

**COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL SELECT COMMITTEE****The future of Channel 4****CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, chaired by Lord Gilbert of Panteg, is to hold an inquiry into the future of Channel 4. The Committee invites written contributions by **Friday 17 September 2021**.

The Committee expects to hear from invited contributors in public sessions in September and October 2021.

**Aim of the inquiry**

Building on its reports *A privatised future for Channel 4?* (published July 2016) and *Public service broadcasting: as vital as ever* (published November 2019) and following the launch of the Government's consultation in July 2021, the Communications and Digital Committee wishes to look again at the remit and ownership of Channel 4.

**Background**

Channel 4 has been one of the UK's public service broadcasters since 1982. It is state-owned but run independently and on a commercial basis, with its profits being used to invest in content. Unlike the BBC and ITV, it has no in-house production arm; its programmes are all made by independent production companies, which are responsible for raising the investment required for commissions, in return for a share of the intellectual property produced.

The Communications Act 2003 defined Channel 4's remit as "the provision of a broad range of high quality and diverse programming which, in particular—

- a) demonstrates innovation, experiment and creativity in the form and content of programmes;
- b) appeals to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society;
- c) makes a significant contribution to meeting the need for the licensed public service channels to include programmes of an educational nature and other programmes of educative value; and
- d) exhibits a distinctive character."

Channel 4 Corporation also operates a portfolio of channels such as E4 and Film4. Programmes are available online through its All4 service. It transferred its national headquarters to Leeds in 2019, part of a wider project to move roles outside of London.

On 6 July 2021, the Government launched a consultation on privatising Channel 4 Corporation. The consultation paper states that privatisation is currently the Government's preferred option.

The Committee's predecessor concluded in 2016 that the risks of privatisation, both for Channel 4 and for the creative industries, outweighed any potential benefits.

## Questions

The Committee seeks responses to the following questions to form the written evidence for its report. Contributors need not address every question and experts are encouraged to focus on their specialism. Other issues may be discussed provided that their relevance is explained. Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence. However, published material may be referenced where relevant.

The Committee encourages people from all backgrounds to contribute and believes that it is particularly important to hear from groups which are often under-represented. The Committee's work is most effective when it is informed by as diverse a range of perspectives and experiences as possible.

- 1) What, if any, developments over the last five years give cause to re-evaluate the ownership of Channel 4 Corporation?
- 2) If Channel 4 Corporation were privatised, what would be the benefits? What would be the risks and to what extent could they be mitigated?
- 3) If Channel 4 were to remain in public ownership, what would be the benefits? Insofar as they are valid, how could concerns about its longer-term viability be addressed?
- 4) Should the regulation and/or remit of Channel 4 be changed, irrespective of its ownership? What would be the risks and benefits of any such changes to the UK Public Service Broadcasting system?

The committee encourages interested parties to follow the progress of the inquiry on Twitter @LordsCommsCom and at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1437/>.

## **ANNEX: GUIDANCE FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Submissions should be made through the online form at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1437/>.

Please bring this document to the attention of groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct, including those who have not previously engaged with Parliament.

**The deadline for making a written submission is 23.59 on Friday 17 September 2021.**

Concise submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered. All submissions made through the written submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email.

Submissions which are accepted by the committee as written evidence may be published online at any stage. When it is published as written evidence a submission becomes subject to parliamentary copyright and is protected by parliamentary privilege. Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence.

Once your submission has been accepted as evidence you will be notified by a further email, and at this point you may publicise or publish it yourself. In doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the committee, and you should be aware that your publication or re-publication of your evidence may not be protected by parliamentary privilege.

Personal contact details will be removed from evidence before publication, but will be retained by the Committee Office and may be used for specific purposes relating to the committee's work—for instance to seek additional information.

The committee may invite individuals and groups who have submitted written evidence, as well as others, to answer questions in a public session. These oral evidence sessions are usually held in Westminster but currently take place virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They are broadcast online and transcripts are also taken and published.

Substantive communications to the committee about the inquiry should be addressed to the clerk of the committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute a formal written submission.