



3 Liberia Road
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26th February 2016

The Rt. Hon. John Whittingdale M.P.

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

Dear John Whittingdale

Thank you for Tuesday's round-table, which I think demonstrated the concern and commitment of those involved in children's media.

The Children's Media Foundation really believes that this is a moment of opportunity to sort out the problems in the proper provision of original, UK-facing children's content, which have arisen as a result of regular budget cuts at the BBC, and the virtual de-regulation of the commercial PSBs in this genre, together with the proliferation of international commercial channels providing predominantly American content.

We would suggest the following actions:

First, the BBC needs to protect its investment in children's content both on the channels and online, preferably by accepting the 8% guarantee suggested in the joint industries statement. This could be achieved through adjustments to the Service Licences by any new regulatory body.

Secondly, the issue of the failure of Channel 4 to fulfill its remit to cater for children over 10 needs to be addressed. You implied that this might be achievable?

Thirdly, we need to take a deep breath and address the whole market failure issue with an eye to the future.

Currently there is no incentive to encourage commercial companies to create PSB content for the UK market, nor is there any meaningful regulation. An alternative, new fund (not created by top-slicing the Licence Fee) could be set up to boost production of new content and encourage new entrants into the market.

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Yes, it is an ambitious ask, and easily dismissed as impractical, but we believe that if we don't consider it seriously now, the decline will continue and, as Anne Brogan said in the meeting, the UK will no longer be the world leader in children's content, as it once was, and still is... just.

So we ask you to set up a feasibility study to report within a year to examine potential sources of funding; forms of administration and regulation; end usage; means of distribution; value, monetarily, but also culturally and socially, etc.

As you have said, the whole scenario of broadcasting and media is changing, but whatever happens, content has to be created to be consumed, and quality, culturally relevant, entertaining content for children will always be needed on whatever platform and in whatever format.

Please let us make sure it is there in the future.

The Children's Media Foundation would be happy to be involved in any way in an initiative of this kind. We already have some thoughts about the areas which should be covered in the study. It needs to be wide-ranging, thorough and genuinely forward looking.

Thank you again, and good luck with all your deliberations!

Best wishes

Anna Home OBE
Chair
The Children's Media Foundation

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