

March 1st 2019

Dear Kirsty,

I am writing as chair of the Royal Television Society North East and the Border Annual Awards event and as pro vice chancellor of the University of Sunderland which has a successful media production and journalism school.

I am writing in support for the Indie Club submission to the OFCOM consultation on the 'Review of Regional TV Production and Programming Guidance'.

The television industry was once a thriving part of the North East economy. But since 2005, there has been a steady decline in the number of independent production companies operating in the region. The trend over the past 25 years to centralise production and commissioning in London has resulted in the main public service broadcasters (BBC and ITV) having only a small presence left in the region.

It is very important that the legislation in the Communications Act 2003, which demands that the Public Service Broadcasters invest in production centres around the UK is thoroughly regulated – especially as London has become such a dominant force in the sector.

OFCOM's review is very thorough and welcomed. The Oliver & Ohlbaum 'Regionality trends within the UK production sector' September 2018 is particularly useful. The table on page 16 illustrates that PSB spending outside London has dropped after a long period of growth and 57% of investment in the last two recorded years (2016 and 2017) has gone to the capital. We want to see that trend reverse.

I support the Indie Club and other interested groups who are keen to ensure the regulation for Made Outside London programmes levels the playing field, and results in more job opportunities in places like the North East of England.

So many colleagues based in this region spend so much of their time working in London. Working at the production hub in Manchester/Salford is actually no easier. It takes as long to get to Salford from Newcastle as it does to get to central London. A more level playing field which recognises the need for productions located outside London to also have their post-production outside London, would be a welcome strengthening of the out of London policy. It would also be good news for the many graduates from North East universities who feel they must move to London to further their careers in the content production and broadcasting industries.

Yours sincerely,

Graeme Thompson
Pro Vice-Chancellor
University of Sunderland