



WS/SB/JO/STE/I/4

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Dear Larry

INFRASTRUCTURAL FUNDING IN LONDON

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of the LFVDA Board in which you outlined a number of concerns arising from the Production Board's decision to discontinue core funding Four Corners Film Workshop.

On the decision itself, I assume that you accept that the context for this decision is radically different from the one in which the letter to Trevor Vibert of Greater London Arts was drafted, some five years ago. Since 1990 GLA has disappeared and the LFVDA was created by the Institute. In that time however, the Institute has experienced considerable changes to its funding base which have impacted progressively on BFI Production in general and have specifically meant a net loss to the Projects Fund of over £100,000.

The Production Board's decision concerning Four Corners was made with this context in mind. It was decided that, given the limited resources available to BFI Production, but also the new possibilities for film and video organisations represented by the National Lottery, the policy of project and infrastructural funding was no longer appropriate. It was resolved that project funding, in line with the general work of BFI Production should be the priority for the Projects Fund.

On more general points:

I am not sure how far your point about previous sources of funding can be sustained. 'Production Projects' as it was called initially, was essentially a reconfiguration of two sources of money: the first and larger part being the Regional Production Fund for

The British Film Institute exists to promote appreciation, enjoyment, protection and development of moving image culture in and throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. Its activities include the National Film and Television Archive; The National Film Theatre; The London Film Festival; The Museum of the Moving Image; the production and distribution of film and video; funding and support for regional activities; Library and Information Services; Stills, Posters and Designs; Research; Publishing and Education; and the monthly Sight and Sound Magazine.

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production workshops in the regions; the second part being certain funds transferred from the old Funding and Development division of the Institute. The Regional Production Fund had no connection with any GLC abolition settlement, while the monies from Funding and Development did, albeit it was related to production and training workshops which had enjoyed GLC funding in the year preceding abolition.

You also raise the question of the Production Board's decision to 'prioritise regional development'. The information I have suggests that there has not been a shift of resources away from London.

The position is, at heart, surely quite simple. BFI Production has decided not to fund infrastructure, whether it be in London or any of the other regions of the UK, and this decision has had the effect of withdrawing a privilege which one London organisation had over the other regions. In the broader context, looking at the full range of commissions from Production across New Directors, feature films and the Projects Fund, the lion's share of funding gravitates, to London-based production companies and talent. You will be aware that we are regularly criticised for that state of affairs by representatives of the other regions in the UK.

Another area of concern in your letter relates to what is referred to as a 'unilateral' abandonment of consultation which is, I believe, something of an overstatement. As far as I am aware, a spirit of 'consultation' has characterised the working of BFI Production and LFVDA officers concerning areas of mutual interest, including, for example, the difficult process of winding up Ceddo Film and Video; the recent setting up of the Screenwrite programme with British Screen; and indeed, discussions concerning the future of Four Corners.

In response to your point concerning the Institute's future relationship to the London Production Fund, I am afraid that the Institute and LFVDA will continue to have differing interpretations. From the point of view of the Production Board, a significant sum of money was allocated to the LPF in its first year which helped to pump-prime the operation. The Institute was happy to have played a part in getting the fund off the ground and making a contribution to something that would come to be recognised as an important player on the national





production funding scene. Ultimately, however, a continued commitment from the already overstretched resources of BFI Production was not thought to be appropriate by the Board.

The funding to LEA/LFMC - £85,000 in the first year and similar sums thereafter - is not one-off development money but a continuing commitment to fund the revenue gap on the rent of the Hoxton Square premises. Next year it also includes a contribution to VET of £20,000 to enable their occupation of the premises. In addition, next year's Development Budget contains a £5,000 contribution to Connections; likely support of Marc Boothe's projects; and £7,500 towards the continued running costs of Sankofa i.e. a sum in excess of £100,000 to support London's infrastructure in addition to the £450,000 we give to the LFVDA direct.

Finally, as the above should make clear, the Institute no longer endorses the principle of 'ring-fenced' infrastructure support for London.

To conclude on a more positive note, I feel sure that collaborations between the Institute and the LFVDA will continue and develop.

In this context, there has, I know, been some discussion in the recent past between Institute officers and Steve McIntyre concerning the idea of 'cultural spaces' which relates to a sense of irreplaceable cultural value in the work of a group of people. Irene Whitehead has already established certain protocols in this area and offered some limited funding support to certain organisations in London. Developing and expanding this principle might provide a useful area for mutual collaboration. I should be interested to hear your views.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wilf'.

Wilf Stevenson  
Director

cc Irene Whitehead/Head of Cinema Services &  
Development  
Ben Gibson/Head of BFI Production  
Steve Brookes/BFI Production

