

Rachel Drummond-Hay, Director, Drummer TV—written evidence (FCF0005)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into the future of Channel 4

I co-own a double BAFTA and multi award winning independent TV production company based in Bristol with my business partner Tamsin Summers.

I wanted to put forward my personal concerns about the idea of selling Channel 4. I co-own an independent TV production company with a turn-over just under £2 million. We employ about 20 full time staff and an additional 30-50 freelancers each year, and we also do a huge amount of training at all levels. We make a range of programmes (mainly factual) for broadcasters including Channel 4, CBBC, BBC, Channel 5 and BSLBT - the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust.

When me and my partner started the company 10 years ago, it was Channel 4 that gave us a grant to help us in our first year - we had no investment and were unusual in that we were run by two women. It was this grant that enabled us to gain our first BBC commission - and from that we've grown. Two years ago, we supported two Black film makers in setting up their production company called Blak Wave - this was our way of giving back the support Channel 4 gave to us. Channel 4 have gone on to be incredibly supportive to Blak Wave - the first Black owned TV production company in the SW.

Channel 4 have given us commissions over the years which have been a backbone of our growth and development. Their model of commissioning means they are able to genuinely help support and grow start-up/small and diverse companies - as well as make big hitting shows with established super indies. This keeps the market fresh. Taking that commissioning away would have a serious impact on the independent sector who relies upon commissions from Channel 4 and BBC. Without Channel 4, many smaller Indies will fold.

We hire many diverse employees - both BAME and disabled. We also train staff at all levels - currently with trainees directly (financially) supported by Channel 4 and working on Channel 4 productions. These people go on to be vital talent for the likes of Netflix/ITV/Channel 5 - without the support from Channel 4 our training would slip away as we couldn't afford to train at the level we do .

We make programmes for BSLBT - a Deaf broadcaster - who is again supported by Channel 4. It is Channel 4 who provide the biggest platform to showcase their work, giving Deaf audiences a platform to watch programmes in BSL (British Sign Language). If Channel 4 is sold I worry about the future of BSLBT who, are the only commissioners funding programmes in BSL.

As I understand it, Channel 4 isn't drawing on the public purse - it is financially stable - but once sold it will be gone forever. The work that the Channel does outside of commissioning is extensive and really has a huge positive impact on the independent production sector. The government seem to be trying to push

this sale through between the end of the Summer recess and start of Party conferences and I question why it needs to be so speedy – the idea of a sale has already been looked at in the past and it was agreed at that time as not the best way forward.

I'm certainly not an expert on the detail of the sale - but do feel passionately about the value of Channel 4 continuing as it is, and **not** being sold to a commercial entity. The value of the Channel goes far beyond the making of programmes - the impact of growing new talent and growing new production companies, as well as supporting diversity and new voices is of huge importance to the TV industry as a whole - and goes a huge way to providing the future talent for the likes of Netflix and Amazon Prime. We would be lost in Bristol without them - and as a Company owner I can't stress enough how important Channel 4 is to us.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

September 2021