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Dear William,

Re: Response to ***A new approach to public service content in the digital media age*** by First Light Movies

I am writing in response to the Ofcom discussion paper published in January 2007, which examines the potential role of the Public Service Publisher, in light of the technological and social challenges which we all will face in the not too distant future.

First Light Movies (FLM) is the UK's leading national agency that supports young filmmakers. It enables young people from all backgrounds aged between 5 and 18 years old, to realise their creativity through the moving image medium.

As an organisation which has championed the voice of young people, expressed through digital media, we are excited by the proposition of a new public broadcasting paradigm that will cast its net over and beyond what is current thinking.

The potential role of the PSP and the creative remit it can offer to an organisation such as FLM are both a challenge and an opportunity.

It is clear that the PSP has the potential to enable and support FLM to do more of what it already does. Our work exhibits many of the characteristics which the consultation document mentions as being intrinsic to the PSP.

There lies an opportunity for FLM to highlight its work as being clearly participative. FLM is about young people participating and taking creative and technical control. They are the authors of their work and demonstrate each time to us that they are the main stakeholders in the vision they are creating.

Additionally, FLM has consistently offered significant public value as it gives opportunity to a plurality of young people's voices from all over the UK. It supports socially disadvantaged groups and has a geographical spread of funding, which ensures that we cater to all sections of the community.

We place a high value on the benefits of distribution and viewing of the work by young people because it shows them that they are taken seriously as producers of content, and because it serves as an illustration of positive activities undertaken by them and can portray positive images of themselves which mainstream media has a tendency not to do.

Furthermore, to engage in the discussions is to argue that the creativity and stories that young people have to share, should not be ghettoised as they currently are, in obscure timeslots or little known or recognised channels, in the digital or terrestrial world, but to acknowledge that there is this alternative where there will be no geographical, time or distance barriers inbetween them or their potential audience.

Mediabox, a new scheme (funded by DfES) for disadvantaged young people, aged 13 to 19 years old, to create content across all types of media develops these last two themes. Managed by a consortium led by FLM and including UK Film Council, Skillset and The Media Trust, this £6million fund is to target those who have traditionally not engaged with the creative industries and provides them with a support framework, as well as opportunities to apply directly for funding to realise their stories and ideas that can be told via a range of digital media (film/television, radio, web, multi-media).

Young people will be encouraged to develop positive on-screen and behind the screen role models. By sharing and viewing their work collectively in a community centre, or individually via their mobiles, they will work to inspire others that they can make a difference and that they can challenge the status quo in terms of bringing positive stories to the media about youth today.

A further area we are developing, which fits into the PSP theme, is The Lightbox which is accessed via the FLM website. Here all funded projects have a secure area to blog, to share details about their own respective films with other projects, view the latest still images and look at storyboards, etc. This virtual interconnectivity and dedicated space offers the opportunity for young people to participate and comment, share knowledge, demystify prejudices through discussion and exposure to the unknown, increase their understanding of alternative viewpoints and inspire them to have creative play in a safe space.

On the issue of intervention and the nature of its appropriateness in the digital media age, FLM is in agreement that this is a necessity and we are already working in this space.

We were able to identify a gap in resources for the younger age range of filmmaker we support. Without an intervention from the public purse in the form of a commission from Culture Online, our work to reach out, engage and inspire our whole range of young people would have been that much more difficult. Developed in partnership with the UK Film Council, CBBC, Creative Partnerships, the online filmmaking resource, www.filmstreet.co.uk was created to inspire and support these younger filmmakers. This interactive website has been winning awards both nationally and internationally (BAFTA nominated, BIMA Best Kids site 2006, Yahoo Search Finds of the year, EureleA European E-Learning Awards – best international project) and exemplifies the quality of creative work that FLM could at a future date be contributing to the PSP.

Finally, in terms of the devolution debate, FLM would support this focus being itself located in Birmingham and considering this to be one of its USPs. Decentralising activities outside of London would be positive not just in terms of the economic argument but also for the public value and public benefit position. FLM would also suggest that there are developing and ready made devolved networks such as the Regional Screen Agencies with which FLM works closely to deliver

many of its activities. If we are to consider that the digital age is about removing a multitude of physical barriers then does it not become logical to expect that the PSP model can be based anywhere and everywhere and rather than a reliance on ownership and management by organisation in the way that the BBC does, that it is delivered through a democratic network promoted through peer review?

I trust that this response by First Light Movies is able to inform the work of Ofcom in the continuing development and debate around the PSP. Furthermore we will welcome any future opportunities to input into discussions of the issues raised in this paper and by other contributors.

Yours sincerely,

Pip Eldridge
Chief Executive
First Light Movies