



Representing
Service Companies to
the Screen Industries

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OFCOM'S SECOND PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING REVIEW

Introduction

UK Screen Association is the trade body that represents and promotes the commercial interests of companies providing facilities and specialist services to the television and film industries. We have >150 member companies, many from post-production but also outside broadcast, lights, camera and studios.

With Public Service Broadcasters accounting for >90% of investment in new networked UK-originated television content, the UK facilities sector is to a great extent dependent not only on the continuance, but the growth of, public service broadcasting across all platforms.

Similarly, in this digital age the continued success of the services sector is crucial to any ambitions that the UK may have for its broadcast industries. There is an innate understanding of emerging technologies, digital workflows and creative know-how within the services sector which means it has an ever increasing role to play in every facet of the production of the audio visual image regardless of the final viewing screen.

The symbiotic relationship that exists between broadcasters, production companies and the services sector has to be strengthened considerably if we are to sustain and improve upon, the quality, richness and diversity of public service broadcasting.

Response to Consultation

The consultation questions as drafted do not directly relate to the services sector however any review of public service broadcasting would be incomplete without due consideration for the deeper supply chain which supports it.

We believe it is in the public interest for PSBs to create the right business environment in which independent facility companies can flourish on the basis that a healthy and vibrant services sector is imperative to deliver public service purpose.

Government intervention to make PSB accountable to its domestic supplier basis would do much to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the UK's facilities and service infrastructure.

- **Commitment to procure indigenous facilities and services**

We whole-heartedly agree that UK originated output is fundamental to the delivery of public service broadcasting purpose. The reported £300m fall in spending in real terms on new original UK programming between 2003 and 2007 is alarming and if this trend continues unabated it will be to the great detriment of public service broadcasting and the UK's vital infrastructure of the screen and wider creative industries.

By extension UK originated output is almost by definition best serviced by the domestic facilities sector.

This is especially true in the case of high profile, high budget landmark productions which deploy the latest technologies and have international appeal and thus showcase the very best of British broadcasting.

A set policy from PSB to its supplier base would create a high degree of certainty, building market confidence and enabling facility companies to take informed business decisions particularly with regard to future investments in technology.

Fundamentally we believe that the demand from PSB should fairly promote the domestic services infrastructure. The nature of the sector is such that it has to constantly evolve pushing the boundaries of what's possible both creatively and technically. Without this core demand for services its scope is limited and it will become increasingly difficult for the sector to remain abreast of world-wide industry developments which in turn will comprise its ability to compete internationally.

Consequently, within the PSB framework there should be sufficient scope to encourage PSBs to facilitate an increase in bids for work by independent facilities and services in the commission of UK originated output.

- **Independent production quotas linked to the procurement of indigenous facilities and services**

In setting independent production quotas for PSBs Ofcom has taken great strides to nurture and safeguard the independent production sector however there is no corollary for the independent facilities sector.

We urge Ofcom to consider the introduction of a facilities quota which would simply mirror those set for independent production and thus ensure all interests are aligned.

Furthermore, we believe that only productions that have procured domestic facilities and services should qualify as UK independents for the purposes of satisfying any PSB production quotas.

- **Regional production quotas linked to the procurement of local facilities and services**

There are vibrant clusters of facilities and service companies throughout the UK which have grown around production centres. As above, we advocate that only those productions that have procured services within the region should qualify for the purposes of satisfying any PSB regional production quotas.

By way of summary, the services sector is diverse in its activities however much of its success is dependent on a small number of factors namely: its ability to evolve with and exploit the structural changes in the UK broadcast and production landscape; its international competitiveness in the face of challenges for work from other countries; its ability to maintain investment in new technologies, state of the art facilities and staff training; its ability to exploit new technologies, to innovate and to develop new working practices which add significant value to production.

The new PSB framework can positively influence the business environment in which facilities companies operate and in doing so this will enhance their own public broadcasting purpose.

Yours sincerely

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Chief Executive