

PSB REVIEW

IS CHANNEL 4 WORTH FUNDING IN THE FUTURE?

If you asked yourself - which channel did I learn most from watching last week? The answer would almost certainly be Channel 4.

If you asked yourself - which channel most challenged your opinions or gave you the best practical advice on how to improve the way you live your life? The answer would almost certainly be Channel 4.

In the new multichannel landscape, Channel 4 has become the benchmark for modern public service broadcasting. It manages to be aspirational and inspiring, while retaining a culture of making mischief and being troubling. If you want to build a dream home, learn how to be a better parent, find out why your body is like it is - or if you want to know what it really feels like to be inside the head of the Prime Minister - it's all there on 4.

Viewers want their channels to wear their public service remit lightly and the Channel does that very well indeed. The delicate balancing act can only be achieved through clear management and a strong belief in the values at the core of the Channel's output. The Channel has an incredible battle on its hands to continue to make stand out distinctive programming in the battleground of the multi-channel environment. It will only be able to be at the forefront of making distinctive, high quality programmes that reflect the world about us – if it is financially supported.

As an independent producer I have provided the Channel with programmes for the last 15 years. I continue to choose it as my first port of call because it is a platform where you can make programmes that you feel will get watched and that will make a difference to people's lives. We sell the programmes we make for Channel 4 to many countries around the world. The job is made relatively easy because the Channel has a much envied, global brand of innovation and quality.

I favour option 3 where the plurality continues. The BBC absolutely needs to be supported as the cornerstone of PBS, but Channel 4 has consistently shown that it more than matches the BBC on PSB in a number of key areas.

Channel 4 has been very active in promoting regional production through its support of independent companies, which in turn has helped create economic benefits to the regions and guaranteed plurality of cultural voices too.

If Channel 4 is to continue as PSB powerhouse it needs support quickly, but that support should not be given lightly. Channel 4 needs to be closely monitored to ensure that it delivers on many of its future claims. It is perfectly placed to be a key place for innovation, multiplatform delivery for children and young people, and the home of quality programmes that will help change people's lives.

In its bid to be as commercially successful as possible it has begun to slip in some key areas and has woken up late to the need to state its renewed public service credentials.

With a stringent new remit in place, the Channel remains in a unique and special position to serve some key areas of viewers' needs for a long time to come.