



CITIZENS' PSM FORUM BRIEFING NOTE MEDIA BILL May 2024

The Citizens' PSM Forum comprises British civil society organisations which believe that high quality media, and Public Service Broadcasting specifically, make a valuable contribution to UK democracy, society, culture and the welfare of its citizens. More information about the membership of the Forum can be found [here](#). The Forum welcomes the Media Bill but we have some concerns. This briefing provides an overview of these concerns.

The PSB Remit

The Forum's primary concern about the wording of the Media Bill is that it removes existing provisions in Section 264 of the 2003 Communications Act which require the Public Service Broadcasters to provide content in specified genres which is considered societally valuable.

While we welcomed the Government's addition of a clause to require a 'range of appropriate genres' from the Public Service Broadcasters, we do not believe this is adequate to either ensure proper understanding of what constitutes Public Service Media or ensure it is monitored properly by Ofcom.

We recommend that much of the wording from Section 264 of the Communications Act should be retained, specifying genres and other societally valuable aspects of content, so that Ofcom will be statutorily required to report on the delivery of such content. If these details are not included on the face of the Bill, Ofcom will not be required to continue to measure such content.

We welcome and endorse [Viscount Colville's Amendment](#) specifying the genres which should be required by the PSB Remit, as well as [Baroness Bull's amendment](#) requiring high general standards of content.

Additional Concerns

Discoverability of PSB content

We recommend that greater clarification is required regarding PSB content being 'made available' and 'easily discoverable'. We do not consider 'an appropriate degree' of prominence in Clause 28, page 42, line 26 of the Bill to be adequately clear. We consider a 'significant' or 'substantial' prominence would better indicate Parliament's wish to ensure prominence for PSB. We welcome Amendments tabled to date to support this approach including those tabled by [Baroness Grey Thompson](#) and [Baroness Featherstone](#).

Channel 4 Support for SMEs

While we welcome the increase in Channel 4's independent production quota to 35% we believe that Channel 4's founding mission to support new and emerging independent producers should be reinforced in legislation. We support the [Amendment by Viscount Colville](#) that a new 'SME Guarantee' should be included in Channel 4's quotas, requiring that 35% of its commissioning spend goes to producers with annual turnovers less than £25m.

On-Demand Coverage of Listed Events

We believe the Listed Events regime needs to include digital rights, so that citizens will have guaranteed access to time-shifted content on the PSB VOD platforms. This recommendation was made by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee but has not been accepted by the Government which is still considering this issue. We support the [Amendment on this issue tabled by Baroness Grey Thompson](#).

Workplace Diversity

The Forum considers that greater efforts should be made to ensure workforce diversity and equal opportunities. We therefore welcome the [Amendment by Baroness Bonham Carter](#) to introduce a requirement for the PSBs to publish objectives on the promotion of diversity and equality among the workforce and for Ofcom to monitor and report on PSB performance on meeting this requirement.

Children's content

Children's content is required in the Bill, however we welcome [Baroness Benjamin's Amendment](#) which would require that Government conducts a review into how to ensure children have access to culturally relevant and age-appropriate original UK content. This is especially important given that the next generation of adults viewing habits are changing more quickly than any other age group.

Signatories

Better Media	https://bettermedia.uk/
Decentered Media	https://decentered.co.uk/
The British Broadcasting Challenge	https://britishbroadcastingchallenge.com/
The Campaign for the Arts	https://www.campaignforthearts.org/
The Children's Media Foundation	https://www.thechildrensmediafoundation.org/
The International Broadcasting Trust	https://www.ibt.org.uk/
The Media Reform Coalition	https://www.mediareform.org.uk/
The National Council of Women	https://ncwgb.org/
The Sandford St Martin Trust	https://sandfordawards.org.uk/
The UK Coalition for Cultural Diversity	https://ukccd.org/
The Voice of the Listener & Viewer	https://www.vlv.org.uk/

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