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FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION - REPORT JAN 89 - MAR 89

Any report like this always runs the risk of lapsing into a long and not particularly informative list. Instead of mentioning everything underway in F&D, this report will instead focus on the broad issues animating the Division's work, while also highlighting some of the more substantial individual developments.

Much divisional time and energy has been spend in a wide ranging and thorough interrogation of policy, strategy, and the operational structures necessary to deliver on these. This has been prompted by a range of internal and external factors: the Corporate Plan, with its performance indicators for each Division; the Wilding Review which promises a radical revision of Regional Arts funding and structures; the growing pressures of the 'new reality'.

In this context the year-end formal consultative meetings between F&D and the Regional Arts Associations took on a particular significant twist. The underlying question was, of course, whether the current high level of devolved funding to and relative autonomy of the RAAs are the most effective way of promoting development of regional film and video activity. The BFI's position, as outlined in a strategy paper prepared by F&D, is that they are not. Instead, because of the large investment sums necessary to establish projects in the Regions, the thrust of funding policy should be towards strengthening centrally administered budgets. Funding decisions would be made in conjunction with a range of regional partners, but will, more than at present, reflect a national, BFI co-ordinated, strategy.

That national strategy being developed will be to consolidate and expand the exhibition infrastructure of Media Centres and Film Theatres, and to develop a network of well resourced production/training facilities centres. In order to 'flesh out' the broad proposals made in the light of the Wilding review, F&D has also spent considerable time during this three month period preparing details strategic plans for the principle areas in which it works: supporting production workshops, exhibition venues, training, and festivals. With regard to the first two of these, discussion has been animated by several recent major developments.

Over recent months, Channel 4 has been reworking its Workshop Funding Policy, moving away from long term funding of the Franchised Workshops towards a more project/product led policy. Alongside this, and in conjunction with F&D, has been the commencement of a strategy for the establishment of a network of well equipped and managed regional facilities centres. While most film and video workshops have always contained an element of resource provision, the new direction being pursued by the BFI and Channel 4 acknowledges the high level of initial capital investment necessary in order to equip the proposed facilities

centres to an appropriate level. This will make available production and training to a high professional standard, while also enabling them to maximise revenue earning capacity. In the light of this new policy emphasis, the launch in February of the new Sheffield Independent Film premises, funded by the BFI, Channel 4, Local Authorities and Yorkshire Arts marked an important staging post for the implementation of this new policy. Funding and Development, in now involved in wide ranging discussions to formulate a detailed plan for establishment of a network of comparable centres across the country.

A comparable plan is being formulated for the development of the regional exhibition infrastructure. Such a plan will need to suggest strategies for expanding the sector in a climate of declining real public subsidy. Here too, recent developments have added topicality to such a plan. Major strides have been taken in the Nottingham Media Centre Project, with a building being purchased with financial assistance from City, County and BFI; the formal establishment of the Company Board of Directors; and the imminent appointment of a Director for the Media Centre. The planned opening date is April 1990. In Sheffield too, there have been significant advances with Media Centre plans. A major feasibility study has been accepted in principle by the City Council, which has already commenced building work on the overall Cultural Industries Quarters development, within which the Media Centre will be housed. Opening of Sheffield Media Centre is scheduled for April 1991.

Continuing with exhibition, the last three months have also witnessed the commencement of feasibility studies on full time film theatres for Leeds and Leicester, and concrete moves towards the establishment of a full time film officer at Warwick Arts Centre.

Discussion with Local Authorities and cultural partners in Sheffield and Nottingham typically range across production, exhibition, training, education. Comparable major discussion are ongoing in Merseyside with all of the film and video groups in the region, the Local Authorities and Merseyside arts. These discussions promise nothing less than a complete overhaul of the structures and activity of film and video groups in Liverpool. Alongside these discussions, F&D is also participating in a study, promoted by Mersey TV, into a major Exhibition/Education Media Centre in the City.

Other policy documents produced by F&D during this period have concerned Film and Video Festivals Policy and Training/Employment (in the light of the White Paper on Broadcasting). The first of these argues that the BFI should prioritise Film Festivals with an innovative and critical stance vis a vis dominant film culture. A documentation policy with a critical-cultural thrust should also be a requirement. Video Festival are considered separately - the key requirement here is for Video Festivals to address the specificities of what video culture might be or might

become. Training/Employment and the White Paper were considered in extensive briefing notes which identifies a number of shortcomings around these issues - these notes informed discussion on the BFI's response to Government.

Also on the training side have been a number of courses for practitioners in regional cinemas and workshops, continuing the long term work of equipping the 'independent' sector with the relevant business skills to survive and hopefully flourish in the arid environment of the new reality. These courses have focused on business/strategic planning and effective marketing.

On a more downbeat note, the period also witnessed the winding up of two representative organisations. SEFT commissioned a study of its work and operation, following which it decided that the organisation should go into voluntary liquidation. F&D has endeavoured to secure the future of as much of SEFT's work as possible, by relocating Screen within the John Logie Baird Centre at the University of Glasgow, and by commissioning a further study on Media Education Teachers' needs, and the most effective ways of meeting them. WFTVN also closed following withdrawal of funding from the London Borough Grant Scheme. Again, efforts have been made to secure a future for some of its work, with WFTVN's database being passed on to Vera Productions in Leeds. The two other substantial representative organisations, ABW and IFVPA are also examining closely their policies and operational structures. These will form agendas for future discussions between these bodies and F&D.

The period also saw the final rounds of decision for funding from the Development Fund (a full list of 1988/89 Development Funding decisions is attached). Because of forward commitment to major projects in the 89/90 financial year, the Fund is also fully committed for this year as well. F&D is currently considering allocations for next year, in the light of the strategic plans under construction.

Funding & Development (May 89)

Development budget 1988/89 allocations:

Colchester F&V Workshop	Business plan	1,500
Fantasy Factory	Capital Equipment	12,000
Manchester City Council	Regional Plan pt-2	5,000
Tyneside Cinema	Restructuring	5,000
Leeds Film Theatre	Feasibility study	2,000
Intermedia (Nottingham)	Capital Equipment	15,000
Bucks. Arts Assoc.	Research	2,000
Sheffield Media Unit	Business Plan	1,000
S.W.Arts	Training Co-ordinator	10,000
Albany/VET	Market Research	2,200
SE Arts	Production Consultancy	5,000
GLAA	London Audit/Feasibility	10,000
Merseyside Arts	Strategic Plan	20,000
Sheffield City Council	Media Centre Report	5,000
VET	Training Courses	6,600
Rainbow Alliance	Feasibility Study	2,000
IMTF	Training	5,000
MEC	DTP System	3,392
NW IFVPA	Regional Survey	1,000
Luton 33	Business Plan	1,000
LHAA	Feasibility Study - Hull	8,000
SEFT	Consultancy	5,000
Vera Production	Restructuring/Relocation	2,000
Riverside	BP Expo	1,250
BFI	Marketing Courses	5,000
York Film Workshop	Capital Equipment	7,000
Sheffield Independent Film	Development Strategy	10,000
Mersey TV	Feasibility Study	2,500
Nottingham Media Centre	Capital Grant	50,000
Scottish Film Council	Development Programme	23,000
Retake Collective	Removal etc	15,000
BFI	EOP Programme	5,000
EAF	Business Plan	1,000
Regional Exhibition Project Fund allocation		25,000
		274,442