

Channel 4 Statement of Programme Policy 2006

1. Overall strategy

In 2006 Channel 4 will build on the success of recent years to offer more talked-about programmes than any other channel, more programmes that make a difference to people's lives, and more programmes promoting new UK talent.

We will take more risks than any other broadcaster, in terms of subject matter, range and breadth of new commissions, with major investment in bold and risky projects such as *The Play's The Thing* and *Big Art* that are intended to have a lasting impact.

We will continue to maintain and, where possible, increase the quality of our output, with the core Channel's programme budget planned to increase from £490 million to over £500 million.

Channel 4 will offer a unique public service contribution, focussing on education, diversity and innovation. In 2006 we plan to strengthen still further our news and current affairs output, and to offer a substantial increase in the amount of originated UK drama.

In line with the three-pronged strategy set out in 2004, Channel 4 will continue to extend the fulfilment of its remit across an increasing number of digital channels and in new media. For the first time in 2006, Channel 4 will be complemented for the entire year by free-to-air digital channels E4 and More4, and we have plans to grow our channel portfolio further. These two channels will have a combined programming budget of £100 million. We will expand our new media activities, which will include new public services in addition to FourDocs (which launched in 2005), with our spend in this area increasing to £21 million.

Channel 4 will aim for an 11% share across our portfolio of channels, but the focus will be on our key demographics, 16-34s and ABC1s.

Our programme offer will focus on peak, with *Channel 4 News* at the heart of the schedule at 7 pm. We will be driven by our remit, offering educative, diverse and innovative programmes across the schedule, and by our commitment to new talent. We will be able to offer more originated UK drama with a substantially increased drama budget. Our Education spend will increase to £90 million.

Across our schedule, three key themes in 2006 will be:

- Challenging and controversial contemporary subject matter
- Talent and authorship
- Increases in investment in public service delivery

(i) Challenging and controversial contemporary subject matter

Our schedules will include a strong focus on international issues...

- Drama events such as *The Road to Guantanamo* and *The Mark of Cain* (about the abuse of Iraqi prisoners)
- Doubling the number of *Unreported Worlds* to twenty programmes
- Documentaries such as *Dying For a Drink* on the global battle for water resources, and *My New Home* on children immigrating to the UK

...and challenging and controversial issues

- Documentaries on social issues such as the elderly and children with mental health problems
- Science versus Religion – a polemic by Richard Dawkins
- Schools programmes covering topics such as race and addiction
- Religious programmes confronting difficult issues such as gays in Islam and the Church of England

(ii) Talent and authorship

We will provide substantial opportunities for new talent....

- Creating *The Play's The Thing* – an ambitious and risky project in which we will work with a new writer to put on a new play in the West End
- Experimenting with new comedy talent, often in key Friday night slots as well as in our *Comedy Lab*
- Showing eight one-hour docs in *The Other Side* to showcase new talent, as well as the daily *Three Minute Wonders*
- Funding the Documentary Film Foundation with £1 million to develop and promote a new generation of documentary filmmakers beyond the confines of television
- Funding new drama talent initiatives including *Coming Up* and the *Paines Plough Scheme*
- Supporting new animators by funding *Animators In Residence* and *MESH*
- Offering a showcase and practical advice on the FourDocs broadband service, while IdeasFactory will continue to encourage wider participation in the creative industries
- Launching two new studios to support low-budget production and distribution in partnership with the UK Film Council

- Continuing to fund the Shorts Scheme to drive new talent into features

...and invest in some of the most exciting established British talent

- Working with artists such as Jake Chapman, Tracey Emin, Russell Maliphant and Jonathan Dove across a wide range of art forms
- Developing films with artists Steve McQueen and Sam Taylor Wood
- Releasing British films *Isolation* and *Brothers of the Head* in 2006, and developing projects such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

In total, Channel 4's internal and external training will be around £4 million, including £500,000 for researcher and commissioning posts for ethnic minorities and £300,000 for the Freelance Training Fund.

(iii) Increases in investment in public service delivery

On Channel 4:

- The drama budget will increase by £8.5 million to £35 million
- We will strengthen peak-time current affairs by doubling the number of *Unreported Worlds* from 10 to 20 and increasing *Dispatches* to 32 episodes

In line with our three-pronged strategy, which Ofcom endorsed in its PSB Review, we will extend the fulfilment of our remit to digital channels in 2006...

- 2006 will be the first full year for More4, with a focus on news and current affairs, drama and documentaries, and a total programme budget of £33 million
- More4 will offer major seasons on Iraq, Russia and Civil Liberties, and director seasons on Nick Broomfield, Michael Moore and Errol Morris
- There will be a substantial increase in investment in originated drama-docs across both More 4 and Channel 4
- We aim to increase home-grown drama and comedy on E4, increasing the channel's budget to £67 million
- We will seek new cross-platform events to play across Channel 4 and More4

... and to new media

- Total new media investment is planned to increase by £5 million to £21 million, with an increased focus on public service initiatives, including further programme support content and new standalone projects
- We are actively exploring the potential for video-on-demand and the distribution of Channel 4 programmes across new platforms

- We will provide a £1 million injection of online support for *Channel 4 News* and *Dispatches*
- We will develop FourDocs further and roll the format out with FourLaughs, which will include a commissioning fund to support emerging talent
- There will be an increased use of broadband and other digital platforms to extend access to Channel 4 schools output

2. Significant changes

There will be no significant changes on Channel 4 in 2006.

3. Innovation, experiment and creativity

Channel 4 will continue to be the most innovative broadcaster in the UK. We will:

- Continue to work with around 300 external production companies, approximately double the number that the BBC works with across its entire output. This gives us access to the greatest range of ideas, from the greatest range of producers
- Be highly-focused on developing and giving exposure to new talent, as our overall strategy sets out (see above)
- Continue to invest heavily in new and risky projects, such as *Castleford*, *Big Art* and *The Genius Awards*
- Anticipate a total development spend of more than £10 million
- Invest a total of £2.6 million in new talent onscreen, ringfencing new talent strands such as Comedy Lab and Three Minute Wonders
- Fund specific training schemes for regional companies and ethnic minority talent, and spend around £400,000 on funding specific company development projects
- Offer a greater range of programmes than any other commercial broadcaster, evidenced by the number of new titles. We have already commissioned over 100 new titles for 2006, and that number will rise considerably during the year

4. Tier 2 arrangements

Channel 4 expects to meet all its quantitative requirements in 2006. As a publisher-broadcaster we will far exceed the 25% independent production quota, and will meet the 50% target for European origin. We expect to meet the origination target of 60% in all hours and 70% in peak. We will meet the target of 4 hours of news in peak, and 4 hours a week of current affairs (all hours) with 80 hours of current affairs in peak during the year. We will meet our regional targets of 30% of hours and spend.

5. Programme offer

Channel 4 supports the purposes and characteristics of public service broadcasting that were developed by Ofcom as part of the PSB Review. For this Statement of Programme Policy, we have set out our programme offer on a genre-by-genre basis with reference to the purposes and characteristics as appropriate.

News

Channel 4 News will continue to provide the highest-quality news coverage at 7pm every weekday. *More4 News* at 8pm, immediately following the main bulletin on Channel 4, will offer additional coverage and extended interviews.

Current affairs

Unique amongst the UK broadcasters, Channel 4 will enhance its provision of peak-time current affairs in 2006, extending and increasing investment in our flagship strand *Dispatches*, with the number of programmes increasing from 28 to 32 and an increase in accompanying online initiatives.

The number of episodes of our international strand *Unreported World* will double from 10 to 20, enabling Channel 4 to increase the range and depth of international coverage. UK current affairs will be covered by *30 Minutes*, with 20 programmes, double the number in 2005. The strategy is to bring original and diverse views to current affairs, opinions not found elsewhere on UK television.

Education

Channel 4's commitment to Education spans its television channels, new media and numerous new talent and training initiatives. The core channel will commit £90 million to education programmes in 2006, with a big proportion of these in peak time.

The sections below on Schools, Science and History, Religion, Social Issues, Arts and Leisure Interests describe the range of our education offer.

Schools programmes

Our strategy in schools programmes is to focus on 14-19 year olds, with four key areas: rites of passage, teenage angst, opening up the wider world and the world of work.

We will continue to refine our strategy by working with DfES and education experts and by surveying the target age group to understand their needs and attitudes.

We will also extend our distribution by different platforms, increasing the use of CD Roms, Broadband and online services for schools and colleges. ClipBank, the service for secondary and FE teachers, will increase the number of digitised clips available to teachers. All Channel 4 Learning's broadcast programmes will continue to be supported by programme notes, available free online at www.channel4.com/learning.

Children's programmes

Channel 4 does not commission programmes made specifically for children.

Science and History

Science and History are core to our Education output. We will encourage authorship, with Niall Ferguson's six part *New History of the Twentieth Century* and Gunther Von Hagens' *Life and Death*, and plan to tackle a wide range of science issues, such as the DNA map of Britain and the differences between humans and animals. We will focus on the contemporary with *Challenger* and *Falling Man*. We will encourage family viewing with *Time Team*, *Scrapheap Challenge* and a new science format show. *The Genius Awards* will be a big public competition to prompt collaborations between artists and scientists.

Religion and other beliefs

Channel 4's religious programmes will examine contemporary issues around the world, putting religion at the heart of the story and reflecting the diversity of belief in the UK. They will be polemical and controversial, featuring authored pieces from Richard Dawkins and Muslim academic Tarique Ramadan, and confronting challenging themes such as gay issues in Islam and the Church of England. Channel 4's religious programmes will all play in peak in 2006.

Social issues

Channel 4's documentaries will reflect how we live now and the diversity of the world. We will focus in particular on important social issues such as the elderly, children with mental health problems, adoption, immigration and the relationships between different ethnic groups in Britain. We will also commission primetime series highlighting issues of public interest in accessible ways, including school admissions, divorce mediation, education and child obesity.

At the heart of all our social documentaries is the intention to promote tolerance within society (see also the section on Diversity below).

International coverage

Coverage of international issues will permeate our entire schedule, as we aim to increase the understanding of the world through drama and documentary as well as news and current affairs (see Contemporary subject matter in Overall strategy, page 2).

Drama

We will significantly increase our original drama output in 2006, with Channel 4's budget increasing to £35 million, which will enable us to schedule more high-quality originations at 10pm. Investment in drama will be boosted significantly by More4's

ambition to commission an event drama each month, which will also air on Channel 4; and by E4's increased commitment to long-running drama. This increase in investment will enable us to commission both more long-running series (new and returning) and new single dramas.

This big increase in drama ambition will require a major increase in development, and the lead time for drama can be very slow, but we are confident of achieving a substantial increase on 2005. In line with our overall strategy, our drama will focus strongly on contemporary material, including international and multicultural issues.

Comedy and Entertainment

Channel 4's ambition in Comedy is to identify and promote new talent, and the greatest challenge is to stimulate an audience for our new comedies on Friday nights. Traditionally the strategy was to sandwich new shows between episodes of established US comedies, but with fewer of these popular US shows available we now have to work harder to attract viewers to Channel 4's new comedy series.

Our commissions will bring the best cutting-edge writing and performing to the screen, encourage original writing and performing talents, and reflect the live comedy circuit ahead of anyone else. Similarly, in Entertainment, our Friday night shows will be new and provocative – we will use them to showcase new talent and try risky ideas.

Arts and Music

Channel 4 aims to maximise its PSB impact in Arts by making as big a noise as possible with our investment, through high-profile events and high-quality (and big-budget) series. Two highly ambitious projects are *Ballet Hoo*, following in the tradition of *Operatunity* and *Musicality*, which will give disadvantaged young people a chance to work with a large prestigious ballet company; and *The Play's the Thing*, a highly risky project to commission a new writer and put on a new play in the West End. Work will get underway on *Big Art*, a long term project involving the public in major commissions for public art across the UK.

Our ambition is for our Arts and Music programmes to be of the highest quality, and to cover a wide breadth of subject matter. Thus, Howard Goodall will return with *How Music Works*, and we will show serious journalistic pieces on architecture, performance, philosophy and art history.

Feature films

Channel 4 will continue to spend £10 million per annum supporting new UK film talent. Our development slate, which now includes five of the Film Council Slate Funds, encourages and supports an enormously wide range of talent and projects and the fruits of this are beginning to come through. Our most recently completed films *Isolation* and *Brothers of the Head* will be released in 2006. FilmFour is also privileged to be developing *The Lovely Bones*, led by *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson.

Sport

Channel 4 lost the rights to live Test cricket in 2006, which will mean a significant diminution of our sports coverage. However we will continue our extensive racing coverage as well as innovative coverage of alternative sports.

We will seek other sports to invest in and innovative new forms of coverage.

We have taken the decision to reinvest the money saved by the loss of cricket rights in 2006 in drama and family science and history formats.

Leisure interests

One of Channel 4's key strengths is the quality of its leisure and lifeskills programmes. From *Grand Designs* to *Supernanny* to *You Are What You Eat* to *Pay Off Your Mortgage in a Year*, our programmes will offer inspiring and practical advice.

6. Additional matters

Cultural and other diversity

Channel 4 is strongly committed to cultural and other forms of diversity. It lies at the heart of our remit, and we will continue actively to champion diversity both on- and off-screen, including amongst independent production companies.

Cultural diversity

We will encourage diverse casting in all our programmes, and are committed to extending the range of voices and presenters on the Channel across our output. Key multicultural presenters in 2006 will include Krishnan Guru Murthy, Sorious Somura, Robert Beckford, Tarique Ramadan, Seetha Hallet, June Sarpong and Miquita Oliver.

We will show a wide range of programmes that reflect the diversity and complexity of modern Britain, including *My New Home* (on the children of new immigrants), *The Bradford Riots* (drama), *The Great British Black Invasion* (on African immigration to the UK) and *Sharia TV*. In Arts, there will be a film on Fela Kuti and a new commissioned opera about Gadaffi.

Channel 4 will continue its pioneering ethnic minority television training in 2006. We will spend £525k funding three ethnic minority commissioning editors at Channel 4, eleven entry-level researchers on the ethnic minority Researcher Training Programme and two bursaries for ethnic minorities on City University's News Journalism MA/Channel 4 News. We will encourage our suppliers to improve diversity at all levels of production, and we will encourage and support black and Asian production companies.

Disability

Channel 4 will commit £220k to disability initiatives in 2006 in addition to the £30k we put into Vee-TV/deaf training. We will repeat the one-year placement for a disabled broadcast journalist with Channel 4 News, and introduce a new one-year placement for a trainee development producer to work on low budget feature films. We will continue to fund deaf and disabled directors, producers, researchers and runners on short-term placements.

Programmes dealing with disability in 2006 will include Progeria, Primordial Dwarfs, Alzheimer's and speech disorders as well as Vee-TV.

Repeats

Our policy for repeats will be in line with fulfilling our licence commitments on originated programmes. Our editorial and spending focus is in peak so repeats there will be minimal.

Promotion of media literacy

Channel 4 will continue to provide viewers with clear information about programmes in listings and other media, on the EPG, and with additional information available on the website.

We will offer a clear system of on air announcements and warnings, and in addition we provide warnings for our teletext provider to post page 408 for the duration of the programme (in line with the recommendations of the Denton Committee on Violence on Television).

The *Breaking The News* website will provide information on how the news is made, offering a unique interactive programme enabling young people to edit news packages themselves as well as fulfilling a range of curriculum requirements.

Channel 4 will fund IdeasFactory, encouraging individuals to participate in the creative industries online and through initiatives and regional events. Media literacy skills will also be promoted with broadband initiatives such as the FourDocs documentary site, and that model will be extended in 2006 with the creation of FourLaughs.

Public Input

Channel 4 will continue to seek the greatest possible feedback from viewers in the formulation of programme policy. In 2006 we will have quantitative and qualitative audience research throughout the year, and we will conduct in depth research on viewer perceptions of innovation.

This audience research will be discussed at regular meetings with commissioning editors.

Kevin Lygo
Director of Television
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