**BFI SETS OUT SUPPORT FOR UK INDUSTRY IMPACTED BY COVID-19 CRISIS**

**Statement from Ben Roberts, Chief Executive of the BFI**

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has been devastating and far reaching, and we are working with colleagues across the industry to support those who have been hardest hit, and ensuring that we thrive as we recover.

We are part of a community of innovative and talented creatives working across the entire value chain. We are committed to supporting the individuals, organisations and businesses who have been most impacted by COVID-19, and we have developed a programme of support, which sits alongside the Government’s extensive fiscal package.

We have been listening to the industry to understand where the need is most, and have repurposed over £4.6m in National Lottery funding to target specific areas of the sector, including exhibitors, freelancers and producers. We have also adjusted criteria on key existing schemes – including our annual £2.5m Development Fund and the BFI Locked Box – in response to issues such as cash flow and company overhead.

Meanwhile all our existing funds for shorts, features and talent development funds – which total £21.9m in 2020/21 – remain open and across the board we are committed to getting money to those who need it as quickly as possible.

We also want to help our industry deliver for audiences during this period. Our Audience Fund Project Awards, with £1.6m available in 20/21, has always encouraged applications for inventive online audience-facing activity, and we hope our funding can now help these bring films direct to audiences while our cinemas are closed.

In addition, we continue to support producers through the BFI International Fund, so they can capitalise on upcoming virtual markets, and at the same time, are assessing how we can adapt our Film Export Fund to ensure we can effectively support sales agents once physical international festivals and markets resume.

Alongside this, we remain in close collaboration with Government and a wide range of partners through the Screen Sector Task Force, through which we have already helped to shape measures introduced to support our industry. The Government has been really supportive throughout this process, and while this vital work continues, we are also focused on developing a strategy for our recovery.

**Creative Industries Minister Caroline Dinenage comments:**

“Our world-leading screen sector is at the cultural heart of the nation and is one of our greatest success stories. It is fantastic to see the BFI taking a strong lead in helping those in the industry struggling in these difficult times. Together with the Government's unprecedented financial support package, these measures will help ensure that the sector continues to thrive and is well placed to recover as quickly as possible.”

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**£4.6M TARGETED PROGRAMMES OF SUPPORT:**

* **£2M BFI FILM CONTINUATION FUND**

Up to £2m to be made available to independent UK productions interrupted by COVID-19 to help cover unexpected additional production costs to ensure productions are in the best position to resume production when practical. Further details will be announced later in April.

* **£1.3M BFI FAN COVID-19 RESILIENCE FUND**

Exhibitors and festivals have faced immediate closure and cancellations, with many small and medium sized businesses at risk of permanent closure and making staff redundant. The BFI has repurposed the **BFI Film Audience Network**’sNational Lottery activity funding, to offer critical relief to exhibitors across the whole of the UK. Opening next week, applications will be via local **Film Hubs**. [bfi.org.uk/fanresiliencefund](http://www.bfi.org.uk/fanresiliencefund)

* **£500,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 FILM AND TV EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND**

We partnered with The Film and TV Charity to set up this fund, which is [now open for applications](https://filmtvcharity.org.uk/covid-19-help-advice/covid-19-relief-fund), and yesterday announced a contribution of £500,000 of National Lottery funding. The Fund offers support to active workers and freelancers working across production, distribution and exhibition who have been hit by the crisis, providing one-off grants of between £500 and £2,500. The £2.5m fund is thanks to donations from industry, including Netflix, the BBC, WarnerMedia and several generous individuals, as well as the BFI.

* **£800,000 FOR BFI FUNDED FEATURES**

£800,000 was made available for current BFI funded features that were interrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions. As contracts were abruptly cut short, the funds ensured those employed were paid two weeks’ notice.

* **BFI FUNDED PARTNERS**

All our funded partners and projects have been given flexibility on both the scheduling of payments to support cash flow, and on delivery against activity targets impacted by the pandemic. This has been particularly essential for the 28 exhibitors, major festivals, distributors and archives who received £3.8m through our Audience Fund Organisational Awards in March.

**ADJUSTED CRITERIA**

Addressing the urgent need to keep our UK independent producers, their projects and their companies in business, we have adjusted criteria on some existing funds:

* The **£2.5m Development Fund** now offers greater flexibility in the scheduling of payments and frontloading fees, and can now cash flow funds up to 80% for each step (eg a draft)
* The **BFI Locked Box** is available to producers, writers and directors who have a share of income from previous BFI supported projects. Ordinarily accessible only for future project development, production or training, a portion of Locked Box funds will now be made available to help alleviate hardship, supporting reasonable overheads to protect business resilience during the next six months.

**KEY FUNDS (full list of open funding programmes below)**

All our existing filmmaker funds are fully active and open for business and we are working hard to get money to those who need it as quickly as possible. Full details below, but this includes:

* We are continuing to accept, assess and make decisions on applications for **Production Funding**, giving producers confidence and allowing them to work towards commencing production when possible
* Recipients of the **£2m Vision Awards** will be announced this month, supporting 20 production companies around the UK over the next two years.
* The **Young Audience Content Fund**, financed by the UK Government, is also continuing to award production and development funding.

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More details of all our Funds below. Advice and information for those working across the breadth of the screen sector can be found here: <https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/covid-19-update>, this includes a COVID-19 Q&A setting out the information and guidance we have so far on the pandemic and its impact on the sector at large.

[**PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING**](https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/production-development-funding/young-audiences-content-fund)

A total of **£21.9m of National Lottery** is available this financial year, through the development, production and talent development funds detailed below. Across shorts and features, the Funds continue to be active and fully open for business. Applications and funding decisions are being processed as quickly as possible, and payments are being accelerated to ensure funding can ease immediate cash flow challenges.

**Development Fund**

**£2.5m is available through the BFI** **Development Fund** for new projects, as well as continuing to offer funding and editorial support for over 150 live projects. The BFI is keen to ensure producers impacted by COVID-19 can continue to develop projects, operate their companies and retain staff, including engaging writers, directors and other freelancers. We are offering greater flexibility in the scheduling of payments and frontloading fees, and can now cash flow funds up to 80% for each step (eg a draft). Producers of already awarded ‘live’ projects can email DevelopmentCoordinator@bfi.org.uk to request acceleration of payment on a similar basis.

**Production Fund**

Although the vast majority of production in the UK is currently on hold, the **BFI Production Fund, with £15.9m available in 2020/21**, is continuing to accept, assess and make decisions on applications for Production Funding to give producers confidence that funds will be available, and allow them to work towards commencing production as and when possible. We are also continuing to support existing BFI funded projects that had to stand down during this period, working closely with the teams to ensure production is able to restart at an appropriate point in the future.

**Documentaries**

**Doc Society**, our documentary partner with **over £1.2m** available to fund documentaries in 2020/21, are continuing to run their range of support and funding for UK documentary filmmakers through the BFI Doc Society Fund. They are due to make a new round of feature awards in April, with the fund reopening in the summer, while the Made of Truth Short Film Fund will open in May.

**Shorts, Early Development Funding**

**BFI NETWORK** is still offering funding through its **Short Film Fund** and the **Early Development Fund**, while the NETWORK Talent Execs across the UK are moving their work online and offering coaching and 1:2:1 guidance. The latest details can be found at @BFINETWORK.

**Funds to be announced**

The selection process for the **Vision Awards**, the **BFI NETWORK INSIGHT** programme and the **Short Form Animation Fund**, are continuing to the same timeline. All are currently closed for applications, with successful filmmakers to be announced and awarded in April 2020 as planned.

[**AUDIENCE FUND PROJECT AWARDS**](https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/distribution-exhibition-funding/bfi-audience-fund)

The fund is open, welcoming funding applications for a range of audience-facing activities – including online strategies. The Fund seeks to back projects which offer people across the UK the opportunity to enjoy and learn from the richest and most diverse range of great UK and international filmmaking, past, present and future.

[**YOUNG AUDIENCE CONTENT FUND**](https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/production-development-funding/young-audiences-content-fund)

The **Young Audiences Content Fund**, financed by the UK Government, supports the creation of distinctive, high-quality content for audiences up to the age of 18. Although some production is currently on hold, there is £18.8m available through production and development awards which continue to be processed and regularly awarded. An announcement detailing the projects funded between January-March 2020 will be made in April.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors**

**About the BFI**

The BFI is the UK’s lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a distributor of National Lottery funding and a cultural charity that:

* Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of world cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
* Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
* Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
* Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.