

BFI response
to
Ofcom's Annual Plan 2015-16

October 2014

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BFI has two suggestions for areas of potential work for Ofcom's Draft Annual Plan 2015/16. The first question concerns ways in which Ofcom might help increase access to legacy television material, reflecting the fact that the BFI is the designated National Television Archive.

The second question concerns the potential for Ofcom to help increase investment by commercial public service broadcasters (PSBs) in original British children's television programming.

2. ABOUT THE BFI

In 2011 the BFI became the lead organisation for film in the UK. It is now a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film.

Our mission is to ensure that film is central to our cultural life, in particular by supporting and nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK.

- It delivers this role: As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK

In October 2012, the BFI published 'Film Forever, Supporting UK Film 2012-2017', which set out its strategy for the next five years, following an extensive industry consultation.¹ It described the activities underpinning the BFI's three strategic priorities: Expanding education and learning opportunities and boosting audience choice across the UK Supporting the future success of British film Unlocking film heritage for everyone in the UK to enjoy.

To that end, the BFI helps ensure that public policy supports film and, in particular, British film.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Greg Dyke.

3. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Are there areas of Ofcom's overall strategic approaches and purposes (outlined in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.10 above) that may need to change?

The BFI has not identified any.

What are the issues and areas that should form Ofcom's priorities or major work areas in 2015/16?

The BFI has two suggestions.

¹ <http://www.bfi.org.uk/about-bfi/policy-strategy/film-forever>

i. Legacy television

The BFI is designated as the National Television Archive under the terms of the Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988. Under the Communications Act 2003 a funding contribution is made by the public service broadcast licences holders as determined by Ofcom.

Television is an important cultural form and the BFI has actively collected television programmes for 50 years. Indeed, more than 70% of individual works in the BFI National Archive are television programmes. The collection comprises approximately 900,000 TV programmes, mainly from the 1970s to the present. It includes a continuous record of BBC broadcast output, as seen by the public, now spanning 23 years and selected material from the other PSBs.

The BFI makes these collections available to researchers and, subject to rights clearance, by including a limited amount of material in the BFI's cultural programme.

The BFI believes legacy television should be made as widely accessible as possible by whichever means, including through the commercial activity of the PSBs. We think that during 2015/16 Ofcom should work with the BFI to examine the latter's potential role, alongside the PSBs, in making legacy television available, especially for less commercially viable titles.

ii. Children's Television Programming

In a research report on children's programming within the public service broadcasting framework published in August 2013, Ofcom stated that: "Since 2006, PSB spend on children's first-run originated programmes has dropped by 17%, to £91m in 2011. This is driven by a 93% decrease by the commercial PSBs taken as a group (ITV/C4/C5) from £33m to £2m. The BBC, however, increased spend by 15% over the same period, from £77m to £89m."

This appears to be detrimental to the interests of children as they do not have sufficient access to material which reflects the culture within which they are growing up.

With this in mind, the BFI believes that in 2015/16 Ofcom should undertake further work on the ways in which commercial PSBs could play a role in addressing the decline in original British television programming for children - for example, whether it would be desirable to put in statute a power for Ofcom to include specific investment obligations regarding children's programming in the licences of the commercial PSBs.

Are there any specific areas for deregulation or simplification in the coming year?

The BFI has not identified any such areas.

Ends.