

# **Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation**

Department of Communities and Local Government

Submission from the

**UK Film Council  
10 Little Portland Street  
London  
W1W 7JG**

January 2009

# Delivering Digital Inclusion

## An Action Plan for Consultation

### A response from the UK Film Council

#### Executive Summary

- The UK Film Council supports the Media Literacy Task Force Submission to 'Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for consultation', and agrees with the Task Force emphasis on the central importance of 'media literacy' in giving all users their best opportunity to reach their fullest potential through digital technologies. (This submission is attached as an Appendix below).
- In addition, the UK Film Council wishes to underline the importance of the internet for the development of creativity and talent both in relation to people and communities own communications and expression, as well as to the sustainability of the film and moving image content industries and value chain in the digital age
- The UK Film Council would further like to draw the attention of the Select Committee to the impressive media literacy and film education work carried out in the Nations and Regions of the UK
- The UK Film Council submits that all citizens should, as an entitlement, be educated, encouraged and positively supported in their online communications, their creative and critical use of the internet and digital technologies.
- That formal education should address this entitlement through the support of adequately trained teachers and classroom resources
- That informal opportunities for learning in a media rich society should be encouraged by government

#### 1. Background

The UK Film Council is the Government backed lead agency for film in the UK ensuring that the economic, cultural and educational aspects of film are effectively represented at home and abroad. Our goal is to help make the UK a global hub for film in the digital age, with the world's most imaginative, diverse and vibrant film culture, underpinned by a flourishing, competitive film industry.

The UK Film Council does not just work to ensure British films get made and that British studios and skills stay competitive. The cultural and educational aspects of film are equally important drivers both of its policy and funding priorities. The UK Film Council believes that having access to a diverse choice of films and moving image, enjoying them, understanding them, perhaps even making them should be open to everyone in the UK.

## 2. Key Issues

The UK Film Council is a founder member of the Media Literacy Task Force and supports its submission to 'Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation' (*as given in the Appendix attached below*).

In addition, however, it wishes to emphasise the importance of the internet for the development of online communication, creativity and expression in all citizens, in their fullest diversity and variety, and of talent in relation to the film and moving image content industries and value chain. The following points are of significance:

- a) The Charter for Media Literacy describes a media literate person as someone who participates fully in our society and culture and thus understands all "3 C s":
  - Being creative
  - Being critical
  - Being culturally aware.
- b) This rich competence and confidence in using the internet and new digital media is vital to the development of new business models for the production, distribution and consumption of film and moving image content. This confidence will increasingly be in the future an essential pre-requisite for use of the internet as a fertile training ground for talent.
- c) Learning to make choices about content available online, to communicate freely, and to understand the 'message' being communicated – is part of what being media literate means. Being supported and resourced, either in a formal school setting or informally through the help given by content providers and manufacturers, by other agencies, or in the home, to become media literate is therefore the responsibility of government, the media industries, educators and parents – and citizens themselves.
- d) Regulation of still relatively uncharted online territories is proving difficult, though the media industries' self and co-regulation should definitely continue be encouraged. Codes of Practice and other means of ensuring responsible content and effective means of classification or warning are potentially useful. Nonetheless developing media literacy skills from an early age will, the UK Film Council maintains, provide a better long term strategy for addressing these challenges.
- e) The UK Film Council, therefore, maintains that encouraging responsible and creative use of media, and the full range of digital communications, through both formal and informal education, through wide access to information about the nature of content, as well as by other means that

producers and distributors of creative content have developed, is of paramount importance.

- f) The UK Film Council would like to draw attention to the impressive media literacy and film education work carried out in the Nations and Regions of the UK, particularly by the British Film Institute and the film agencies of the Nations and Regional Screen Agencies. For more information see: <http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/fundedpartners>
- g) The work of First Light Movies is of particular relevance since it engages young people in a critical understanding of film through the practical process of making movies. Its innovative website for younger audiences is especially of note: [www.filmstreet.co.uk](http://www.filmstreet.co.uk) as is their Mediabox fund (<http://www.media-box.co.uk/whatis.php?ID=9>)
- h) This wealth of experience, expertise and best practice might well provide models and insights in how to engage people through creative activity and critical understanding that can be of value to the Action Plan. Such educational work fosters competencies in people which empower them to use the 'language' of media and thus to be literate, and thus to participate more fully in UK society today.
- i) It is of vital importance for the creative economy as well as for the social and cultural life of the UK in the twenty-first century that everyone is encouraged to become media literate.

### 3. Conclusion

The UK Film Council submits in relation to any Recommendations that may be made as a result of this Consultation concerning people's use of the internet:

- That everyone should have an entitlement to be educated and informed to make the most of their use of the internet and online content throughout their lives
- That formal education should address this entitlement and in particular through the support of adequately trained teachers and classroom resources
- That informal opportunities for learning in a media rich society should be encouraged by government so that everyone can access and enjoy online communication as well as possible creative and potentially economically productive digital opportunities.

Carol Comley  
Head of Strategic Development  
UK Film Council  
(020 7861 7861)  
January 2009

APPENDIX:

Delivering **Digital Inclusion**: An Action Plan for Consultation

A Response from  
**The Media Literacy Task Force**  
[www.medialiteracy.org.uk](http://www.medialiteracy.org.uk)

**1. About the Media Literacy Task Force and the Charter for Media Literacy:**

The Media Literacy Task Force was set up in 2004 with the support of Tessa Jowell MP, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in 2004. Currently chaired by Alex Graham, CEO of Wall to Wall Productions, it comprises senior representatives of the BBC, the British Board of Film Classification, the British Film Institute, Channel 4, ITV, the Media Education Association, Skillset and the UK Film Council. DCMS, Ofcom, the Broadband Stakeholder Group and Andrea Millwood-Hargrave sit as observers.

In November 2005, James Purnell MP (then Minister for Creative Industries and Tourism) together with some distinguished Patrons, a number of leading figures from the Nations and Regions in education, the film, television and media industries, launched a Charter for Media Literacy. The Charter explains what being media literate today means as well as priorities for developing this, particularly in relation to moving image media and content. The text of the Charter was widely consulted upon, both within the UK and Europe, and many individuals and agencies in education, cultural organisations, the media and communications industries have since pledged their support (for the full text of the Charter, its context, and a list of current signatories see [www.medialiteracy.org.uk](http://www.medialiteracy.org.uk) ). The Charter is also championed across Europe by a further group and has signatories from at least 19 other countries (see [www.euromedialiteracy.eu](http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu) for information).

Details of the launch event, and other related documents, are available to download at: <http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/publications>

## **2. The Task Force:**

- Sees 'media literacy' as part of a wider definition of 'literacy' in the C21st and not as a separate set of skills or competencies
- Is committed to ensuring a combination of creative, cultural and critical competencies (the Charter's 3 C's) for all citizens in relation to their online communications and their full and productive use of media
- Believes these competencies and skills should be an entitlement, not a privilege, and available to all throughout their lives and that without them some people will remain excluded from the digital world – that is from the world as it functions today
- Aims to encourage full, purposeful and creative use of the internet and media, including the confidence and competence to respond or question, complain about or object to, content or services on behalf of themselves, their families or communities – whether geographic, cultural or related to disability, age, gender or sexuality
- Believes that collaboration between government, educators, the media and communication industries and cultural agencies is the best route to developing media literacy effectively with parents, children and others.
- Each of the Task Force partners already undertakes extensive media literacy work of its own and the purpose of the group is to support, cross-fertilise and disseminate ideas and initiatives, not to duplicate them and to act as a united voice in the public arena of the principles and aims set out in the Charter for Media Literacy.

## **3. Statement from the Task Force to the Digital Inclusion Action Plan Team:**

The Media Literacy Task Force is very much aware that the Action Plan sees the greater spread of IT skills and the take-up of broadband services and IT skills as one of the key ways in which (digital) exclusion will be overcome.

The Task Force wants particularly to emphasise the importance of the role of media literacy in ensuring this universal take-up of digital technologies and thus of maximising their social, economic, political and cultural impact.

A truly 'Digital Britain' needs to be one where everyone, irrespective of age or circumstance, is able to communicate and participate online. One where people not only have the skills to access these technologies but the confidence to embrace and interact with the exhilarating array of content and services which a fully converged world will make possible.

It believes that the key to this vision is media literacy for all. If 'literacy' can be defined as the ability to participate in a culture fully then media literacy is an essential contemporary extension of that basic entitlement – the capacity to engage fully with the digital world as part of today's 'culture' of communications in the widest sense.

The switch to digital broadcasting, the roll out of high-speed broadband and the creation of user-friendly public and private digital services are necessary conditions for a fully digital Britain. Yet they are not, in themselves, sufficient. The 'literacy' gap remains and, unless it is reversed, will severely inhibit the take up of broadband and the content and services it will provide. As such, it will impact adversely on the cultural health and sustainable wealth of the nation.

While closing the IT skills gap will be critical to making a digital Britain inclusive, what better way to incentivise the British public to acquire these skills than to open their eyes to the sheer scale of the possibilities open to them through digital technologies?

The public service broadcasters have done an enormous amount already to support people acquiring their understanding and confidence online, and we believe that the BBC in particular – as a condition of its continued public funding – should continue to play a central role. But other organisations are increasingly playing their part. The UK Film Council's Digital Screen Network, or the growing online presence of cultural institutions like the Tate and the ENO, are examples of the growing digital contribution of the state. We believe the commercial sector can play a growing role too and the ISPs and telecommunications companies have an obvious interest in growing levels of media literacy in Britain.

Taken together all these cultural content offerings and communication opportunities can act as a magnet for everyone unsure of the benefits to themselves, their families and communities of being active online and engaging with understanding with the opportunities and choices there.

#### 4. Responses to the Consultation questions

The answers given below are *in addition* to those that may already have been expressed in separate submissions by the Task Force partners and are intended to supplement and support such responses. In particular the answers below aim to draw attention to the immense value of media content and communications in exciting people to venture online or to use digital technologies, and the power of such content to improve the quality of people's lives and of the communities in which they live or of which they are a part.

##### Chapter One

Question 1: *How far do you agree with the definition of digital inclusion and the nature of the problem set out in Chapter One?*

The Task Force agrees with the definition and particularly welcomes the emphasis it puts on everyone improving the quality of people's lives and life chances through their take up of the riches of the online world.

Too often the discussion of the digital environment concentrates on ways of protecting (especially young) people from danger rather than enabling everyone, of whatever age, social or economic background, both to access and understand the fullest variety and range of the advantages and opportunities available online.

This Action Plan positively redresses the balance in favour of that concentrating on the empowerment which digital inclusion can bring to individuals and communities.

Nonetheless the Task Force emphasises that for a full and rich engagement with contemporary society, acquiring the:

**'broad range of skills, and the ability to make connections between different channels/media and input devices (text, sound and vision; keyboard and mouse; symbols and language; etc)'** p.28.

that the Action Plan refers to does not go far enough. It is also the *understanding* of what, and how, these 'complex' texts communicate – known as 'media literacy' – which also needs increasing across the population. It is the difference, in the world of print, between giving people free access to books and teaching them to read and empowering to understand the difference between novels and newspapers, the prejudice of propaganda and the impartial prose of unbiased reporting, a poem and a recipe.

More and more in the contemporary world people need to be able to make the distinction between media texts for their own protection (phishing emails, internet offers and sites), for information (the source and reliability of news or opinions), for pleasure and entertainment (the choice of films and TV programmes) and in relation to personal disclosure and communications on social networks or in emails.

How media texts with their varieties of signifying elements (words, images, sound) communicate is something that is not taught in schools to the same level that is lavished on written material such as literature or historical documents. Yet in everyday life everyone is bombarded with advertisements and multi-various communications, for work or leisure purposes, which have great influence on how people in society make sense of, and function in, the world.

Without this knowledge, understanding and competence to 'read' media and its messages – to be 'media literate' – people will remain excluded from society and culture and thus from full and significant participation as citizens and community members in the UK today.

## Chapter Two

*Question 2: How far do you agree with the analysis set out in Chapter Two? Is there other evidence we should consider as to why digital inclusion is an important social issue?*

The Task Force believes that digital inclusion also empowers those with differing cultural or ethnic backgrounds to develop their sense of community, network with others, or use online resources for communication and creative interaction as well as for accessing goods and services. While this aspect of personal expression may not necessarily be of first importance for all users its potential impact on content providers is significant. It would bring a range and diversity of voices, stories and viewpoints into the public space which might otherwise be lacking and over time alter the representation of the UK to itself.

Channel 4's 4Talent and UGC sites such as YouTube, among many others, offer opportunities for people to be included in the opportunities for communication and creativity that digital technologies can offer individuals and communities. First Light's Mediabox fund is an important example of how opportunities can be offered to young people to develop their communication skills (see <http://www.media-box.co.uk/whatis.php?ID=9>)

## Chapter Three

*Question 3: How far do you agree with the analysis in Chapter Three of the main*  
Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation

*barriers which prevent individuals and communities from engaging in digital technologies?*

The analysis of the main barriers to engaging with digital technologies (on p.28) is generally accurate and helpful. In relation to the following, though the Task Force would like to underline the significance of this point:

13. People still need motivation and skills to use technology. It is still common for a household to have broadband access and for members of the household to be non-users of the Internet, thereby being digitally excluded. Advanced media literacy skills are imperative and public services such as libraries, museums and archives could have a stronger role in supporting media literacy building on the role they already have in supporting library users to get on line.

The Task Force strongly agrees that in relation to people's 'motivation', it is not merely technological access and IT skills take-up which is at issue. People's lack of media literacy, which is more prevalent in excluded groups for a range of educational and other reasons, is and will remain a major barrier to inclusion.

If raising the overall standard of media literacy is not addressed in formal education, informal life-long learning and by content providers of all sorts, as well as encouraged through every government channel, users will not have the competencies and the confidence to venture online and discover the riches and opportunities available to them.

The importance of this point should not be buried away in the Action Plan but given much more prominence from the start. Its significance was ably captured by Andy Duncan, CEO of Channel 4, in a recent speech to NESTA in January 2009:

*"Universal access is the essential foundation of [a digital Britain] but by itself it is not sufficient. As every cable operator has found to their cost, access to a service is not the same thing as take-up of that service. So the second key factor is to stimulate demand and here the best way forward must be a combination of public policy and private provision. Commercial services will be the core - entertainment, information, financial services, retail, business-to-business services, and there are already plenty of such services today. We still have a very long way to go, however, before we are using the full potential of the online world to deliver public services in a more effective - and cost-effective - way.*

*For example, when by the government's own admission only 20% of schools have really 'got it' in terms of exploiting digital technology to drive next generation learning, we need to ramp up the integration of digital technologies with our formal and informal learning services. Media literacy is as essential to a full and productive life today as basic literacy was in the world of our grandparents."*

The richness and variety of content which media literate people can access online is a huge incentive to motivate anyone who is unsure of why they might bother to take-up digital services and products. It is important therefore that content providers, as well as policy makers, ensure that the variety, quality and scale of the online experience is communicated as widely as is possible and that the population is empowered to become media literate enough to take-up and enjoy it.

*Question 4: What are the most effective ways to remove these barriers and ensure that all individuals can exercise an empowered choice about their use of digital technologies?*

Education, whether formal or informal, is clearly the most effective way of removing barriers and positively empowering people at whatever stage of their lives. There is already much being done in schools that might be termed media literacy education but it is not necessarily known as such, nor are the various initiatives drawn together in ways that would consolidate and validate the skills and competencies being learned. The use of media should not be separated from other topics and subjects but become an integrated part of researching and communicating the fruits of study across the curriculum.

The Creative and Media Diploma, introduced into schools last September, developed by Skillset with the industry, is one way in which a media literate approach has been introduced into the curriculum for some 14–19 year olds.

Training teachers to use media and online resources more specifically, and in particular to bring their experience and knowledge of subjects to bear on information – found through searches for example – would help pupils to realise that discovering information is merely the precursor to evaluating it. Being media literate is not only having the skills to access and navigate technologies but also the capacity to assess critically the results and the effects such use enables.

In a similar way in informal education fostering confidence online should link IT skills and competence with an understanding of the way online communications work and how understanding these 'messages' are made and what their effects are. This will not only make people safer online but help them make their

communication and creativity more effective and useful. This link between technology and communication is an important way of demonstrating the value of being online and developing this competence as it shows the practical and personal – as well as the communal and social – dimensions of digital developments to those who might otherwise be alienated from them.

The Broadband Stakeholder Group (an Observer organisation on the Media Literacy Task Force) also agrees that empowering individuals with clear and easy to understand information about digital services is crucial to helping them navigate the digital world effectively. Information and understanding also builds enthusiasm. This in turn supports the commercial innovation of digital products and enriches the individual’s digital experience.

This is the rationale that underpins the Good Practice Principles on Audiovisual Content Information which the industry has developed and agreed and which offers a good example of a form of best practice.

“Building on existing good practice, the principles promote common sense, simplicity and transparency to ensure that consumers are empowered to make safe and informed choices about commercially provided content.

They relate to content that may be unsuitable for children and young people or which some members of the public may find offensive.

While the format of the information provided may vary from platform to platform, content providers are committed to ensuring that it:

- is easy to use and understand
- enables the user to make informed choices
- uses plain and consistent language
- is practical for the medium in which it is made available”

These principles have the support of major content providers in the UK and further information can be found at:

[www.audiovisualcontent.org](http://www.audiovisualcontent.org)

This industry-led approach delivers for individuals whilst also giving commercial players sufficient flexibility to innovate new services, and would urge the government to support similar self-regulatory initiatives.

*Question 5: What are the risk factors and benefits for different communities associated with current and next generation access?*

The main area which is not sufficiently emphasised by the Action Plan is the recognition of the benefits to those communities which are based on ethnic or faith-based roots being connected to online resources and networks and of the wider, positive outcomes to the UK as a whole of such universal access and engagement. Empowering particular communities, and communities of interest, will lead to a greater sense of connectedness and inclusion in the body politic and to the enrichment of the UK's cultural life and to a better sense of UK identity for every citizen. The risks of this not happening are of isolation, a sense of being unheard or unwanted, a lack of involvement with mainstream culture and a resulting tendency to separation and defensiveness.

*Question 6: What should be done to empower communities and local partnerships to address these risks and benefits?*

The model given in relation to RNIB Cymru 'ATIC' project gives two useful pointers as to how these issues might be addressed effectively. First involving local and community specific organisations that already have firm links with local people but with a national co-ordination and strategy behind them. And secondly the use of trained volunteers as 'champions' to back up and support packages of resources to be used for training purposes. National and regional media campaigns as well as the provision of resources via television, radio and online would support and supplement such an approach.

*Question 7: How far do you agree with the summary of issues around the direct use of technology presented in Chapter Three? Are there any other important issues we have not mentioned?*

The Task Force agrees with the summary of issues set out at the end of this chapter and particularly highlights nos.1 and 9 as being powerful barriers for many people. That is they perceive media literacy skills and competencies as being something for those with an interest in technology or gadgetry as such and not as a means to accessing services and experiences that will benefit their lives or that they will enjoy. Entertainment online, or the accessing of additional content from terrestrial television or elsewhere, is therefore a huge potential lure for those who have not as yet ventured into the online world. In many cases what is being offered is 'more of the same' only in ways and at times which the user might find more convenient.

Similarly many online processes such as email are only a digital extension or

equivalent of earlier means of communication or of familiar activities such as shopping. Communicating this fact is an important part of demystifying the online experience and giving people the courage to explore it.

#### Chapter Four

Question 8: *How far do you agree with the assessment of risks and opportunities around the indirect benefits of technology presented in Chapter Four?*

The analysis is sound and the point about joining up and breaking down silos particularly potent. Improving the “skills and awareness on the part of some local, national and regional delivery partners about the potential of digital technology to deliver social and economic benefits to the most disadvantaged local citizens and communities” is clearly essential. But this may also be a case of moving ‘hearts and minds’ to understand the importance of equality and diversity issues in both policy-makers and delivery partners and of ensuring that they are a fully integrated part of any process and outcome designed for the public good.

Question 9: *How can we raise awareness of the indirect benefits of technology for service design, planning and delivery across all sectors?*

No response to this question is being made.

Question 10: *Does the way in which services, particularly public services, are currently delivered adequately support individuals and groups who are socially disadvantaged? What more could be done to ensure they do.*

An answer to this issue has been given in the response to Question 8.

#### Chapter Five

Question 11: *Are you aware of any other examples of good practice not mentioned in Chapter Five?*

As was touched upon in the answer to Question 2, there are many examples of creative and critical media practice in the public realm which give opportunities for pupils and other people both young and old to engage with media and to express themselves imaginatively. Both the BBC and Channel 4 offer many opportunities of this kind, while the BFI and BBFC websites and educational activities support exploration of film issues whilst the UK Film Council supports numerous schemes – such as First Light (see [www.firstlightmovies.com](http://www.firstlightmovies.com)) – or via its Regional Screen Agencies where young and old can engage digitally with the moving image. These cultural opportunities for becoming digitally included should not be overlooked as

they often resonate powerfully with ordinary people's lives and experiences and may be a first point of interest and entry to the digital world.

Question 12: *What aspects of previous or current digital initiatives and strategies have been most successful in tackling digital exclusion?*

No response to this question is being made.

Question 13: *What actions need to be taken to support better partnership approaches?*

No response to this question is being made.

Question 14: *What should be the extent of Government's intervention in tackling digital exclusion?*

The government should see overcoming digital exclusion as a very serious and significant matter. It impinges on the economic, social, cultural and political life and health of the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unless the fullest potential of its citizens is released and harnessed, the UK will fall behind in both competitiveness and social cohesion and its cultural life will be out of touch with the widest possible views and ideas of its citizens. Strategic leadership and financial investment from government is therefore imperative

Question 15: *How else can the impact of current activity be maximised?*

No response to this question is being made.

## Chapter Six

Question 16: *How far do you agree with the proposed principles outlined in the Charter? Are there others we should consider?*

The principles are good in general but what is missing is an acknowledgement that access and technological skills alone cannot achieve the ends that the Action Plan desires. In particular the crucial element of 'understanding', (that is the capacity to engage fully with digital processes and resources, to ask questions and to make informed choices) goes beyond, although is based on, these foundations. It is this wiser form of 'literacy' which empowers people not merely the connection to, or the skill to use, digital technologies. To the first principle therefore the Task Force would add:

Assist and motivate the most disadvantaged citizens and communities to achieve increased independence and opportunity through direct access to digital technology and skills *and through improving levels of media literacy.*

Question 17: *How far do you support the actions which underpin the principles? Are there others we should consider?*

In the light of the answer given to Question 16 it is therefore imperative that a second bullet be added to the Action Plan which commits to:

**'promote direct action to improve levels of media literacy, and thus the understanding and fuller engagement with media for everyone, both through formal education and in life-long learning opportunities'.**

Question 18: *What issues need to be considered in determining a baseline measure for digital inclusion?*

No response to this question is being made.

Question 19: *What should be the brief of the Digital Champion role?*

The Champion should also work to ensure that the wider media literacy agenda , as set out in the additional proposed bullet (above Question 17) is part of their brief.

Question 20: *What would be the single most effective thing government could do to drive its digital inclusion agenda?*

Lead from the top in terms of setting the agenda across government, integrating and aligning policy and ensuring adequate budget resources to achieve the desired outcomes of the Digital Inclusion Charter.

Question 21: *Are there any other issues you would like to raise in relation to this consultation?*

**The Media Literacy task Force would also like to draw your attention to this recent letter sent by the Chair to Lord Stephen Carter in relation to DCMS' initiative, 'Digital Britain':**

*Stephen Carter, CBE  
Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting  
Department for Culture Media and Sport*

*2-4 Cockspur Street*  
*London*  
*SW1Y 5DH*  
18<sup>th</sup> December 2008

Dear Stephen,

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Media Literacy Task Force\*.

We are aware, of course, that media literacy and IT skills is one of the key points in the Digital Britain agenda and wanted particularly to emphasise the importance of the role of media literacy in ensuring the universal take-up of digital technologies and maximising their social, economic and cultural impact.

A truly 'Digital Britain' needs to be one where everyone, irrespective of age or circumstance, is able to communicate and participate online. One where people not only have the skills to access these technologies but the confidence to embrace the exhilarating array of content and services which a fully converged world will make possible.

We believe that the key to this vision is media literacy. Literacy might be defined as the ability to participate in a culture fully; media literacy is an extension of that basic entitlement – the capacity to engage fully with the digital world.

The switch to digital broadcasting and the roll out of high-speed broadband are necessary conditions for a fully digital Britain. But they are not, in themselves, sufficient. The literacy gap remains and, unless it is reversed, will severely inhibit the take up of broadband and the content and services it will provide. As such, it will impact adversely on the cultural health and sustainable wealth of the nation.

While closing the IT skills gap will be critical to making Digital Britain work, what better way to incentivise the British public to acquire these skills than to open their eyes to the sheer scale of the possibilities open to them through digital technologies? Or, if you'll forgive me for paraphrasing you, we need to emphasise the poetry as much as the pipes.

Of course, we're not seeking to duplicate the efforts which are already being made. The public service broadcasters have done an enormous amount, and we believe that the BBC in particular – as a condition of its continued public funding – should continue to play a central role. But other organisations are increasingly playing their part. The Digital Screen Network, or the growing online presence of cultural institutions like the Tate and the ENO, are examples of the growing digital

contribution of the state. We believe the commercial sector can play a growing role too. The ISPs and telecommunications companies have an obvious interest in growing levels of media literacy in Britain.

What is needed is a focus to ensure that the combined impact of all this activity is greater than the sum of its parts; a forum which brings together those in the public and private sectors that have a stake in the development of both IT skills and media literacy.

*There is plenty that such an organisation could do: from raising levels of awareness of what is already available, to providing a focal point for new ideas which might bubble up from individuals and communities throughout the UK. It might act as a catalyst for new ventures between organisations, both public and private. It might even define and set a benchmark for the basic competencies that constitute media literacy and provide the necessary tools to acquire and measure such competencies – a digital equivalent, perhaps, of the cycling proficiency test.*

The object of this letter, however, is not to narrow the debate but to open it up. The precise scale and scope of this body; its relationship with existing organisations and with both central and local government needs to be the subject of further detailed study. We believe such a study should be a central plank of the second phase of your Report and lead to concrete recommendations, designed to make Britain the most media literate country in the world.

The Media Literacy Task Force would be happy to co-operate or collaborate in any way that would advance this process and I am more than happy to meet with you or your officials to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Alex Graham

**Chair**

**Media Literacy Task Force**

*Wall to Wall*

*8-9, Spring Place*

*London*

*NW5 3ER*

[Alex.graham@walltowall.co.uk](mailto:Alex.graham@walltowall.co.uk)

Please Copy Response to:

Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation

*Peter Packer*  
*Media Literacy Task Force Secretariat*  
*104 St. Donatt's Road*  
*London*  
*SE14 6NT*  
[media@packerpunch.com](mailto:media@packerpunch.com)