



# Introduction

by

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The BFI's role is to look to the future. That's exactly what we have been doing over the last year by listening carefully to really valuable feedback and learning from thousands of people across the UK, at roadshows, roundtables and through our online survey. Thank you for being involved. As some great futurists have put it: smart people don't predict the future, they shape it.

We are excited to present here our five-year plan which builds on Film Forever, our previous strategy. It is designed to help shape the BFI's next chapter for film, television, animation and the moving image generally, so we can seize all the opportunities, expected and unexpected, artistic and economic, that this dynamic arena offers.

We are keenly aware that our contribution is a relatively modest part of the overall landscape. Our role is one of enabler, investing where we can most make a difference and where we can be a supportive catalyst for change. We will always choose to do this

in partnership, and we would like to thank our key partners who have worked so hard with us to shape this next chapter.

Today filmmakers are drawn to experimenting across a whole new array of screens and technologies and across the non-linear, interactive world. The opportunity for the BFI to support risk taking to influence this artistic evolution has never been so exciting. This broadening of cultural focus will be visible in all we do, as we set out in the next five years to inspire excellence, to ignite creativity, and to expand and deepen enjoyment of the moving image for all of us.

The BFI's cultural programme is the foundation of all our work, enriched through partnering with the other great film centres across the UK and abroad. In this strategy we will be advocating harder than ever for film to be central to all our cultural lives, and contributing culturally to the places where we live; empowering the next generation of creative people;

and being at the forefront of international cultural diplomacy.

Film, television, animation, and the moving image are thriving, and after nearly a decade of growth and critical success, this isn't a flash in the pan. The UK is the destination of choice because we can boast a proven outstanding skilled workforce with a solid international reputation for getting the job done. Confidence can be measured by the private sector capital investments in new infrastructure across the UK from London to Yorkshire to Northern Ireland. The sustained Government commitment to the sector, not least through the screen sector tax reliefs, ensures the UK's competitiveness as a business destination. Together film, animation, television and games make a significant contribution to the economy. But we cannot afford to be complacent. There is growing international competition, and in the post-referendum world we know we have to up our game to sustain and grow further the UK's position.

There is overwhelming evidence of our creativity capturing global attention. From Ken Loach and Andrea Arnold being feted at Cannes, through films such as Bridget Jones's Baby capturing the hearts and minds of audiences worldwide. While recognising the successes, we are aware that British film's future is a complex one of great potential but also many challenges. For many UK filmmakers it can feel like tough going. There are genuine questions for us to consider about how independent British film can be supported to take advantage of its creative success to scale up and better compete in what should be an age of opportunity. Future economic value will come from more and better UK content being created, owned and then exported by UK businesses.

We see it as a central purpose to work with the Government, PACT, FDA, UKCA and others to take every opportunity to ensure a stronger future for UK filmmakers.

And there are risks. A recent BFI taskforce found significant obstacles for those who choose to pursue a career in the film industry, and diversity in the workforce is poor. So we are missing out on the talent and creative potential of a great number of young people that we really need for the future.

Creating opportunity will be the key focus across every single layer of the BFI's activity in this next period as we want it to be easy for everyone to

participate, no matter what their background, gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation or geographic location. We will be launching, with Creative Skillset, a new ten-year skills framework with recommendations that tackle the double imperative of diversity and future skills needs. In the case of skills, social mobility will be of paramount importance. It is our intention to work with all producers active in the UK to create the right conditions so that every production in the UK can voluntarily adopt the BFI Diversity Standards.

For the sector to really flourish, we need to recognise and promote the wealth of talent and creativity from across the whole of the UK, in addition to London. We plan to support further the other emerging centres that have the commitment, leadership and ambition to develop into creative screen clusters of international influence. Our aim is that by the end of this strategy some 25 per cent of our production funding will be devolved to these clusters. We are also creating a new pilot Enterprise Fund providing repayable working capital for small and medium-sized enterprises working in the riskier areas of innovation across the screen industries.

During our UK-wide roadshows, there was a constant call, particularly in England, for greater BFI visibility and for the BFI to advocate more effectively on devolved and regional issues. During Film Forever our work with partners in the Film Audience Network, such as Home in Manchester, Watershed in Bristol, Chapter in Cardiff and Queens Film Theatre in Belfast, has been particularly important. In this strategy we will be devolving more decision-making and funding to key partners in this network and working with them to strengthen the BFI presence outside London.

Globally, the screen industries are evolving at speed, with exciting new markets emerging. The international sales and distribution sector is in the midst of huge disruption and change. We know that ensuring the best possible outcome for film following the upheaval of the European referendum will be a major priority for the BFI, one which will entail new resource and expertise, as well as renewed energy to flourish in markets outside the EU.

We are ambitious for the future and want to show the world that the UK means business. British film and television are celebrated the world over **and deserve a national home, now more than ever**. Every other major art form has its own place, and the BFI now

has a stunning opportunity, having acquired a site, to create a national film centre. This new film centre will embody our optimism, confidence and excitement about the UK's leading role in the future of film, at home and abroad. It will create a place that inspires the next generation of filmmakers and audiences, where everyone can discover and explore the magic and wonder of film – past, present and future. The UK is currently enjoying an explosion of creativity and, with its film centre ambitions, the BFI is poised to take advantage of all this potential.

## WHAT WE MEAN BY 'FILM'

Our aim is to inspire excellence across the range, depth and diversity of the moving image, in ways that pique and support creativity, can augment experience, enrich cultural context, and create contemporary relevance.

Filmmakers and creatives are leading the development of the art form across high-end television, 3D and virtual reality, while simultaneously, in a digitally dominated world, others are fighting for the artistic freedom to continue working with original analogue materials.

Those working in video games are seeking to evolve the grammar of filmmaking to push the boundaries of the moving image into the interactive world.

For the future, (and throughout this strategy) 'film' will mean anything that tells a story, expresses an idea or evokes an emotion through the art of the moving image, whilst honouring the platform for which the work was intended.

We will support the continued experimentation, innovation and development of the art of the moving image, whether for the big or small screen, whether delivered in a linear or interactive form. We will introduce greater flexibility in our funding criteria to encourage innovation in moving image. We will expand further the sphere of our cultural programme and the expertise of those who deliver it.

## WHAT WE MEAN BY DIVERSITY

Diversity is good for creativity, supports economic growth, taps into under-served audiences and makes good business sense.

That's why our definition of diversity is to recognise and acknowledge the quality and value of difference. We believe that in order to have a healthy, world-class, and resilient film culture and industry we need to showcase, invest in and present the best talent we have in the UK. This means that diversity needs to sit at the heart of our decision-making.

We want to make it easy for everyone to engage with film and the moving image, no matter what their gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, social background or geographic location. The BFI is committed to promoting a wider range of voices in British film, both in front of and behind the camera. We believe this is an industry-wide challenge and an industry-wide responsibility, and the introduction of the BFI Diversity Standards was an important early initiative that signalled our commitment to achieving real change.

True diversity means a film culture that stretches across the UK in a meaningful way – and that's far from where we are today. We can be proud of the internationally recognised expertise in our capital city. But when voices from all the regions and Nations of the UK are not properly represented, that is detrimental to UK film as a whole.

In this strategy we will do all we can to bring forward the next generation of British talent, to spread opportunity where it might not exist, to make career progression as easy as possible and to make sure doors are opened where they might appear closed. We will be asking all our funded partners to work with us to advocate hard for the BFI Diversity Standards to be adopted and celebrated across the whole industry.

Alongside Creative Skillset, we will lead an overhaul of skills and training, working with Government, the devolved administrations and industry for a proper professional skills framework that has the specific aim of removing barriers. Our Black Star programme is a demonstration of how we will curate our cultural programmes to influence a change in perspective.

## WHAT WE MEAN BY UK-WIDE OPPORTUNITY

This strategy makes a major commitment to devolving more decision-making and funding opportunities to the English regions and the Nations. During our UK-wide roadshows, there was frequent call for the BFI to be more directly involved, to add support at a local level and advocate more effectively on devolved and regional issues.

While London is – and will remain – one of the most successful global centres, the greatest opportunity and imperative for the future is to focus on supporting the development of additional internationally ambitious, economic and cultural centres across the whole of the UK. We anticipate that our Creative Clusters Challenge fund will lead to the identification of one or two priority international clusters for the future, and we commit to working with partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnerships, with specific incentivisation funding to support production, skills, enterprise and business development.

We will be passing greater devolution of decision-making and funding to our partners across the Film Audience Network, using the existing infrastructure to keep overheads as efficient as possible. We will also be working with them to increase the number of funding access points for future filmmakers, who naturally congregate around these cultural hubs, as well as working more directly with locally based production companies so that their professional ears and eyes can better augment opportunity across the UK.

We introduce a new funding initiative providing repayable working capital to support enterprise and higher risk innovation projects in smaller companies working across the screen industries. The British Film Commission will lead on developing a new UK-wide strategy for film and screen production services to include and encourage individual city screen agencies alongside the services in the Nations, as part of our ambition that the UK is the best place in the world to make film.

We want to be more visible across the UK, working with our partners to advocate for film, television and moving image culture to be at the heart of the new devolved strategies and funding plans, as well as shouting louder about their achievements in Westminster. To do this we commit to BFI personnel

across England, and closer working with LEPs, education institutions, councils and creative agencies in each of the Nations. There will also be trustee positions on the BFI board reserved for individuals who bring a particular understanding of film in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.