

SUBMISSION FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF FILM AND TELEVISION
PRACTITIONERS SCOTLAND AND TOMMYGORMLEY

Dear Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee,

First of all, we wish to thank you for the diligence of your questioning of the witnesses at the meeting on the Creative Industries on 10th February 2016.

AFTPS is appalled with the evasive manner in which the witnesses answered the questions. As Richard Lyle MSP rightly pointed out they were “passing the parcel” with answers.

In your report one of your key recommendations was for Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise to work together to serve the industry:

“76. The separate and distinct remits of Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland are acting as a barrier to working cohesively to effectively support the film industry. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government provides direction to Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland to work in partnership in order to support the economic and cultural needs of the film industry, and reviews their performance annually against a specific performance indicator.”

AFTPS believes that Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise are monumentally failing the industry that they are charged to support.

Every other nation in the UK and indeed most countries globally have a dedicated Screen Agency to encourage growth in the sector due to the economic significance of the screen industries.

The Scottish industry would be better served with a dedicated screen agency and the evidence for this can be seen in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Film and TV sector is unique and needs an agency geared to its specific needs. Some Screen agencies also support the games sector. The new Scottish Screen Agency needs to be autonomous and report direct to the Scottish Government.

Attached [Annexed] is a letter from one of our Members, Tommy Gormley that we would like to submit as evidence to support our argument.

Tommy is originally from Glasgow and, although he now has to work outwith Scotland, he returns regularly and attends industry social events. He is a BAFTA winner and his recent films include Star Wars, Mission Impossible, and the two recent Star Trek films.

His latest film is Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens, in which he was First Assistant Director and Co-Producer, had a budget of \$200 million, and has grossed just under \$2 billion to date in box office returns. It is expected to become the

highest grossing film of all time. He is currently directing and producing a film with fellow countryman, Dougray Scott.

You can find further details of Tommy Gormley's career here:

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0331166/>

If the Committee deems it appropriate, our chairman Alan J. Wands, along with Fiona Gavin and Stephen Burt of AFTPS are available to give evidence.

Alan Wands, known universally as Willy Wands, has thirty years' experience as a producer both in Scotland and internationally and can give an insight into missed opportunities.

Fiona Gavin is a senior Art Director based in Edinburgh with extensive film and high end television credits, working throughout the UK.

Stephen Burt is an experienced Location and Production Manager who has been working in the republic of Ireland on the TV programme "Penny Dreadful" for the past 3 years.

Alan Wands: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0910807/>

Fiona Gavin: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1223896/>

Stephen Burt: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0123461/>

These members work in the commercial area of film and TV production and can give you a valuable insight into the industry.

The issue is not about funding alone. It is about developing the sector by management and leadership, to build an industry that will be a net contributor to the economy.

We do hope this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

The Association of Film and Television Practitioners Scotland

Annexe

I just watched the meeting of the Economy, Energy and Tourism committee on 10th February 2016 at the Scottish Parliament with great interest, to hear of the progress towards delivering for Scotland the long awaited film studio.

To say I was disappointed would be an enormous understatement. I found the contributions from David Smith, Janet Archer & Natalie Usher to be troubling in the extreme.

I found their responses to be complacent, oblique and uninspiring, but most worryingly, quite obviously lacking in any true ambition to deliver a studio as a matter of national urgency.

The whole impression the three gave to the public is I feel best summarised by the position that a purpose built film studio would be nice, but isn't really actually a necessity.

The palpable lack of ambition for our film and TV sector was shocking.

All the more so that it comes from the very people who are meant to be leading the charge.

In what seemed a complete role reversal, the MSP's who were questioning the trio seemed like the ones who had the desire and drive to see this long awaited ambition achieved, rather than the other way around.

I was also troubled by the petty querying on the true figures for production spend in our country. It was a shameful smokescreen.

The harsh, inescapable and unacceptable truth is that Scotland has around 3% of UK production spend, nowhere near what it should be. It is a catastrophically low percentage.

A film studio is no panacea, and it doesn't in itself solve the problem of this low spend ratio, but it is a VITAL component of the film production process and absolutely a prime mover in where films and high end TV shows choose to base their productions.

I was distressed to hear Natalie Usher's comments that "the lack of a shiny new studio" was not a barrier to growing the film and television business.

I sincerely believe this to be in point of fact 100% wrong.

It is quite simply not the case.

In 27 years in the industry, at the sharp end of film production, I have never worked on a major film or television project that didn't either utilise a proper film studio, or suffer from the lack of one.

“Convertible studio space” is not the answer. The fact that Natalie Usher thinks it is, the Director of Film and Media at our national body in charge of this sector, speaks volumes.

Does it occur to the trio in front of the committee that Ms Usher’s claim that production companies are not asking, and therefore are not being turned away from Scotland because of a lack of studio space, is precisely because the industry KNOWS there is no such proper studio facility available in Scotland?

Because they know this, they don’t ask. Scotland is simply not on their radar in the first place.

I truly believe, with all my experience and knowledge of this field, that a film studio would a true hub for our industry, and would gather together the critical mass required, in terms of skills, crewing and ancillary support, to be a gamechanger for film making in Scotland.

It is woefully overdue but it is still not too late.

However it needs the people charged with overseeing this task to truly believe in it.

Tommy Gormley

Little White Rose Films Ltd