

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO**

**THE STATEMENT OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR**

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS, THE MANAGEMENT OF RADIO SPECTRUM, AND**

**POSTAL SERVICES**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and is laid before Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

**2. Declaration**

- 2.1 Baroness Lloyd of Effra, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Digital Economy at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.
- 2.2 Holly Creek, Deputy Director, Digital Infrastructure at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

**3. Contact**

- 3.1 Stephanie Barrett at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology can be contacted by email at the following address with any queries regarding the instrument: [stephanie.barrett@dsit.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.barrett@dsit.gov.uk). Alternatively, the department can be contacted by telephone: 020 7215 2693.

**Part One: Explanation, and context, of the Instrument**

**4. Overview of the Instrument**

*What does the Statement do?*

- 4.1 The purpose of the Statement of Strategic Priorities for Telecommunications, the Management of Radio Spectrum, and Postal Services (“the Statement”) is to give Ofcom, the UK’s independent regulator of communication services, guidance on the government’s strategic priorities and desired outcomes. There are five priority areas: supporting growth through a transparent, competitive, and fair retail market for consumers, driving growth through world-class fixed and wireless digital infrastructure, driving growth through maximising access to spectrum, maximising opportunities for growth through secure and resilient telecoms infrastructure, and supporting growth through resilient and sustainable postal services.
- 4.2 Under section 2B, Ofcom must have regard to the statement when exercising relevant functions. Ofcom must explain what they propose to do in consequence of the statement within 40 days of the designation of the statement or such longer period as the Secretary of State may allow. Ofcom must also, as soon as practicable after a period of 12 months from the designation of the statement and after every subsequent period of 12 months, publish a review of what they have done in the period in question in consequence of the statement.

*Where does the Statement extend to, and apply?*

- 4.3 The extent of this instrument (that is, the jurisdiction(s) which the instrument forms part of the law of) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- 4.4 The territorial application of this instrument (that is, where the instrument produces a practical effect) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## **5. Policy Context**

### *What is being done and why?*

- 5.1 The Secretary of State has decided to designate the Statement, which will replace the 2019 Statement, to establish the priorities this government has for the telecommunications, spectrum and postal sectors. These are key sectors, regulated by Ofcom, which ensure connectivity, underpin daily life in the UK and boost economic growth.
- 5.2 It is a priority for the government that telecoms consumers are protected whilst supporting growth through a transparent, competitive and fair retail market. People should feel empowered when they are interacting with the market and confident they are getting a fair deal. This means: delivering a competitive retail market which is clear and transparent, including encouraging Ofcom to evaluate the impact of interventions collectively and standing ready to take further action as required; sustaining consumer satisfaction and improving it where possible; protecting vulnerable customers; supporting those who are digitally excluded; and encouraging Ofcom to continue to engage with groups likely to be affected by regulatory changes.
- 5.3 On fixed telecoms, the provision of voice, data and video communication services through a physical, wired infrastructure such as copper cables or fibre-optic lines, connectivity, the Statement sets out the government's priorities for the sector, including: the continued promotion of competition to support consumer choice, investment and growth, for residential as well as business broadband, alongside ensuring widespread connectivity including through public funding. Ofcom's role in ensuring continued access to Openreach's physical infrastructure for competitor firms remains crucial to the success of the fibre roll-out. To unlock productivity gains and growth, the government encourages, where appropriate, the take-up of gigabit broadband.
- 5.4 On mobile telecoms, the delivery of voice, data and video services over wireless networks using mobile infrastructure, enabled by technologies such as 4G and 5G, the Statement outlines the government's priorities including: a stable policy and regulatory regime that will deliver good connectivity for everyone, particularly through improving the quality of Ofcom's coverage reporting on network availability and quality; encouraging growth and productivity through investment in high quality 5G networks; driving innovation in advanced connectivity technologies (ACTs) that will support growth, security and resilience; and realising the full benefits of 5G. Ofcom's support is sought in the following ways: ensuring effective competition; monitoring investment in 5G networks and the cost of regulation.
- 5.5 On modernisation, the Statement sets out the importance the Government attaches to the modernisation of the UK's digital infrastructure, including: the need for modernisation to protect the vulnerable and critical national infrastructure; putting in place safeguards; actively monitoring industry modernisation programmes; the need for clear, realistic and achievable criteria for when copper regulation can be withdrawn; and appropriate information for consumers.
- 5.6 The Government's spectrum priorities set out in the statement include: amplifying UK influence in international spectrum negotiations; maximising access to this finite

resource to support growth; implementing new spectrum management techniques, such as the automation of the shared access licensing framework; supporting public sector spectrum access, including for defence and emergency services; and ensuring that spectrum management meets the connectivity needs of key sectors as appropriate, including the needs of the space, transport, utilities, and programme making and special events sectors.

- 5.7 On security and resilience, the Statement sets out the Government's approach to maximising opportunities for growth through secure and resilient telecoms infrastructure. This includes advocating for a proactive regulatory approach to the security and resilience of telecoms networks and services, and Ofcom's role in monitoring and enforcing compliance with legal obligations set out through the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021 and associated Electronic Communications (Security Measures) Regulations 2022. The statement also sets out the government's resilience priorities. This includes incident reporting, net zero and climate adaptation, and ensuring telecoms supply chains are secure and resilient. It also commits to supporting Ofcom's work on power resilience.
- 5.8 The effective and sustainable provision of postal services is integral to driving growth in the economy. The Statement sets out that the Government's key priority continues to be the provision of a universal postal service that meets the needs of users, is affordable, efficient and financially sustainable in an open and competitive postal market. It sets out that the Government considers it important that when Ofcom considers the future of the universal postal service in the context of changing market conditions, it pays particular consideration to the needs of postal users including vulnerable customers and businesses.

*What was the previous policy, how is this different?*

- 5.9 The 2019 Statement followed the publication of the Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) in July 2018<sup>1</sup> and reflected the conclusions of that review.
- 5.10 The FTIR set out the changes that needed to be made to the telecoms market and policy framework to help secure world-class digital infrastructure. The FTIR set out a number of strategic priorities in relation to full fibre deployment, including: reducing the costs and barriers to the deployment of fibre networks; easy access to Openreach's ducts and poles; the need for stable and long term regulation that incentivises investment and ensures competition; an "outside in" approach to full fibre deployment so that the most commercially difficult to reach premises are not left behind; and the need for a timely switchover to full fibre networks. The FTIR also set out a number of strategic priorities to help create the conditions for a competitive mobile market that supports investment and innovation in 5G, in addition to priorities that enable the maximum economic and social value from the use of spectrum.
- 5.11 A number of the strategic priorities set out in the FTIR related to Ofcom's regulatory functions and were reflected in the Statement. The Statement also set out the Government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes in telecoms consumers, network security and resilience, and postal services.
- 5.12 In relation to telecoms consumers, the Government wished to improve the consumer experience in the sector and as such strategic priorities set out in the Statement

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT), 'Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review' (2018) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-telecoms-infrastructure-review>> accessed 03 February 2026.

included: addressing harmful business practices, particularly those that affect the most vulnerable consumers; improving consumer engagement by helping consumers to better navigate the market by giving them the right information; removing the barriers to switching; and improving the overall quality of service for telecoms consumers.

- 5.13 The security and resilience of the UK's telecoms networks was also included as a strategic priority for the Government. The Statement set out the Government's support of an engaged, proactive regulatory approach to the security of communications networks and services. This approach was aimed at incentivising network and service providers to respond to identified threats and risks, and to lead to higher standards across the sector in the management of cyber security and resilience.
- 5.14 Finally, in relation to postal services, the Government expected Ofcom to review Royal Mail's contingency plans and mitigating actions where it is not reassured that Royal Mail is planning and investing appropriately. Royal Mail is the UK's universal service provider required to provide a one-price-goes-anywhere, 6-days-a-week letter and 5-days-a-week parcels delivery service across the whole UK.

## **6. Legislative and Legal Context**

### ***How has the law changed?***

- 6.1 The Digital Economy Act 2017 inserted new sections 2A - 2C into the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'), which sets out the legislative framework for this Statement. Under section 2A, the Secretary of State may designate a statement of the Government's strategic priorities in the United Kingdom relating to telecommunications, the management of the radio spectrum, and postal services.
- 6.2 A statement cannot be amended within five years unless there is a general election or a significant change in Government policy, or the Secretary of State considers that the statement, or a part of it, conflicts with Ofcom's general duties. Section 2A also stipulates that the statement may set out particular outcomes identified with a view to achieving the strategic priorities.
- 6.3 Since the first Statement was designated in 2019, the digital and technology sectors have delivered outsized productivity growth across the British economy, and digital use has continued to grow. These changes in the digital landscape necessitate an update to the Statement, in order to ensure it provides steers that reflect this government's ambitions, missions and priorities. Without updating the Statement, Ofcom would have to continue to have regard to the 2019 Statement, which has become outdated.

### ***Why was this approach taken to change the law?***

- 6.4 This is the only possible approach to make the necessary changes.

## **7. Consultation**

### ***Summary of consultation outcome and methodology***

- 7.1 Under section 2C, before designating a statement, the Secretary of State must consult Ofcom and such other persons as he considers appropriate on a draft of the statement for at least 40 days. The Secretary of State must then make any changes to the draft that appear to him to be necessary in view of responses to the consultation and lay the draft before Parliament for a 40-day period, excluding Parliamentary recesses. The

Secretary of State may then designate the statement unless either House of Parliament resolves not to approve the draft within that period.

7.2 A public consultation was published and ran between 21 July 2025 and 18 September 2025.<sup>2</sup> This consultation sought views on a proposed Statement, and the following questions were asked:

- Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for fixed digital infrastructure? Are there alternative or additional strategic priorities and desired outcomes you believe are required?
- Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for mobile digital infrastructure? Are there alternative or additional strategic priorities and desired outcomes you believe are required?
- Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for the management of radio spectrum? Are there alternative or additional strategic priorities and desired outcomes you believe are required?
- Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for consumer? Are there alternative or additional strategic priorities and desired outcomes you believe are required?
- Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for telecoms security and resilience? Are there alternative or additional strategic priorities and desired outcomes you believe are required?
- Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for postal services? Are there alternative or additional strategic priorities and desired outcomes you believe are required?

7.3 In total, there were over 70 responses from a range of stakeholders, including telecoms companies, trade bodies, local authorities and consumer groups.<sup>3</sup>

7.4 Overall, most respondents broadly supported many of the Government's proposed strategic priorities and desired outcomes. Respondents were generally supportive of the principle of supporting growth through a transparent, competitive and fair retail market. Some respondents wanted the government to go further in certain areas, including in relation to affordability and fraud. Respondents were also supportive of the government's overarching position on the benefits of promoting network competition to support investment in the fixed telecoms sector and deliver the best outcomes for consumers in the long term. On priorities for mobile infrastructure, most respondents supported the government's approach. For example, industry respondents welcomed government seeking support from Ofcom on the monitoring investment in 5G networks and the cost of regulation, as well as continuing to ensure effective competition. Overall, respondents were supportive of the Government's focus on maximising the use of and access to spectrum. For example, respondents supported the expectation that Ofcom conduct a review of Programme Making and Special Events' spectrum requirements and associated technological trends. Respondents also expressed overall support for the government's and Ofcom's commitment to a robust

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<sup>2</sup> DSIT, 'Proposed Statement of Strategic Priorities for telecommunications the management of radio spectrum, and postal services' (2025) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-statement-of-strategic-priorities-for-telecommunications-the-management-of-radio-spectrum-and-postal-services>> accessed 03 February 2026.

<sup>3</sup> DSIT, 'Government response to consultation' (2026) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-statement-of-strategic-priorities-for-telecommunications-the-management-of-radio-spectrum-and-postal-services>> accessed 11 February 2026.

approach to telecoms security and resilience. All stakeholders supported the Statement's overarching priority on the provision of a reliable, affordable and efficient postal service.

## **8. Applicable Guidance**

- 8.1 The Statement does not require any guidance.

## **Part Two: Impact and the Better Regulation Framework**

## **9. Impact Assessment**

- 9.1 A full Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument because the Statement sets out government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes as they relate to Ofcom's regulation of telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum and postal services. Any regulatory decisions as a result of the priorities within the Statement are for Ofcom to make.

### ***Impact on businesses, charities and voluntary bodies***

- 9.2 There is no, or no significant, impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies because the Statement only sets government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes as they relate to Ofcom's regulation of telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum and postal services. Any regulatory decisions as a result of the priorities within the Statement are for Ofcom to make.
- 9.3 The legislation does not impact small or micro businesses. The Statement only sets government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes as they relate to Ofcom's regulation of telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum and postal services. Any regulatory decisions as a result of the priorities within the Statement are for Ofcom to make.
- 9.4 There is no, or no significant, impact on the public sector because the Statement only sets government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes as they relate to Ofcom's regulation of telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum and postal services. Any regulatory decisions as a result of the priorities within the Statement are for Ofcom to make, and the impact of those decisions are for Ofcom to consider.

## **10. Monitoring and review**

### ***What is the approach to monitoring and reviewing this legislation?***

- 10.1 Ofcom must, as soon as practicable after a period of 12 months from the designation of the Statement and after every subsequent period of 12 months, provide an annual report setting out the actions it has taken in consequence of the Statement.
- 10.2 The Statement does not include a statutory review clause. Section 2A permits the Secretary of State to amend, including by replacing the whole or part of, the Statement. This cannot happen within a period five years unless there is a general election or a significant change in government policy, or the Secretary of State considers that the Statement, or part of it, conflicts with Ofcom's general duties.

### **Part Three: Statements and Matters of Particular Interest to Parliament**

#### **11. Matters of special interest to Parliament**

11.1 None.

#### **12. European Convention on Human Rights**

12.1 As the Statement is subject to negative procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

#### **13. The Relevant European Union Acts**

13.1 This instrument is not made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020 or the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (“relevant European Union Acts”).