



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

4th July 2022

Jean Contreant

RE: CHANNEL 4

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of Channel 4. I have read your comments on this issue with interest.

I would like to reassure you of the Government's commitment to the success and sustainability of the UK's public broadcasting system, of which Channel 4 is an integral part.

Channel 4 has been hugely successful in delivering the aims set out at its creation in 1982, including supporting the UK independent production sector; delivering diverse and risk-taking content; and contributing to the wider public goals of public service broadcasting. However, since then, the TV landscape has changed beyond recognition.

As you might be aware, Channel 4 is entirely commercially funded, but has been publicly owned since it began broadcasting. It was set up in this way principally to provide greater choice. Today though, audiences can now watch what they want, when they want, how they want, across a range of internet-enabled personal devices. The independent production sector has also grown enormously so that it now supplies content to a wide range of broadcasters and streaming services.

The Culture Secretary, the Rt. Hon Nadine Dorries MP, after public consultation, considers Government ownership to be holding Channel 4 back from competing against streaming sites such as Netflix and Amazon. Ministers believe that a change of ownership will offer Channel 4 the freedom to continue its success as a public service broadcaster long into the future.

The broadcasting white paper set out further detail on the proposals for a change of ownership of Channel 4. Under private ownership, the Government will remove a restriction on Channel 4 which effectively prohibits it from producing and selling its own content. This will allow it to diversify its revenue streams and improve its long-term sustainability. Channel 4 will still be required to commission a minimum volume of programming from independent producers, in line with the quotas placed on other public service broadcasters, to protect its contribution to the sector.

I understand, under the proposals, Channel 4's existing obligations in terms of regional production outside of London and England will be maintained, as will its remit to provide distinctive, educational, innovative and experimental programming that represents the breadth of society, and obligations to show 'original' programmes and provide high quality news and current affairs.



I am encouraged that the Culture Secretary will seek to use potential proceeds of the sale to level-up the creative sector. Investing the money into independent production and creative skills in priority parts of the country will deliver a creative dividend for all. I am glad to note that the UK film industry made more films than Hollywood in the last quarter of 2021 and with more studios opening in the UK, delivering funding will be key.

More broadly, access to capital and the freedom to make and own content are important tools Channel 4 will need to succeed in the future, create new revenue streams and compete. I share the Government's view that the required investment to do this at scale and pace is best provided under private ownership, rather than asking taxpayers to bear the associated risk.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', with a stylized flourish underneath.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**