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Chair: Lisa Opie
Vice Chair: Kate Lyndon

Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair
Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

23rd May 2024
By email only

Dear Chair,

Thank you for inviting me to provide oral evidence to the Committee on Tuesday, to inform your inquiry into British Film and High End TV. I welcome the Committee's recognition of the critical importance of skills to the screen sector.

I am writing to follow up on specific points that were discussed during the session and to clarify ScreenSkills' role in the two apprenticeship pilots that was raised in a subsequent Committee hearing.

ScreenSkills Pan-Industry Strategy and Governance:

- In November 2023, the Screen Sector Skills Task Force, composed of 28 organisations, recommended the creation of a pan-sector strategic body for skills, stating that a 'significantly transformed' ScreenSkills was the "lead option" to assume this role.
- When I joined ScreenSkills as CEO in mid-January, I immediately started work to transform the organisation to become this more strategic body, including initiating a governance review of ScreenSkills and starting to develop a strategy, consulting both the Skills Task Force Working Group and other senior stakeholders from across the sector to understand their priorities and concerns.
- Draft Governance recommendations were presented to the ScreenSkills Board in mid-May 2024, and we are now in the process of implementing the recommendations.
- Simultaneously, we are working on a pan-industry skills strategy, in line with the direction set by the Skills Task Force, that will define and establish the role and responsibilities of ScreenSkills as a strategic body its key functions and target operating model with clear and transparent objectives and KPIs. These objectives will set out ScreenSkills' role in supporting the sector in line with the vision for sustainable skills expressed in the Skills Task Force report. This is currently work in progress, but will be completed by the end September of this year.

In terms of pan-industry data, I would like to further clarify the answer that I gave to the committee. ScreenSkills' remit prior to the Skills Task Force Report published in November 2023 and apart from specifically-funded projects, was specifically recording data on its own activity, not the activity of the wider screen industries. As we now develop the pan-sector skills strategy, which will be underpinned by pan-sector data, ScreenSkills is investigating how best this data can be funded, collected, authenticated and shared.

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Apprenticeship Levy:

At Tuesday's session, I provided a brief overview of the key outcomes from the two Apprenticeship Levy pilots ScreenSkills ran in collaboration with industry that it managed on behalf of industry partners between January 2020 and January 2024. However, given the importance of this issue to the Committee, I thought it might be helpful to provide further details on the pilots, which have now been successfully completed, as well as the key recommendations coming from them.

- ScreenSkills has managed two pilot apprenticeships: one supported by the DCMS with Netflix, Warner Bros. Discovery, and one with DfE with Amazon Prime Video, Banijay, Freemantle, Lime Picture, Sky (with APX Content Ventures). Both of these programmes have now completed and a total of 57 apprentices were supported through them.
- Overall, the two pilots were successful in demonstrating the positive benefits offered by apprenticeships. More than three quarters of the apprentices have secured further employment and the vast majority were extremely positive of the programme itself. For example three quarters would recommend an apprenticeship in the screen industries and 85% felt that the pilots had better prepared them for employment.
- Additionally, the pilots proved effective in supporting apprentices from diverse backgrounds to gain experience and employment in film and TV production, despite having a lack of previous experience or networks.
- Based on our experience with these pilots, ScreenSkills believes that some changes are needed to apprenticeships to make them more effective in the screen industries, including:
 - Enabling the levy to be used to support a wider range and diversity of vocational on-the-job training options
 - Enabling unspent levy funding to cover additional employer costs such as paying apprentice wages for off-the-job training and leave; funding means-tested bursaries to help increase diversity of new entrants.
 - Removing the fixed minimum-length requirements of apprenticeship standards to be better aligned with the duration of training required
 - More high-quality, industry-recognised training providers by using levy funds to encourage industry and apprenticeship providers to collaborate more closely.
- Additionally, in terms of apprenticeships for the sector, ScreenSkills is the leading developer of standards and has developed 23 standards.

ScreenSkills website:

- You mentioned that you had difficulty accessing the list of 'opportunities and vacancies' available on the ScreenSkills website.
- I asked my marketing team to look into this issue as a matter of priority, as the ScreenSkills website is home to a large volume of resources, advice and opportunities on how to develop a career in the screen sector, and it is vital that we make sure these are as accessible as possible.

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- The 'vacancies' page which you referred to is our Jobs Board. This was originally created as a pilot using National Lottery funding awarded by the BFI. Since the funding ended, we have kept the Jobs Board live but are reliant on broadcasters, streamers and production companies sending through their vacancies to be published. Unfortunately, there are occasions - such as when you looked at the page - when there were no vacancies available. We will review how we manage this page and I would like to thank you for bringing this to our attention.
- The full range of opportunities we offer can be accessed via our homepage (screenskills.com), by clicking on '*View all training, events and opportunities*'. These include hundreds of opportunities (which ScreenSkills defines as a course, event or training programme) available to people across the country at all career levels, across Animation, Children's TV, Film, High-end Television and Unscripted TV. Furthermore, the website recognises a 'logged in user' and tailors the opportunities according to their career stage and sector.

Finally, I wanted to make you aware of a pilot programme that we announced earlier this week. In partnership with BBC Studios, ITV Studios and Sky, and developed in consultation with Pact, we have launched the **ScreenSkills Training Passport**. This is a significant step forward in terms of providing a record of standardised and industry-approved training that production staff and freelancers can take from one production to the next. As well as enabling employers to streamline their onboarding processes and move more quickly into production, it will provide production staff and freelancers with a single certificate that they can take from production to production.

The first productions that will be using the training include BBC Studios' *The One Show*, *Casualty* and the next series of entertainment hit *Strictly Come Dancing*; ITV Studios will begin its rollout of the pilot with MultiStory Media's current affairs shows *Tonight* and *The Martin Lewis Money Show Live Summer Special*; and it will be rolled out across a number of Sky Original productions this summer. This programme is an example of the important role that ScreenSkills can play in convening the industry to provide a joined-up, consistent approach to training and skills.

As the Committee has heard, the current, fragmented skills landscape is a key challenge for the screen sector, and so greater collaboration and coordination are vital if we are to fulfil our growth potential. As an organisation that is industry-funded and led, operating across the whole of the UK, ScreenSkills is uniquely placed to deliver this - and my vision as Chief Executive is to make ScreenSkills the true Skills Champion for the whole sector.

I hope that this letter helps to clarify some of the questions that were asked during the Committee meeting, and if you would like any further information on any of these issues please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely,



Laura Mansfield
Chief Executive, ScreenSkills