

Kirsty Johnson
Ofcom

22nd March 2019

Dear Kirsty Johnson

I am writing this letter in response to the consultation on “Made Outside London”. As the Mayor of the West Midlands I am committed to supporting the region’s creative sector and there are some fantastic Film and TV creators in the region such as Ragdoll, 7 Wonder, Fish in a Bottle, Maverick TV, Full Fat TV, Zebra Digital, North One and many more.

These firms have been thriving despite the lack of structure by our broadcasters in the region. Although we have BBC 3 in the region, it does not compare to the huge spending by broadcasters in London, Manchester and Bristol.

Every nation and region now retains at least roughly half of its licence fee, except one. The Midlands only keeps 8.5% of the £942 million raised from the region's licence fee payers. Were the BBC to invest the average they spend on network television spending across the rest of the UK in this region, they’d have spent £430.7 million instead of the £26 million making network television across the Midlands.

While just 1.5% of the budget is spent in the Midlands, the BBC sends 19.7% of its programming budget spent to the North and 49.4% in London. This cannot be right.

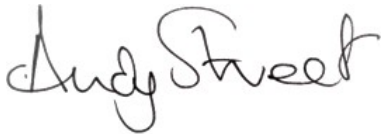
The BBC states that every pound it spends generates another pound in the local economy and that as a publicly funded organisation it has an important role to play in rebalancing the economy overall. By spending so little in the Midlands the BBC puts us at a serious disadvantage in terms of jobs, skills retention and developing a thriving Film & TV sector.

Despite a heartfelt and professional campaign from the industry, local politicians and diverse creatives from the region, Channel 4 decided to go to Leeds instead of choosing to make a difference in the Midlands. The reason given was the strength of the industry in the West Midlands.

I acknowledge that there is more that can be done by the Combined Authority and its partners and certainly we are rising to the challenge through our Local Industrial Strategy and by delivering the DCMS Creative Industries scale up programme, but it is difficult when broadcasters don’t invest in the region. Commissioning in the region is critical to sustaining a thriving talent pool across all the careers in the creative sector.

I hope this consultation will show the strength of feeling around this subject and I hope many people from the Midlands have made the point that we are at a significant disadvantage. It is definitely time to make more outside London. It is time to make in the West Midlands.

Yours sincerely



Andy Street
Mayor of the West Midlands