[GB] New Government Signals Major Regulatory Changes

IRIS 2001-7:1/18

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Announcing the new Labour Government's legislative programme in the House of Lords on 20 June, the Queen said that "a draft Bill to create a single regulator for the media and communications industries and reform the broadcasting and telecommunications regulations will be published."

The draft Bill is likely to be prefaced in the next weeks by a Bill that will set up OFCOM - the unified regulator which will combine the roles of the Broadcasting Standards Commission; the Independent Television Commission; Oftel; the Radiocommunications Agency; and the Radio Authority (see IRIS 2001-1: 8).

The draft Bill, which will deal with wider issues, eg cross-media ownership, may be published for consultation later this year, with the aim of putting the Bill to Parliament in the autumn of 2002.

The management consultancy, Towers Perrin, has been appointed by the Chief Executives of the five existing regulators to determine the process for the establishment of the new regulator. "The initial work by Towers Perrin will be to:

- provide a clear overall view of the functions, processes, structures and resources in each of the existing organisations;

- assess the options for OFCOM under each of these four headings;

- propose criteria for evaluating these options;

- set out a clear timetable for the stages of work that will need to be carried out in order to get from where we are now to a fully functioning OFCOM by 2003."

The consultants are to report by the end of August 2001 to a steering group consisting of the five Chief Executives and officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

Queen's Speech of 20 June 2001

"Regulators Work Together to Lay the Foundations for OFCOM", Joint Press Release issued by the five UK communications regulators

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