



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Combined Authority Board Meeting

Date	23 June 2017
Report title	Responding to the Government's Consultation on Increasing the Regional Impact of Channel 4 Corporation
Portfolio Lead	Councillor John Clancy – Economic Growth
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Report to has been considered by	A version of this report has been considered by the Programme Board

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

1. Note the update on developing a West Midlands response to the Government's consultation on *Increasing the Regional Impact of Channel 4 Corporation* and comment as appropriate.
2. Agree to delegate authority to the Mayor, the Leaders of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley and Solihull and the three LEP Chairs to agree the final response to be submitted to Government on 5 July 2017.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Combined Authority Board on progress in developing a West Midlands response to the consultation document that the Government has launched on the future of Channel 4.
- 1.2 To seek delegated authority for the approval of the final response for submission to Government on 5 July 2017.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 12 April 2017, the Government launched a consultation on *Increasing the Regional Impact of Channel 4 Corporation*. They are seeking views on how Channel 4 can most effectively contribute to regional economic growth, stimulate regional creative industries and better serve regional audiences. Specifically they would like to look at:
 - To what extent should Channel 4 be based outside London, potentially including moving its headquarters;
 - Whether more programmes shown on Channel 4 should be made outside London; and
 - Whether Channel 4 should be able to make larger investments in production companies to support the development of emerging talent, including that from the regions, and help bolster Channel 4's future financial position.
- 2.2 The Government is seeking responses to a series of questions set out in the consultation document. The deadline for submissions is 5 July 2017.
- 2.3 On 12 May 2017 the Combined Authority agreed to submit a regional response to the consultation on behalf of the West Midlands and commission the West Midlands Growth Company to lead on the preparation of the response. It also welcomed the funding of a feasibility study by a number of partners including the Black Country, Coventry & Warwickshire and Greater Birmingham & Solihull (GBS) LEPs and Coventry City Council.
- 2.4 Following the Board's decision, a working group has been convened to lead on the development of the submission. The group is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Growth Company and includes representatives from across the three LEP geography.
- 2.5 KPMG and BOP Consulting have been commissioned to assist in the development of the response which will set out the reasons why the region is best placed to meet the requirements of Channel 4 and the Government.
- 2.6 From work undertaken to date, it is evident that the West Midlands has a lot to offer Channel 4. This includes a highly talented, diverse population, a low business cost base and excellent connectivity. These clear strengths have already led to a number of large organisations such as HS2 Ltd and HSBC taking the decision to relocate to the region in recent years.

2.7 The West Midlands is also well placed to deliver on the requirements necessary for a Channel 4 move to the region. There are several locations within the WMCA area that could be considered by Channel 4 as potential sites for new headquarters or programming, each able to cater for different requirements. They include Friargate Coventry, The Hub in Solihull, the Black Country and Birmingham city centre.

3.0 Next Steps

3.1 Work is ongoing to complete the evidence base required to underpin the submission and to craft the response itself. This report seeks delegated authority to the Mayor, the Leaders of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley and Solihull and the three LEP Chairs for approving the final response before submission. Non-constituent members will be briefed on the contents of the response via their LEPs.

3.2 To support the development of the response, a detailed engagement plan is being delivered. This includes key influencers across Government, local MPs, the creative, cultural and media sector, universities, colleges and Channel 4 themselves. This part of the process is incredibly important as Government will be looking for a broad level of support for any relocation. Demonstrating the benefits of any move to Channel 4 will be a critical part of this work.

3.3 The Government has not yet set out how it will respond to the outcomes of the consultation exercise post 5 July but it is clear that engagement with key stakeholders will need to continue beyond this date. If the decision is taken for Channel 4 to relocate and the West Midlands is considered a viable option, then the Government and the Channel 4 Board will need to undertake much greater analysis of potential sites which the West Midlands will need to be ready to respond to.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no financial implications for the WMCA arising from this report at this stage of the consultation process.

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

6.0 Schedule of background papers

6.1 Government Consultation: *Regional Impact of Channel 4 Corporation*.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608416/Increasing_the_Regional_Impact_of_Channel_4_Corporation_-_Consultation_1_.pdf