



**Department
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Jonathan Bell MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure

CMS 280994/asg
17th March 2016

Dear Jonathan and Carál,

OFCOM - DEVOLUTION TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Following discussions between our officials, I am pleased to formally announce our intention to legislate in relation to Ofcom, in parity with the measures being adopted for Scotland and Wales. This will ensure a consistent approach in the role of the devolved nations in relation to broadcasting and telecoms regulation, and ensure the Northern Ireland Assembly has the ability to appropriately scrutinise Ofcom and hold Ofcom to account in relation to Northern Ireland matters.

We intend to legislate for the following measures:

1. the Northern Ireland Executive to appoint a member of the Ofcom board;
2. a requirement for Ofcom to lay its annual report and accounts before Northern Ireland Ministers, who shall then lay them before the Northern Ireland Assembly;
3. a requirement for Ofcom to submit reports to, and appear before Northern Ireland committees; and
4. a formal consultative role for the Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly in setting the strategic priorities for Ofcom.

I understand the first three of these measures may require the legislative consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and my officials will continue to work with yours to deliver this. The fourth proposal for a consultative role in Ofcom's strategic priorities will be delivered through an MoU between DCMS, Ofcom and the Northern Ireland Executive, once the legislation is in force.



I will write again once I have further detail of the legislative timetable at Westminster and I will ensure that my officials keep you abreast of any related policy developments.

I am copying this letter to the First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Yours ever

John

Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport