



House of Commons
Digital, Culture, Media and
Sport Committee

**Appointment of the
Chair of Ofcom**

First Report of Session 2017–19

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed
13 December 2017*

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and its associated bodies.

Current membership

[Damian Collins MP](#) (*Conservative, Folkestone and Hythe*) (Chair)

[Julie Elliott MP](#) (*Labour, Sunderland Central*)

[Paul Farrelly MP](#) (*Labour, Newcastle-under-Lyme*)

[Simon Hart MP](#) (*Conservative, Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire*)

[Julian Knight MP](#) (*Conservative, Solihull*)

[Ian C. Lucas MP](#) (*Labour, Wrexham*)

[Christian Matheson MP](#) (*Labour, City of Chester*)

[Brendan O'Hara MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Argyll and Bute*)

[Rebecca Pow MP](#) (*Conservative, Taunton Deane*)

[Jo Stevens MP](#) (*Labour, Cardiff Central*)

[Giles Watling MP](#) (*Conservative, Clacton*)

Powers

The committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/dcmscom and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Chloe Challender (Committee Clerk), Joe Watt (Second Clerk), Philip Aylett (Senior Clerk, Scrutiny Unit), Josephine Willows (Senior Committee Specialist), Andy Boyd (Senior Committee Assistant), Keely Bishop (Committee Assistant), Grace Camba (Inquiry Manager), and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

Contacts

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Introduction

1. On 8 August 2017 the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport launched a competition for a new Chair to replace the current Chair of the Office of Communications (Ofcom), Dame Patricia Hodgson, who is due to step down at the end of December 2017.
2. The Ofcom Chair competition was advertised on the Cabinet Office Centre for Public Appointments website and by search consultants Gatenby Sanderson. The application closing date was 29th September 2017.¹ Interviews were held on 3rd November. The appointment was made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments as regulated by the Commissioner on Public Appointments.
3. This is a four-year appointment with a three day per week time commitment. In addition to chairing meetings of the Board, the Chair will be expected to: act as the most senior representative of Ofcom to its various stakeholders; serve on several of Ofcom's committees; and oversee the discharge of Ofcom's statutory functions, including the operational delivery of the conclusions of the Digital Communications Review and a regulatory framework for the BBC. Appendix One contains more information on the role of Chair of Ofcom, including selection criteria for the post.

The preferred candidate

4. The Secretary of State informed us that the Government's preferred candidate for the role of Chair of Ofcom is Lord Burns GCB.
5. The Committee took oral evidence from Lord Burns in a pre-appointment hearing on 13 December 2017.

¹ The assessment advisory panel was made up of: Sue Owen, DCMS Permanent Secretary; Dr Tracy Long, Senior Independent Panel Member; and Sir John Kingman, Other Panel Member.

1 The appointment of Lord Burns

6. Lord Burns has had a distinguished career in public life, including seven years as Permanent Secretary at the Treasury from 1991 to 1998. He has also been the Chairman of several large companies including Channel Four Television Corporation from 2009 to 2015. Detailed information about Lord Burns' career can be found in Appendix Two.

7. In oral evidence we asked Lord Burns about the following specific matters:

- Personal and career background
- Suitability for the role
- Developing and implementing a strategy for Ofcom
- The BBC
- Technology and social media
- The Fox/Sky Merger
- Ofcom and the nations and regions
- Channel 4
- The impact of Brexit on industries regulated by Ofcom.

Possible conflicts of interest

8. Candidates for the post were required to complete a form outlining possible conflicts of interest. Lord Burns wrote:

I am a non-executive member of the OBR until June 2018. The Chairman of the OBR is the spouse of the Chief Executive of Ofcom. I am Deputy Chairman of the Hay Festival of Literature and the BBC are a partner organisation.

Conclusion

9. On the basis of the evidence provided to us, we are satisfied that Lord Burns is a suitable candidate for appointment to the post of Chair of Ofcom. We wish him well in his new post.

Appendix One: The role of the Chair of Ofcom

This information is taken from the Centre for Public Appointments website.²

Person Specification

Role Specification

The Chair will be expected to:

- Provide leadership to the Board during a period of both change and growth in its membership, bringing together the diverse perspectives and experiences of other Board members to oversee the discharge of Ofcom's statutory functions, and in particular the operational delivery of the conclusions of the Digital Communications Review and a regulatory framework for the BBC; and
- Be the most senior representative of Ofcom to its various stakeholders, including its licensees, other regulated entities, the United Kingdom Government and Parliament and the devolved National Governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (working with the relevant Nations' Board members).

Key Selection Criteria

Candidates will need to demonstrate:

- the ability to lead the Board of a major national body using sound judgement and decision-making to ensure successful delivery in a highly complex organisation;
- a strong intellect and the ability to understand the business and economic principles underpinning the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal sectors in the digital environment – it is also desirable, but not essential, for candidates to be already conversant with these particular industries;
- an appreciation of the needs of UK consumers and citizens and the competitive and consumer dynamics of these fast-changing sectors; and
- the ability to operate with the highest levels of Government as well as to command respect from senior stakeholders in industry.

Personal attributes

- In providing leadership to the Board, the Chair will be committed to forging an inclusive and effective board culture, working collegiately with Board members, the effective chairing of meetings, inducting new Board members, ensuring an appropriate structure of board committees is in place and the timely flow of high-quality supporting information to them, and building a positive relationship and an 10 appropriate division of responsibilities with the Chief Executive; and

² <https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/ofcom-chair/> accessed 13 December 2017

- Candidates must demonstrate personal integrity of a high order, and must have stature and authority. They must have demonstrable understanding of Ofcom's need to make independent judgements under pressure and no conflicts arising from any commercial or political interests.

Appendix Two: Biographical information

Name: Terence Burns

Date of Birth: 13 March 1944 at Hetton le Hole in County Durham

Full-time Employment History

- 1991-1998 Permanent Secretary, HM Treasury
- 1980-1991 Chief Economic Adviser, HM Treasury and Head of the Government Economic Service
- 1965-1979 London Business School. Between 1965 and 1970 10 various research posts. From 1970, Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer in Economics. 1979 Professor of Economics. Between 1977 and 1979 Director of the LBS Centre for Economic Forecasting.

Activities since leaving HM Treasury

Public Affairs

- 1998- Member of House of Lords
- 2001-2003 Member of House of Lords Economic Affairs Select Committee
- 2016- Member of House of Lords Economic Affairs Select Committee
- 1999 Chairman, Financial Services and Markets Joint Committee of House of Lords and House of Commons
- 2011- Non-executive member of the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)
- 2017- Chairman of Lord Speaker's Committee on the Size of the House of Lords
- 2015-16 Chairman of Independent Commission on Freedom of Information
- 2005-2006 Structural Review of the Football Association on behalf of the FA
- 2004-2006 Independent Adviser to the Secretary of State on the BBC Charter Review
- 2000-2001 Chairman, National Lottery Commission
- 1999-2000 Chairman, Committee of Inquiry into "The Impact of Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales"
- 1998-2000 Member of the Scottish Fee Support Review

Companies

- 2015- Senior Adviser to Chairman of Banco Santander
- 2002-2015 Chairman of Santander UK plc (formerly Abbey National)
- 2004- Non-executive Director of Banco Santander
- 2010-2016 Chairman, Channel 4

- 2000-2010 Chairman, Glas Cymru Limited (Welsh Water)
- 1999-2010 Non-executive Director of Pearson plc
- 2005-2008 Deputy Chairman and subsequently Chairman, Marks and Spencer plc
- 2000-2005 Non-executive Director of The British Land Company plc
- 1999-2001 Non-executive Director and Chairman of the Audit Committee of Legal and General Group plc

Academia

- 1998-2014 Member of Governing Body of the Royal Academy of Music. Chairman from 2003

Cultural and Charitable

- 2000-2010 Chairman of Monteverdi Trust
- 2009- Chairman of Mid-Wales Music Trust (previously Cambrian Music Trust)
- 2015- Deputy Chairman, Hay Festival of Literature & the Arts
- 2012- Director of the Hay Festival Foundation (previously 25 Festivals of Literature Charitable Trust)
- 2017- Chairman, Young Classical Artists Trust

Soccer

- 1996-2000 Director of Queens Park Rangers Football Club Professional Activities
- 1985-2012 Vice President and subsequently President of the Society of Business Economists
- 1998-2011 Governor and subsequently President of the Institute of Economic and Social Research
- 1992-1998 Member of the Board of Management of the Manchester Business School
- 1989-1997 Visiting Fellow, Nuffield College, Oxford

Education

- 1970 Harvard Business School, Young Teachers Programme, at IMEDE in Lausanne.
- 1962-1965 University of Manchester, graduating in Economics (BAEcon Hons)
- 1955-1962 Houghton le Spring Grammar School

Honours and Awards Received

1983 Knight Bachelor

1995 Knight Grand Cross, Order of the Bath

1998 Life Peerage

1989 Fellow, London Business School

1992 Honorary Doctor of Social Sciences, University of Manchester

1993 Honorary Doctor of Laws, University of Sunderland

1996 Honorary Doctor of Science, University of Durham

1999 Honorary Doctor of Letters, University of Sheffield

2009 Honorary Fellowship, University of Cardiff

2012 Honorary Fellowship, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 13 December 2017

Members present:

Damian Collins, in the Chair

Julie Elliott	Chris Matheson
Paul Farrelly	Brendan O'Hara
Julian Knight	Jo Stevens
Ian C Lucas	Giles Watling

Draft Report (*The appointment of the Chair of Ofcom*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 9 read and agreed to.

Appendices agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 19 December at 10.00 a.m.]

Witness

The following witness gave evidence. The transcript of the session can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 13 December 2017

Lord Burns, Government's preferred candidate for the Chair of Ofcom

[Q1-60](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

POF numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Citizens Advice ([POF 0001](#))