

**Angus Macqueen, Director, Ronachan Films—written evidence
(FCF0008)**

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

I am a direct product of the independent TV community created by Channel 4 in the 1980s, have worked in the sector for over 30 years. My company continues to do so, feeding off the unique regulatory environment created by the existence of both the BBC and Channel 4. For all the new broadcasting and streaming environment that will in the end ask serious questions of the BBC license fee, I do not see how they undermines Channel 4's ability to continue to function and flourish as an independent broadcast force in Britain.

The way in which Channel 4 created and nurtured the Independent sector in Britain is well known history and does not need repeating, nor does the fact that it has succeeded consistently in speaking to and for communities that feel excluded from the tone of the grand BBC behemoth. The unique genius of the British regulatory environment has been the different shapes of the Public Service broadcasters – and in the case of Channel 4, it costs neither the viewer nor the state a penny.

What does need repeating is the way in which Channel 4 has over the past four decades shown the BBC the way forward. This has been both editorially by challenging and reshaping the BBC's attitude to the public it serves, and commercially by teaching the naturally insular BBC how to deal with the outside world of independent creativity. That is a process that is constant and certainly not complete. If Channel 4 is privatised, I believe it will deeply damage the future shape, creativity and behaviour of the BBC.

What also needs stressing is that Channel 4 has played and continues to play such an important role in making Britain perhaps the industrial and creative hub of television round the world. In my sphere that means factual programming. Huge organisations are by nature risk averse, both creatively and financially as I have experienced throughout my career. Channel 4's very size, in this world of streaming giants and the BBC, gives it the fleetness of foot and ability to explore and fail and then reshape ideas. Risk taking is at the centre of its remit, one it has not always lived up to, but the Channel has certainly done huge amounts to keep Britain's tv at the cutting edge globally. Creativity is a process that flourishes when nurtured.

If Channel 4 loses its financial independence and is purchased by an international conglomerate as would seem likely, whatever the PSB regulations imposed on the purchaser, this ability to seed and nurture risk and innovation will undoubtedly be severely curtailed. Big multi-nationals are not designed to nurture. In my case that seeding has brought millions of dollars, euros, yen and yuan into the British economy, even as a very small part of the astonishing concentration of global factual programming that comes out of the UK. Produced by brilliant people yes, but the product of our unique competitive domestic broadcasting environment.

The impact for Britain will not just be financial. Channel 4 has played a central role in building the UK's soft power around the world and creating the reality of Britain as a global cultural force. Clearly the BBC with its scale is a leader, but again and again Channel 4 has punched well above its weight around the world, in news and documentary as well as films. Witness the way it is has helped transformed attitudes here and globally to the Paralympics.

There is no question in my mind that Channel 4 can continue to play this role. Please do not strangle this critical element in our cultural diversity.

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