

## Welcome to the October 2021 newsletter



It is nice to see that we are all starting to embrace some form of hybrid working. The UKRN team has started to move back to the CAA offices on a regular basis which is really nice as some members hadn't actually met in

person! I would also like to introduce two new members of the UKRN team, both from Ofgem, Agnese Meloni who will cover data and vulnerability and Stephen Bass who will cover NetZero.

UKRN is immersed in the flurry of Government papers that have come out since the summer and I thank you all for your continued support in helping us approach some tricky areas. There will obviously be more work to come as these papers progress and we will keep you updated on our involvement.

Alongside the Government papers we have been working in the D&I space, which is covered later in this newsletter and on the next generation Non-Executive Directors work. Thank you all for supporting these initiatives and for the applications for the scheme.

As COP 26 begins, our work in the NetZero space is on everyone's agenda and will remain a key part of the UKRN workplan for the foreseeable future.

*Attricia Archer, UKRN Director*

### Bill Emery, UKRN Chair of Chairs

Earlier this year I was privileged to take over from Jonson Cox as "Chair of Chairs" of UKRN. This is an informal role chairing the regular meetings of the Chairs' Group and assisting with UKRN governance, Strategy and Expert Panel. Our members oversee and regulate huge swathes of the UK economy and it is clear we all gain hugely from the work we do collectively.

Many of you will be familiar with me through my 30 years in regulation including at Ofwat, ORR and now as Chair of the Northern Ireland Utility Regulator. I am also Chair of CERRE, a Brussels-based think tank dedicated to ever better regulation for the energy, tech, media, telecom, mobility and water sectors. "Ever better" is a mantra that is relevant to our work as regulators and for the sectors we regulate. We can achieve this by learning from others, sharing knowledge and experiences, and testing and

taking opportunities as they arise. This is at the heart of UKRN.

It's been a really busy time and I wanted to share some of the highlights from the many UKRN meetings and activities I've been involved in:

- at our April Chairs group, we discussed appointments to regulatory boards with Peter Riddell – the public appointments commissioner.
- in July we met senior officials of the Cabinet Office to discuss developing plans for better regulatory and other opportunities. And
- at our meeting in November, we are exploring Net Zero strategy and implications

I have found the discussions at our Expert Panel meetings in June and September to be exceptionally interesting. We have had wide ranging, informed, insightful and thought-provoking debates on four topics: climate change & vulnerability, vulnerability and data, outcomes and measurement and regulatory appeals. Colleagues from our relevant working groups were involved in these meetings to take forward the learning into our work programmes. The panel also had an introductory session with the CEOs group a few weeks ago. Overall, it has been a hugely impressive start for our new panel and I thank Cloda, Helen, Mick and Suzanne for their very positive contributions so far – the future looks a little less daunting for us with their help! I encourage all our network members to use the panel to assist them – talk to Barbara on how to do this.

Finally, a big thank you to Attricia and the team at UKRN for the work they are doing. We have an important work programme to deliver to make a difference. We are living through very challenging times but with the collaboration, mutual support and encouragement through our network we will be better able to meet the challenges ahead.

### Cloda Jenkins, Expert Panel member

Back in 1997 when I started working as an economic advisor in the regulated sectors, I never imagined I would get to a point where I would be able to discuss pressing issues with, and learn from, dedicated staff across the regulators. It has been a privilege to join the Expert Panel at a time of challenge and ambition across all the sectors that UKRN represents. I was involved with early versions of the Joint Regulators Working Group and can see the original rationale for coming together, to allow for the

value of economies of scale and scope in ideas and experiences to be explored, remains strong. Now, it is backed up by an impressive small group of dedicated UKRN staff and a network of working groups seeking solutions to significant problems that affect us all.

In my career I have focused on the nuts and bolts of incentive regulation, working across sectors, and it is great to see that improving incentives, to deliver cost efficiency, innovation, quality of service and environmental improvement has not lost its place at the regulators' table. The details and priorities always change but the need to maintain well known principles of incentive regulation and to remember lessons from history and from across sectors does not go away.

What I have valued most from being on the Expert Panel is the opportunity to take a broader look at regulation. It has been particularly humbling to talk to my colleagues on the Expert Panel and several UKRN members about how to improve efficiency of outcomes and equity of outcomes in parallel. Most of our discussions to-date have inevitably led us to the challenges of how to support vulnerable consumers, particularly in the context of the Covid pandemic, and how to meet the inter-generational objective of a fair transition to net zero.

Regulators have learnt from each other about the technical detail and processes of price controls, and mechanisms to enhance market competition, for some time. Now we are not just thinking about common cross-sectoral issues but issues that sit above each sector and require true collaboration of ideas for us to be in with a fighting chance of delivering the step-change needed. The UKRN work programme provides a great basis to get the conversations going and I look forward to working with all those involved to turn ideas into practical solutions that we see implemented across the sectors.

## Vulnerability network update

Since April, UKRN's Vulnerability network has organised and facilitated many roundtables, including the impact of Covid on vulnerable consumers and data recording of vulnerability. These sessions have already led to some interesting next steps that will feature in the 2022 workplan.

The final roundtables of 2021, covering debt and affordability, took place in October and included speakers from a range of external organisations and government.

## Recent consultation responses

The UKRN has formally responded on behalf of members to two BEIS consultations, which closed on 1 October 2021:

[Reforming the Framework for Better Regulation](#) and [Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy](#)

We look forward to engaging further on the outcomes of the consultation as policy develops.

Reform is a key area of focus and we have been engaging closely with Government Departments and agencies to ensure UKRN members are plugged into policy development, more generally where it is relevant to our objectives. During the summer we have held sessions and workshops with Government and the CMA on:

- Project Speed
- Economic Regulatory Reform
- Competition and Consumer Reform
- Better Regulation: and
- Government Data Strategy

## UKRN member regulator D&I pledges

On behalf of its members, UKRN are pleased to publish a set of diversity and inclusion pledges that our members have produced, which seek to collaboratively drive forward D&I work across their organisations and sectors they regulate.

[UKRN member regulator D&I pledges](#)

## Events

### Reflections on Covid

On 17th June UKRN hosted a roundtable discussion for members, government departments, consumer groups and trade associations, "Reflections on responding to the impact of Covid and the way forward: A regulatory perspective." The event provided the opportunity to take a step back and reflect collectively on the experiences and learnings of the last 18 months, and to look ahead to consider what this means for the future. A range of speakers from our members and industry gave great insight into how the sectors responded to the challenges. Learnings included:

- Future focus on consumers in debt, and affordability, with the lasting impact of Covid
- Retain responsiveness to industry, essential for sectors to remain competitive

- Use of data, and data driven solutions, across sectors where possible
- Continue to listen, learn and adapt to consumer needs: enable innovation

The full report is available on our website here:

["Reflections on Covid" event](#)

## What's coming up

### WIG/UKRN event on COVID-19's impact on consumer debt, Tuesday 9 November

Over the last 18 months the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact across the UK economy, however the effect on consumer debt has been mitigated by policy interventions designed to support household finances. With the furlough scheme due to finish in September 2021, UKRN has partnered with WIG to discuss how this picture may develop, the role of key stakeholders across the sectors in supporting vulnerable households and those consumers who maybe new to debt, and how consumer debt levels may influence wider economic recovery.

To register for the event, [click WIG link here](#)

### All eyes on COP26

At the time of writing, we are closely watching the start of the [COP26](#) conference in Glasgow, which runs from 31 October to 12 November. You will have undoubtedly heard that this is a make-or-break moment for getting the agreement of world leaders to the cuts in future greenhouse gas emissions that will be necessary to protect us, and future generations, from the worse impacts of climate change. This is one of the most intractable problems of our time, and we are at a critical juncture as emissions paths are set to exceed dangerous levels in the near future if we don't make further commitments now.

It is likely to be a bumpy ride as leaders negotiate who pays the costs, and how fast we make substantial, even revolutionary, changes to the fundamental infrastructure that supports our societies. However, for those that move quickly there will be new opportunities.

Throughout, the UKRN will continue working with our members and beyond to build understanding, and to facilitate engagement and positive action across the regulatory community.

*Steve Bass, UKRN Net Zero lead*

## Changes to the team

### Agnese Meloni joins from Ofgem, July 2021



Agnese joined the UKRN in July 2021 on secondment from Ofgem, where she worked as an Enforcement Manager. By working at UKRN as Vulnerability Lead, Agnese is looking forward to

supporting the drive towards positive change for vulnerable consumers in the UK and is excited to work with a dynamic and experienced team at UKRN, supporting Vulnerability, Data Strategy and Young Professionals networks.

### Stephen Bass joins from Ofgem, August 2021



Joining the UKRN in late August 2021 on secondment from Ofgem, Steve brings recent experience of leading compliance and enforcement teams at Ofgem and the New Zealand Commerce

Commission, together with his long experience working on sustainable energy, climate change and resource efficiency. Steve is excited to be coordinating UKRN's networks on net zero, alongside driving the Senior Representatives Group.



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## Contact the UKRN team

For questions about the UKRN, or to sign up to our newsletter, please get in touch with the team:

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