

## WGGB and ALCS Save Channel 4 briefing

### About us

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) is a trade union representing professional writers in TV, film, theatre, radio, books, comedy, poetry, animation, and videogames. Our members also include emerging and aspiring writers. It negotiates national agreements on pay and conditions with key industry bodies, including BBC, ITV and Pact, the Royal Court, National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company.

The Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society is a not-for-profit organisation for the benefit of all kinds of writers. Set up in 1977 and owned by its writer members, ALCS collects money due for licensed secondary uses of authors' work and currently has over 115,000 members. At Westminster, it also provides secretariat support for the All Party Writers Group (APWG).

### The Channel 4 model – sustainable and working

- Channel 4 does not cost UK taxpayers a single penny, generating its income from advertising. Its digital advertising revenues have doubled since 2016 and alone make up 17% of revenues.
- The current model ensures that all surplus revenue (recently recorded at £74 million and a projected revenue of £1bn in 2021) is reinvested into UK television production. A change of ownership would result in money being taken out of the UK market and given to shareholders, potentially outside of the UK.
- In 2020 it recorded 1.25bn streams of its content and at a time when there is increased competition for the vital youth market, 80% of UK 16 – 24-year-olds are signed up to the All4 platform.

### Channel 4 and levelling up, the value of Channel 4 to the nations and regions

- Channel 4's continued presence in Leeds, Bristol and Glasgow is essential as it makes a vital contribution to levelling up the regions and nations of the UK. In the past 10 years Channel 4 has invested over £1.5bn in the industry outside of London.
- Channel 4's approach to spreading its operational base across the UK exemplifies the Levelling-up agenda by creating genuine local collaborations in different areas such as working with Leeds City Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Screen Yorkshire to establish a partnership board to implement a joint strategy in the area.
- Since 2015, Channel 4's training, skills and outreach work has benefited over 10,000 people including opportunities for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Channel 4 and its value to the UK Creative industry

- Channel 4 plays a central role in the financial success of the UK television and film industries, both at home and abroad, as well as the UK's creative industries, worth over £111 billion to the economy each year.
- Channel 4 has directly invested £12bn into the production sector, creating £992m+ GVA per year, and supporting over 10,600 jobs in the media supply chain.
- Channel 4 commissioning spend accounts for 15% of the production sectors' revenue, but the programmes it commissions are then sold around the world bringing further investment into the sector. The scale of this is illustrated by the fact that Channel 4 was the original commissioner of seven of the 25 best-selling UK unscripted formats around the world in 2019. Film4 films have collectively won 37 Academy Awards and 84 BAFTAs.



- Analysis has suggested that up to 60 independent companies could go out of business if Channel 4 is privatised

#### **The risks of privatisation**

- Privatisation could lead to fewer programmes being made. With owners relying on more repeats and overseas imports, which are cheaper.
- Private ownership is likely to make the channel more profit orientated and risk adverse – focusing on stories and programmes with global appeal, rather than those tailor-made for UK audiences.
- Research shows Channel 4 is consistently rated more highly than other PSBs for tackling issues others wouldn't, showing different cultures and opinions, and showing the viewpoints of minority groups. This could be lost if Channel 4 is privatised
- There are also concerns that privatisation will lead to a reduction in investment in skills and training in the creative sector – already under threat because of government changes to higher education.
- The encouragement and access for up and coming creatives in the sector has also been thwarted by the pandemic – privatisation would further impact Channel 4's ability to stimulate the talent pipeline for the next generation.

If you have any questions, please email John Sailing at the Writers Guild of Great Britain on [john@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:john@writersguild.org.uk)