

**Ofcom's Second Review of  
Public Service Broadcasting:  
Phase 2**

**Response from the British Film Institute**

*Summary*

The BFI wishes to endorse the response submitted by the UK Film Council in relation to the consultation questions

In addition, there are a number of key points we wish to register with Ofcom which we would like to see discussed within the industry and wider in the months ahead.

In particular, we wholly endorse the creation of a new fund bringing together the arts and culture bodies to provide additional public service content on the many emerging platforms.

Furthermore, in this dramatically changed landscape we want to register the critical need to consider the future funding of the National Television Archive to make sure the full spectrum of television and content can be archived in this digital world.

*A National Television Archive*

Broadcasting is a critically important part of the nation's cultural heritage. And it is vital that the nation's broadcasting is made available to future generations: the national archive shows how we saw ourselves at a particular moment in time; it shows us how we have got to where we are; and it tells the vital stories of the people that make up today's society. Just as there is a national repository for published archives, so there should be a proper national repository for broadcasting.

This vital role was recognised:

- in the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988;
- in the Broadcasting Act 1990 (which included a requirement for the regulatory bodies (then ITC, now Ofcom) to require Channel 3 contractors to fund a National Television Archive; this was subsequently extended to the Five franchise); and
- in the Communications Act 2003 which further extended the requirement to Channel 4 (which previously had this condition imposed on its licence by the ITC).

Under this legislation the BFI is the UK's designated National Television Archive. In parallel, following changes in the BBC Charter Review in 1986, since 1990 the BFI has maintained an access service for BBC television output, paid for by the BBC.

The BFI's television holdings now extend to around 700,000 items, making it one of the world's largest collections of broadcast material and certainly one of its most important. Access is provided to it for research and – subject to clearance from rightsholders – at BFI Southbank, at BFI Mediatheques, and to schools, colleges and universities through BFI Screenonline.

It is a vitally important National Collection, and Government support for this work has recently been confirmed by the award of a £25 million grant to the Strategy for UK Screen Heritage, which will fund the capital requirements of providing for the future physical security of the archive and to enable even better public access.

### *Future considerations*

With digital switch-over, the landscape of British television broadcasting will profoundly change. The advent of cable and satellite television a few years back led to a dramatic increase in the volume of television material broadcast; that is likely to multiply yet further after switch-over is completed. In this landscape there are two major questions:

- 1) how to ensure proper archiving of the nation's Public Service Broadcasting;
- 2) how to go beyond that, and ensure proper archiving of all television output. Just as it would not be in the nation's interest only to archive a small selection of academic text-books and no other printed material, so it is not in the nation's interest only to archive a narrow range of television output derived solely from Public Service Broadcasting.

### *Financing*

But the debate about the future of Public Service Broadcasting, the many changes that will follow Digital Switch Over, and the changing financial circumstances of the three commercial PSBs, all mean the issue of the future financing of a National Television Archive must be considered during the Review.

We believe obligation to fund archival work should remain at the level of current provision but should take account of the economies of scale that can be achieved if all the nation's television heritage were to be conserved and curated by a single organization. We would suggest that, if there is contestable funding, a provision must be made for television archives as a fixed percentage of the contestable pool. Future funding could be sourced from any of the four sources of "additional funding": regulatory assets, licence fees, industry levies or direct government funding. We believe it is also important to recognise the importance of maintaining and supporting an archive which can conserve national and local material as well as material of national importance which is provided from non-regulated sources.

The main criterion for archiving is long-term “certainty” of funding. We would welcome a dialogue with Ofcom and other stakeholders to resolve these issues in the months ahead.

04/12/2008