

*live got some
notes on the
sessions on
Monday.*

BFI Strategy and Criteria

Following the Abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan County Councils

A Document for Debate

1. This paper on strategy has been written following the programme of consultation which was outlined in the timetable appendix to "BFI Policies and Priorities for Development". It is informed by the discussions which Funding and Development has had with its national and regional partners. Both the policy and strategy papers now come to the BFI Conference for debate. They will then be revised in the light of that debate, and presented to the BFI's Governors in mid-October.
2. "BFI Policies and Priorities for Development" was written to meet two objectives. It was triggered by the crisis caused by the abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan County Councils. In the confused situation in which existing agencies will be taking on new roles, and new agencies are being formed, it is important for each agency to come forward with a statement of its aims and how it intends to carry them out. That is what Funding and Development intended to achieve with the process which began with the policy paper.

At the same time, that paper will represent Funding and Development's national policy.

3. In putting forward a strategy at this time, however, Funding & Development is concentrating on the current appalling crisis of abolition and in particular the problems which will be facing Greater London. This does not mean that we do not intend to look strategically at other areas also. We do intend to look at them and shall be doing so over the course of the next year. But the crisis and rupture caused by the abolition of the GLC and MCCs both dominates current debate and will seriously affect the entire national constituency. The funded film and video sector stands to lose up to £1.5million and a considerable

potential for growth. An already deplorably low base is being reduced even further at a time when its arguments were beginning to be listened to and acted upon by major local authorities. The funded sector of the film/media economy is going to lose money, growth, the plurality of types of organisation which local authority involvement was already securing, and the example which the GLC and MCCs were setting for other local authorities.

4. The figures show inescapably that the greatest losses are bound to be suffered in London. The GLC is putting more resources into this sector than all the Metropolitan County Councils together. And the BFI has been promised only 40% of the total GLC/MCC input to film and video.
5. Over the last five years the BFI has been working closely with the GLC and MCCs in an alliance to develop the same kinds of organisations and activities which satisfied the policy imperatives of both partners. The BFI therefore retains both an historical commitment to the work of the organisations which have had GLC/MCC funding, and, more importantly, maintains a continuing policy imperative to support them.
6. The BFI's fundamental strategic aim is therefore to preserve as much as possible of the GLC/MCC legacy. It is our intention to ensure that what we preserve will be secure. This will necessarily mean that the bulk of the fl million - apart from a small element which can be legitimately identified as repairs and renewals - will be spent on revenue support. The best that we can hope for will be to limit the inevitable damage and destruction. In a hostile economic climate there will be scant possibility of rebuilding what we have lost.

7. The BFI's strategy will have six main features:

- i) The organisations and programmes of activity which are preserved should together cover a range of work across exhibition, distribution, production, education and training.
- ii) Emphasis within that infrastructure would be on the development of centres of energy, particularly relating to gender and race.
- iii) The organisations which survive would need to see themselves as actively interrelating and part of a coordinated regional and national project.
- iv) There should be diversity of funding sources and an active search for new funding partners.
- v) Adequate funding will be necessary for each surviving organisation or programme.
- vi) In view of the BFI's historical commitments to the work of the GLC and MCCs the "replacement" money will be spent broadly in the same proportions from region to region as was the case between the GLC and individual MCCs.

8. We believe that this approach is the most responsible one that the BFI can take under the extremely adverse circumstances which the sector is facing.

9. In the areas covered by the Metropolitan County Councils most organisations which will be affected by abolition are already in a funding relationship with either the BFI or their Regional Arts Association. The very few that are not are in any case known to their RAA. It will therefore not be necessary to set up a new system for

considering their applications for funding in 1986/87. The BFI is still in discussion with the directors of the RAAs in the affected areas. Organisations will be advised in early November of the appropriate form of application and whether it should be submitted to the BFI or the RAA.

10. In Greater London the situation is much more complex, and special arrangements will have to be made. The size of Greater London, and the variety of ways in which the GLC has been able to assist film and video organisations, individuals and programmes of work have produced a situation in which neither the BFI nor GLA can be sure that we have full information on everything that has received GLC funding. Furthermore, the serious financial problems facing the sector might lead to groups and individuals reforming to pool equipment and resources. This is a situation in which neither the BFI nor GLA can intervene. The only initiatives which could be taken would be by the sector itself with the possible assistance of such representative bodies as the IFVA. In our Provisional Timetable we had suggested that we would be inviting application from specifically named organisations. We now believe that such a system could lead to injustice, and that it would in any case be ineffective for the reasons given above. Applications will therefore be open to all film and video organisations in Greater London.

11. GLA has offered to act as a clearing-house for all applications from London for film and video which would otherwise have been directed at GLA and/or the BFI. The BFI has welcomed this offer, as it reduces the number of different applications which London-based organisations will need to make. GLA and the BFI are therefore designing an initial single application form which we intend to send out, publicise and make available in October/November. Funding and Development Officers are also engaged in a programme of visits involving GLA's Film/Video Officer to every GLC-funded film and video organisations from whom we need information, and are working with other funding bodies (GLA, Channel 4, the intended London Boroughs Grants Unit and the Boroughs) and national organisations (IFVA, ABW, WFTVN) to keep a general pool of information constantly revised and up-to-date.

12. Once applications have been submitted to GLA we shall jointly consider them. In the past certain London organisations, such as the ICA and London Filmmakers Coop, have been funded directly by the BFI. Others, like Cinema Action, have been funded by GLA. And others, like Ceddo, have been funded by both the BFI and GLA. These differences have come about through decisions made in the past. On close examination no very obvious rationale exists for these distinctions, although it is clear that GLA would not be constitutionally empowered to fund the national work of a London-based national organisation, and that the BFI would not administer programmes of funding that are purely regional in scope. One of the first tasks of this process will be for GLA and the BFI to determine, on a rational and strategic basis, which organisations should be considered by which agency. Constitutional and administrative considerations will be factors in that set of decisions, but we shall also be considering whether an organisation would stand a better chance in its struggle for funding from other sources if its "arts" funding came from the BFI or GLA. We have also agreed with Northern Arts that the same considerations will be an important factor in their region.
13. We are urging all the organisations affected by abolition to apply for funding from their "successor" local authorities. In London this means both the Borough and the intended London Boroughs Grants Unit. The BFI and GLA will wait until the maximum amount of information about the detailed funding intentions of the Boroughs and the LBGU is available before we make our own detailed funding decisions. For all organisations applying for revenue funding we shall in any case come forward with decision or firm indications before the end of March 1986. We are very aware of the difficulties which such late notice of decision could cause to many organisations, but only after we have a reasonably reliable estimate of how much money will be coming into the sector from other sources, will we be able to maximise the use of the small amount of money available to us.

14. In assessing applications the BFI proposes to apply the following general criteria:

1. The extent to which the policy aims and objectives of an organisations relate to the BFI's published policies and priorities, with particular reference to the concepts of integrated practice, and centres of energy.
2. The extent to which an organisation maintains a constructive relationship with other local, regional and national activities and organisations working in the area of film, video and television.
3. That an organisation operates positive equal opportunities policies both as an employer and in the activities which it carries out.
4. That an organisation demonstrates competent management.
5. The extent to which an organisation strives to maximise income from all sources.
6. The availability of adequate funding for an organisation from all sources including the BFI.

Finally I should like to thank all the people and organisations who have taken the time and effort to consider our policy paper and to advise us on questions of strategy. The discussions which we have held and the papers submitted to the Division have been of considerable help to us.

Barrie Ellis-Jones

September 1985