



Alistair Bridge
Sixth Floor
Strategy and Marketing Developments
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

**Internet Services Providers'
Association**

23 Palace Street
London SW1E 5HW

Tel: 020 7233 7234

Fax: 020 7233 7239

Email: secretariat@ispa.org.uk

Web: www.ispa.org.uk

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Dear Mr Bridge,

ISPA is pleased to contribute to Ofcom's Annual Plan and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the direction that Ofcom is planning to take and Ofcom's identified priorities.

The Internet Services Providers' Association (ISPA) UK is the trade association for companies involved in the provision of Internet Services in the UK. ISPA was founded in 1995, and seeks to actively represent and promote the interests of businesses involved in all aspects of the UK Internet industry. Its membership includes small, medium and large Internet service providers (ISPs), cable companies, web design and hosting companies and a variety of other organisations. ISPA currently has over 150 members, representing around 95% of the UK Internet access market by volume.

A full list of members is available at:

http://www.ispa.org.uk/cgi-bin/member_list.cgi

ISPA has developed a good working relationship with Ofcom since its creation and looks forward to continuing this relationship moving ahead.

ISPA welcomes Ofcom's continued commitment to promoting competition in converging markets, and underlines the importance of BT's continued adherence to the Undertakings as outline in paragraph 2.7.

ISPA supports Ofcom's proposed three-year strategic policy framework. ISPA believes that the continuation of the implementation of the Strategic Review of Telecommunications is vital to continued competition and innovation in converging markets and supports Ofcom's commitment to explore the potential for new bottlenecks to develop alongside the evolution of markets.

The continued promotion of competition in broadband markets remains important to ISPA and ISPA awaits the conclusion of the Wholesale Broadband Access Market Review later this year alongside Ofcom's sustained commitment to LLU.

Considering Ofcom's objective to secure competition and efficient investment in next generation networks, ISPA notes that Ofcom aims to prioritise continued work with NGN UK. While ISPA welcomes the work of NGN UK, ISPA is concerned that the chosen membership structure does not ensure that the interests of the wider industry are fully considered at the NGN UK meetings. ISPA would like to see NGN UK encourage wider and more active participation by industry at all levels of membership and actively engage and consult with niche ISPs. ISPA has written to NGN UK to voice members' concerns as to the lack of representation, but has not yet received a response.

ISPA believes that Ofcom is correct to promote access to and increase participation in communications services. ISPA supported Ofcom's position on the Audio-Visual Media Services Directive and urges Ofcom to continue to support the protection of the Country of Origin principle in the future to ensure a consistent approach across the full range of EU regulation which affects the communications sector.

In considering how content regulation might evolve in the future, ISPA believes that self-regulation should be the preferred approach for online services. ISPA members and the UK new media industry as a whole have a strong track record of self-regulation and good practice, and there is scope to build on this strength. Online services are qualitatively different from traditional broadcasting in terms of their diversity, audience and reach. It is therefore critical that Ofcom approach the relevant public policy issues afresh rather than use public service broadcasting as a starting point or benchmark and does so with a thorough understanding of the global appeal and user-participation of media services today. We welcome Ofcom's commitment to ensuring that any intervention is evidence based and addresses a genuine market failure.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Clarke
Policy Officer
ISPA UK