

Section 3

Priorities for 2006/7

- 3.1 In the previous section we highlighted the dynamic and converging nature of the communications sector. New communications services are emerging; there is wider availability and use of existing services; and there is a rich choice of TV and radio programmes. At the same time there is a general increase in competition, with prices often falling as a result.
- 3.2 Taking account of this market context, we must respond to a range of important issues, including:
- the debate about how public service broadcasting should be maintained and strengthened as we move towards digital TV switchover;
 - the question of the future use of the spectrum freed-up by switchover and other spectrum available for commercial use;
 - the implications for regulation of new ways of distributing internet and media content;
 - the development of a new generation of telecoms networks; and
 - the continued need to protect citizens and consumers and promote access to a wide range of communications services.
- 3.3 In order to meet the diverse needs of people throughout the UK, we need to anticipate as well as respond to the changes which are taking place. By doing so, we can ensure that consumers continue to have a choice of good-value communications services. Of equal importance is Ofcom's role in supporting and sustaining high standards in broadcasting – quality programmes coupled with protection against offensive and harmful material.
- 3.4 The need to fulfil these wide-ranging responsibilities is reflected in our priorities for 2006/7:
1. **Spectrum release: auction and liberalisation** – releasing and liberalising spectrum, facilitating trading and raising awareness of the opportunities offered by a more market-led approach to spectrum management.
 2. **TSR implementation** – promoting competition and innovation in both voice and broadband services by ensuring effective implementation of the Undertakings made by BT Group plc.
 3. **Continued deregulation** – continuing to explore opportunities to reduce and better target regulation, taking account of the latest regulatory thinking, such as the recommendations of the *Hampton Review*.
 4. **Next generation deployment** – understanding how the next generation of telecoms networks and services are evolving and considering the implications for regulation, both in the core network and in the access network, which can be used for higher-speed broadband.
 5. **PSB: future developments** – continuing work to combine consumer choice in a digital world with benefits for viewers arising from more focused and enduring

public service broadcasting. Work will include a financial review of Channel 4, the development of proposals for the Public Service Publisher and input into the BBC Charter Review in those areas which overlap with Ofcom's responsibilities. We will also conclude our work on local TV and will consider how news is likely to be produced and consumed in the future.

6. **Content delivery** – understanding how new methods of delivering internet and media content are creating opportunities for innovation and examining the potential benefits for citizens and consumers. We will also consider the implications for regulation and ensure appropriate protection for children.
7. **Consumer protection** – taking enforcement action to protect both consumers and citizens, handling complaints effectively and promoting media literacy.
8. **Availability and access** – identifying areas where market failures make intervention necessary to offer people access to services such as broadband and digital television. This work will be informed by Ofcom's ongoing audit of the Nations and Regions.
9. **International engagement** – seeking to influence the way that regulatory policy evolves, in particular, the new EU directive on TV and other audio-visual content, the revised EU framework for electronic communications and international negotiations on spectrum, including the Regional Radio Conference 2006.

Question 1 – *What are your views on Ofcom's proposed priorities for 2006/7?*