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

6 December 2025

Dear Dame Caroline,

Industry investment in skills and training to ensure the UK screen sector prospers

Thank you for your letter (19 November) with a data request regarding investment in skills as part of your ongoing committee inquiry into British Film and High-End Television. We do not publish the specific type of data you have requested which we regard as commercially confidential.

However, as I made clear in the oral evidence session, skills and training for our sector is crucial to ensure that the UK continues to be a global hub for film and TV production. This is particularly important for Paramount as the producer of global film and HETV in the UK and the operator of Public Service Broadcaster (PSB), Channel 5.

Industry is making significant efforts to close skills gaps and make the sector more accessible to people through training and talent development programmes. The 2022 BFI Skills Review suggested that, if production spend were to continue to increase at recent levels, in order to meet future demand industry-wide spend equivalent to 1% of total UK production budgets must be spent on skills and training. I assume this is the reference point for your data request.

Many in our sector believed the subsequent focus on the 1% oversimplified the challenges facing the sector to a matter of monetary spend and not how industry should better coordinate its investment in training to create the most impact. Positively, the report stimulated the creation of the Screen Skills Taskforce, overseen by the BFI, which was funded by Paramount along with industry colleagues to ask two key questions: 1) how much are we actually spending on skills, and 2) what does a unified strategy for skills development across the screen sector look like. In November 2023, the Taskforce found that industry is already exceeding the suggested 1% of content spend on skills and training. It set out a vision for a sustainable, inclusive, and diverse workforce emphasising collaboration, strategic investment, and taking a long-term approach building the workforce our sector needs. This vision is in the process of being implemented.

More specific to Paramount, we continue to ensure that where possible we leverage our investment to benefit the sector as a whole - either through working with expert third-party bodies in our sector, or directly engaging with our production partners to improve access and skills development. Paramount Pictures remains the only US studio to have committed to achieving the BFI's Diversity and Inclusion Standards for all its features produced in the UK – the standards have specific requirements for skills and training. For example, on our recent feature *Bob Marley: One Love* we worked with the Mama Youth Project to provide a trainee scheme for individuals from under-represented backgrounds. Further, Paramount Pictures has a good track record working with creators whose path into our industry is not through formal training programmes – notably the directors RapMan (Blue Story, 2019) and Adam Deacon (Sumotherhood, 2023).

Through our stewardship of Channel 5, we are also involved in crucial skills development for film and TV through the wider broadcasting ecology. PSBs, including Channel 5, are integral to skills development, as many writers, actors and directors will learn and hone their craft on UK soaps, documentary, drama, children's TV, and daytime series before subsequently working in film or HETV. Channel 5's strategy to significantly increase its drama output has created a new pipeline for talent development that will directly support future inward investment to the UK. Channel 5 commissions approximately 400 UK productions each year (up from 200 a decade ago) and last year worked with 73 independent production companies.

Despite Channel 5's relative scale in comparison to the other PSBs, reinvestment of revenues back into original content is exceptionally high despite it being a commercially run broadcaster, with one of the highest reinvestment rates of the PSBs at over 60%. We are also investing in the sustainability of smaller players in the industry, who themselves participate in skills development – more than 50% of the production companies Channel 5 works with are SMEs.

I am confident that the progress made over the past two years by the screen sector will ensure that we build a more diverse and resilient workforce to support further growth of the UK creative industries. We have been buoyed by the current administration's continued commitment to tax reliefs, proposed reform of the apprenticeships levy, and inclusion of the creative industries within its Industrial Strategy.

Best wishes,

M. Simmons.

Mitchell Simmons
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