# Sony Pictures Television calls Channel 4’s in-house production plans “ridiculous” amid industry scepticism



Wayne Garvie, president of international production at Sony Pictures Television, recently described Channel 4’s plans to begin in-house production as “ridiculous”, questioning the broadcaster's readiness to venture into content creation without a solid foundation in production expertise. Launched earlier this year as part of a new strategic vision, Channel 4 aims to establish a dedicated company focusing on genres such as entertainment and reality, which it believes hold significant international appeal.

At the Media and Telecoms 2025 and Beyond Conference in London, Garvie expressed skepticism regarding this initiative, asserting that “those who run in-house production businesses” understand that initial years typically yield financial losses. He pointed out that without considerable intellectual property assets or a thorough understanding of production management, Channel 4 risks straining its limited resources. Given the competitive landscape of broadcasting, he warned that the strategy could be "potentially disastrous", advising that success will take years, even with a capable leadership team.

Despite the criticism, Channel 4's outgoing chief executive, Alex Mahon, has been commended for maintaining the broadcaster's course through turbulent times, including a significant reduction in advertising revenue. In light of recent reforms that allow the broadcaster to create and own content, Mahon emphasised a cautious approach to in-house production. In a response to the Department for Culture, Media & Sport's announcement, she outlined a commitment to gradually escalate independent production quotas to 35%, while ensuring regional representation and long-term financial stability.

As Channel 4 looks to solidify its standing in a rapidly changing media landscape, its strategy has drawn diverse opinions. While some industry leaders share Garvie's concerns, there are indications that the broadcaster is adapting its model in response to these challenges. For instance, Channel 4 has pledged to substantially increase its investments in independent production companies in the UK, aiming for greater impact and diversification across its offerings. The commitment to invest £5 billion in British content over the next decade signals a strong resolve to nurture homegrown talent and creativity.

Additionally, prominent figures in the broadcasting space, like filmmaker Peter Kosminsky, have voiced the necessity for public broadcasters to champion unique British stories, particularly as streaming platforms often shy away from issue-led dramas that focus on local contexts. This sentiment reflects broader worries regarding the ability of public broadcasters to finance such projects amid the evolving dynamics of the media industry.

In tandem with its new production plans, Channel 4 is also enhancing its training and development programmes for emerging talents and investing in the potential of regional production companies. Announcing initiatives such as a £10 million commitment to 4Skills, the broadcaster aims to foster skills and retain talent across the UK, thus reinforcing the importance of regional industries in the national media landscape.

As Channel 4 stands on the precipice of transformation, the coming years will be crucial in determining whether its ambitions in in-house production will indeed bear fruit or flounder amid industry challenges.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/ridiculous-for-channel-4-to-start-making-in-house-tv-shows-says-sony-5X7JRD7PIJPKNGRPXTOHOLBKGQ/), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/jan/05/channel-4-privatisation-plans-formally-abandoned)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/ridiculous-for-channel-4-to-start-making-in-house-tv-shows-says-sony-5X7JRD7PIJPKNGRPXTOHOLBKGQ/), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/a6e2968d-7a78-4e03-9fcf-ce73ad7b98a1)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.channel4.com/press/news/statements-channel-4-chair-sir-ian-cheshire-and-ceo-alex-mahon-response-announcement), [[4]](https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-increase-commissions-nations-based-indies-boost-impact-across-uk), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/e8bd4df3-789f-47c7-8372-bf0a0e14ecb9)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.channel4.com/press/news/statements-channel-4-chair-sir-ian-cheshire-and-ceo-alex-mahon-response-announcement), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/a6e2968d-7a78-4e03-9fcf-ce73ad7b98a1)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/e8bd4df3-789f-47c7-8372-bf0a0e14ecb9), [[4]](https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-increase-commissions-nations-based-indies-boost-impact-across-uk)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.channel4.com/press/news/statements-channel-4-chair-sir-ian-cheshire-and-ceo-alex-mahon-response-announcement), [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/ridiculous-for-channel-4-to-start-making-in-house-tv-shows-says-sony-5X7JRD7PIJPKNGRPXTOHOLBKGQ/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/ridiculous-for-channel-4-to-start-making-in-house-tv-shows-says-sony-5X7JRD7PIJPKNGRPXTOHOLBKGQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/statements-channel-4-chair-sir-ian-cheshire-and-ceo-alex-mahon-response-announcement> - In November 2023, Channel 4's Chair, Sir Ian Cheshire, and CEO, Alex Mahon, responded to the Department for Culture, Media & Sport's announcement regarding the broadcaster's ability to produce and own some of its content. They emphasised a gradual approach to in-house production, aiming to avoid market disruption, and committed to increasing the independent production quota from 25% to 35% to support the sector. They also highlighted Channel 4's dedication to regional representation and financial sustainability.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/e8bd4df3-789f-47c7-8372-bf0a0e14ecb9> - Alex Mahon, Channel 4's outgoing CEO, urged UK ministers to bolster support for British-owned intellectual property amid concerns over potential U.S. tariffs on non-U.S. film productions. She highlighted the creative industries' £125bn contribution to the economy and the need to shift focus toward nurturing UK-owned IP. Channel 4 plans to develop original content and invest in independent studios, a strategy enabled by government reforms following the rejection of its privatisation in 2023.
4. <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-increase-commissions-nations-based-indies-boost-impact-across-uk> - Channel 4 announced plans to increase commissions from independent production companies based in the Nations and Regions, aiming to boost its impact across the UK. The broadcaster's training and development programme, 4Skills, will play a key role in supporting the broadcast industry by investing £10 million this year. A new two-year, £6 million career progression programme, Accelerate, will fully fund progression roles, building skills and retaining production talent in the Nations and Regions.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/jan/05/channel-4-privatisation-plans-formally-abandoned> - The UK government formally abandoned plans to privatise Channel 4 in January 2023. Instead, reforms through the Media Bill will allow Channel 4 to make and own some of its content, and a new statutory duty will be imposed on the board to protect the broadcaster's long-term financial sustainability. Channel 4 has also committed to increasing roles outside London and providing more opportunities for people from across the UK to gain experience in the sector.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/a6e2968d-7a78-4e03-9fcf-ce73ad7b98a1> - Alex Mahon, Channel 4's chief executive, announced her decision to step down in the summer of 2025 after nearly eight years in the role. Her departure coincides with Channel 4's ongoing search for a new chair, following the resignation of Sir Ian Cheshire. Mahon guided the publicly owned, commercially funded broadcaster through a challenging period, including a severe advertising revenue slump, leading to job and cost reductions. She played a key role in resisting government efforts to privatise the channel.
7. <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-commits-invest-ps5bn-british-content> - Channel 4 has committed to investing up to £5 billion in the next decade commissioning creative content from TV and digital production companies across the UK, subject to securing fresh investment to support its public service activities. The £5 billion investment includes up to £1.5 billion spent in the UK's nations and regions, a significant increase at a time when other commercially funded broadcasters are reducing investment levels.