

Press release: £60 million competition to find the next Grange Hill, Peppa Pig and Byker Grove

Minister for Digital Margot James has today announced that the Contestable Fund which aims to halt the decline of UK produced children's content and reverse the growing trend of airing repeats, will also include:

More support for programming in indigenous UK languages such as Welsh and Gaelic;

A multi-million pound boost for commercial radio; and

A special fund to help fledgling production companies develop and pitch their original ideas to make them a reality

In December 2017 plans for a pilot fund were announced and following further engagement with industry including broadcasters, producers and other interested parties [the final elements of the initiative have been unveiled today](#).

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

Young people in the UK deserve high quality content that entertains, informs and reflects their experiences growing up across the country today.

The UK broadcasting and production sectors are world renowned, and a success story to be proud of. This innovative project is an instrumental part of our support for the UK's vibrant media sector and will help it continue to go from strength to strength.

Production levels of new children's content have declined over the past decade, with public service broadcasters spending roughly 40% less than they did in 2006. As a result a significant amount of children's programming on children's channels now consist of repeats.

In 2016, 98% of children's content on commercial children's channels and 91% on public service broadcasters were repeats. To directly combat this decline in content for younger people in the UK, £57 million will be invested in to a Young Audiences Content Fund, administered by the BFI. This will focus on funding a new influx of creative and distinctive content that represent UK children and teenagers today. Five per cent of the Young Audiences fund will support production companies develop their ideas.

Additional features of the £60 million Contestable Fund include a welcome boost to indigenous UK languages programming, with an aim to invest five per cent of the total fund on this.

Ben Roberts, Director of Lottery Film Fund, BFI said:

We're excited to be working with Government to deliver the new Young Audiences Content Fund to help support UK companies to create exciting and distinctive new programmes for young people. It goes hand-in-hand with the BFI's own mission to connect audiences with the widest possible range of content. We look forward to making the most of this new opportunity to back talent to create bold and original programming and expand the choices available for young people.

John McVay OBE, Chief Executive of PACT said:

Pact welcomes the contestable fund pilot and is pleased that the government has listened to industry feedback to help shape the fund. Pact championed the need for development funding and the focus on children's content and is pleased this has been recognised. This will help bring new voices into the industry and people's lives.

Also announced today as part of the Contestable Fund is a £3m Audio Content Fund which will encourage greater innovation and experimentation in the commercial radio sector.

Currently, examples of public service content (aside from national and local news) on commercial radio are rare due to commercial pressures. By removing the necessity for commercial stations and producers to seek as much sponsorship and advertising revenue, the fund will provide significant support to radio producers to try something different, particularly with new voices who do not have an established relationship with broadcasters and therefore access to funding.

Will Jackson, Managing Director of AudioUK, said:

We are delighted that the government accepted our case for an audio element to this fund. This will create many exciting new partnerships between commercial radio and audio producers, and increase the number of diverse new voices both on and off-air. The many production companies based around the UK will be keen to take this new opportunity to make high-quality public service radio content for a range of stations.

Siobhan Kenny, Chief Executive at Radiocentre, said:

"Commercial radio stations are always looking at new ways to serve their listeners, but sometimes the financial reality makes it

difficult to do everything they would like. The Audio Content Fund has the potential to provide a significant boost in public service content for audiences, as well as a great opportunity for commercial radio broadcasters to broaden the range of output they provide.”

Further guidance, including how to apply to both of the funds, will be published by the fund administrators in the new year. The pilot will then be open for applications in April 2019.

Notes to Editors

- The Government has today outlined the final scope of the Contestable Fund in a [policy paper](#).
- The BBC is now the dominant buyer and broadcaster of UK children’s content, accounting for 87% of all first-run UK originated children’s programming by public service broadcasters. Whilst the BBC already shows high quality content through CBBC and CBeebies, this fund aims to increase plurality and support new voices, ideas, and content on a broader range of channels and platforms.
- PACT is the trade association representing the commercial interests of UK independent television, film, digital, children’s and animation media companies.
- The Young Audiences Content Fund will be administered by the BFI. The Audio Content Fund will be administered by an independent not-for-profit organisation created by Radiocentre and AudioUK.

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of UK and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class filmmakers in the UK – investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting UK film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm’s-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.