



“Bringing creative innovation from the margins to the mainstream” - Channel 4 presents a blueprint of its distinctive public role within a fully digital media future

- ***Next on 4* claims “digital media allows Channel 4 to deliver creative remit with even greater impact”**
- **Strategic blueprint details launch of £50 million 4IP fund to pioneer publicly valuable digital media**
- **Channel 4 promises strengthened connection with young audiences in delivery of its public purposes**

Channel 4 has today presented an ambitious blueprint of the enhanced public role it believes it can fulfil in the fully digital media sector of the future.

The *Next on 4* strategic blueprint, unveiled today, underlines Channel 4’s commitment to maintaining its public status and preserving its unrivalled ability to connect new talent, voices and ideas to a mainstream audience. It calls for a new legislative framework to reflect Channel 4’s transition to a multi-media public service network.

The blueprint outlines how Channel 4 plans to extend its public role from broadcast into new digital media, including digital radio and online. It is launching a £50 million fund - the Four Innovations for the Public (4IP) fund - with a range of partners to meet the expectation of UK audiences to be able to access high-quality content at the time and on the platform of their choosing. **See separate release.**

Today’s presentation is the culmination of the most exhaustive review of Channel 4’s role since it came on air in 1982. The review has involved consultation with staff, creative and commercial partners, Government and other stakeholders, as well as extensive audience research including a YouGov survey of 11,000 viewers and users.

Chairman, Luke Johnson, said: “The most encouraging thing to emerge from our consultations, is evidence that our viewers and stakeholders share our instinctive understanding of Channel 4’s unique position in the media landscape. There is strong support for our distinctive public role and determination to help us maintain our independence and our ability to take the greatest creative risks.”

Chief Executive, Andy Duncan, added: “What distinguishes Channel 4 from all our competitors, is our focus on bringing creative innovation from the margins into the mainstream. We believe digital media should allow us to deliver our creative remit with greater impact than at any time in our history.”

### **Channel 4’s four core public purposes**

At the heart of the *Next on 4* strategic blueprint is a fresh articulation of Channel 4’s public service role, which describes the positive impact it aims to have on the lives of viewers as well as wider society. It commits Channel 4 to displaying greater ambition than competitors in pursuit of four key creative purposes:

- **To nurture new talent and original ideas**
- **To champion alternative voices and fresh perspectives**
- **To challenge people to see the world differently**
- **To inspire change in people's lives**

*Next on 4* envisages that digital media will allow Channel 4 to pursue these public purposes with even greater impact in the future than it does now.

Duncan explained: "Channel 4 becomes one of only a handful of places where you can even encounter the mainstream, let alone impact and influence it through creative innovation. Digital technology transforms our audiences' ability to create, access and engage with our content in imaginative and compelling ways. It makes it easier for Channel 4 to identify and develop the best of new British creativity."

Duncan said new digital media would allow Channel 4 to reach out to more diverse creative talent, cementing its appeal to audiences outside the mainstream, particularly younger viewers.

### **A bold, new dimension to Channel 4's public role**

As part of its *Next on 4* blueprint, Channel 4 has outlined a series of initiatives, in addition to the launch of the 4IP fund, to maximise its delivery against its public purposes in future. These fall into the following four broad themes.

*A greater commitment to new talent, voices and ideas.* This will be delivered through:

- An annual commitment to broadcasting more new programmes in peak than any other public service broadcaster.
- Broadcasting the equivalent of at least one new documentary in peak each weekday - a minimum of 260 hours across the year.
- Increasing the number of dedicated slots for new talent across all platforms, including a New Talent Month on Channel 4 in 2008, and committing £10 million annually to support a range of schemes through 4Talent.
- A commitment to increasing Channel 4's annual spend on news, allowing a continued expansion of news online and into radio.
- Ring-fencing £10 million annually for British film, with Film4 committing a significant proportion of its spend on development, short films and low-budget features

*A leading role engaging younger viewers with public service values.* This will be delivered through:

- Adopting a new public service role in children's content, targeting 10 to 15-year-olds. Channel 4 intends to spend an initial £10 million on a major pilot fund for cross-platform projects from 2008.
- Investment of £6 million a year in educational multi-media content for teenagers

*Reinvigorating its connection with minority audiences.* This will be delivered through:

- Appointing a new Head of Diversity to the senior executive team.
- Assigning a commissioning editor specific responsibility for multicultural programmes, with a ring-fenced budget and slots at 9pm and 10pm.
- Doubling the budget for the diversity placement scheme within its commissioning team and rolling out similar schemes across all departments within Channel 4.

*A greater investment in creative partnerships for the benefit of the wider creative economy.* This will be delivered through:

- Remaining a publisher broadcaster working with more independent producers than its competitors and with the aim of securing a future-facing digital rights agreement with the independent production sector.
- A commitment to increase the proportion of Channel 4's spend on original commissions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by 50% by 2012.
- Forming alliances with other public bodies including the RSA, NESTA, Arts Council.

In support of its strategy of using digital media to more effectively deliver its public purposes, Channel 4 will move towards a cross platform commissioning structure.

To help it deliver these promises, Channel 4 is intending to reduce its annual spend on acquired programming by 20% over the next five years, ultimately freeing up £35 million a year extra for UK originated content.

### **Demonstrating public accountability**

Channel 4's new digital vision will be backed by fresh accountability initiatives, designed to demonstrate the public value it delivers. These will include: a basket of measures of the organisation's performance against its public purposes; publication of a new annual Public Value Report; a new content sub-committee of the Channel 4 board; a series of steps designed to increase direct interaction with audiences.

Johnson called on the Government to agree new forms of public support for Channel 4 to replace the gifted analogue spectrum it currently receives, which will be valueless by the time digital switchover is completed in 2012.

He said: "It [new public support] must be delivered in a form that gives Channel 4 long-term financial stability and preserves its independence from editorial interference. This is the moment for absolutely clarity - we believe Channel 4's ability to invest in greater creative risk would not survive a transfer into private ownership, which is why the board unanimously rejects the option of privatisation. It is Channel 4's independence, from shareholders as much from Government, that permits its distinctiveness."

Duncan concluded: "This strategic blueprint is a milestone for Channel 4. Channel 4 is an idea that has worked brilliantly in TV for the last 25 years. We're very excited by the challenge of demonstrating it can potentially work even more powerfully in new digital media, adding a bold new dimension to our ability to deliver our public purposes."

**The full text of *Next on 4* and footage of today's presentation is available at [www.channel4.com/nexton4](http://www.channel4.com/nexton4)**