



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

12 July 2021

Our Ref: HG35680/BD

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Channel 4 APPG on behalf of the group, to share our position on the future ownership of Channel 4.

The APPG on Channel 4 believes the broadcaster has a distinct and vibrant role to play in the UK's cultural landscape. We recognise the immense value a publicly owned Channel 4 brings to British society, culture, the regions, and the economy – at zero cost to the taxpayer. This radical, innovative force in UK broadcasting also has a very special, unique, and distinctive place in modern Britain.

We recognise that it is right and proper that all state assets are reviewed periodically, and we expect the Government to approach this consultation with an open-minded, transparent, and evidence-based methodology.

You have previously said that your department is “proceeding on the basis that an alternative ownership model (but one where it keeps its public service remit) may be better for the broadcaster, and better for the country.” We caution against a preferred outcome and instead call on the Government to gather and examine a broad and robust evidence case. The APPG wants to ensure the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has all the facts it needs to make an informed decision on the future of this national asset.

We urge the Government to make clear what it wants Channel 4 to deliver in the future, and given that remit, what they feel would be the best business model to achieve that. It would therefore be reasonable to expect some very sound analysis, on whether private ownership, with a profit motive, would improve or detract from Channel 4's considerable existing contribution to UK plc.

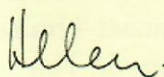
We believe there may be unforeseen costs and harms arising from privatisation which will need to be carefully considered. It could risk destabilising the national effort to build back better, disrupting the creative industries - one of the strongest parts of our economy, and damaging a Film & TV sector currently envied around the world.

We also feel strongly that the consultation should take account of Channel 4's extensive support for SMEs, levelling up on skills and apprenticeships, and investing in creative and production clusters across the regions of all four nations of our Union. A compelling and coherent case for sell-off is therefore needed before, not after, any major decisions are taken.

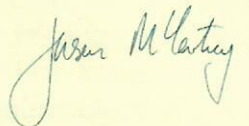
Finally, one of the Government's stated motivations for sell-off is giving Channel 4 greater 'access to capital.' We encourage you to consider the possible unintended consequences of removing publisher-broadcaster status to pursue this. Money would be taken away from small independent businesses across the UK, and instead could end up flowing out of the country and into the pockets of multinational corporations and their shareholders.

Please note, in the interests of transparency, the APPG are making this letter publicly available.

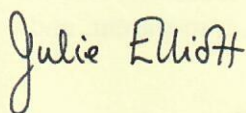
Yours sincerely



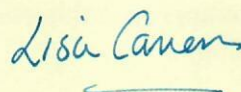
Helen Grant



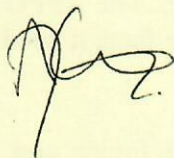
Jason McCartney



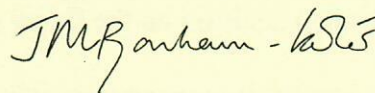
Julie Elliott



Dr Lisa Cameron



Andy Carter



Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury