

## **Meeting of the Statutory Classifiers**

**Thursday 7 March 2024**

### **Present**

Natasha Kaplinsky	President
Murphy Cobbing	Vice President
Kamlesh Patel	Vice President
David Austin	Chief Executive
Debbie Meade	Compliance Officer (for item 3)
Jasmin Mullings	Compliance Officer (for item 3)
Faye Harcourt	Director, Marketing and Outreach (for item 4)
Matt Tindall	Senior Policy Officer (minutes)

### **Apologies**

Dave Barrett	Deputy Chief Executive
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### **Minutes of the previous meeting**

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### **Matters arising**

2. There were no matters arising.

### **Compliance Show & Tell**

3. Debbie shared a clip from THE REV, a crime documentary about a vicar from Wales convicted of mutilating corpses. The film includes a shot of what appears to be a real severed penis, in close-up, which had been removed from a corpse post-mortem. The Classifiers discussed the suitability of the unusually graphic image at 15, and agreed that its brevity and the 'true crime' documentary context provided sufficient mitigation to allow its classification at that category. The BBFC classified THE REV 15 with the content advice 'strong sex references, injury detail, violence, sexually abusive behaviour'.

4. Jasmin introduced a clip from *SALTBURN*, a psychological thriller in which a student befriends a aristocratic classmate. In the clip, the student undresses, lies atop a freshly dug grave, and grinds his body against the earth. The Classifiers noted that it is a prolonged and potentially disturbing scene, but that nudity and sexual detail is relatively limited. The Classifiers considered the film to sit on the 15/18 borderline, but felt that its darkly comic tone was enough to justify its placement at the lower category. The BBFC classified *SALTBURN* 15 for 'strong sex, nudity, sexual threat, drug misuse, very strong language'.

## **MARY POPPINS**

5. Faye joined the meeting to discuss the press reaction to the BBFC's recent reclassification of *MARY POPPINS*, the beloved children's classic about a magical nanny. Historically rated U, the film was recently submitted for classification ahead of a 60th anniversary cinema re-release. When distributors choose to resubmit older films, the BBFC considers them under its current Classification Guidelines so that the modern rating is in line with public expectations. This means that older titles may sometimes require a higher or lower age rating than in previous years.
6. Viewed under the current guidelines, *MARY POPPINS* required a PG rating for two uses of the discriminatory term 'hottentot'. In the film, Admiral Boom (who believes he is a naval commander in charge of a ship travelling the world) asks Michael, a child, if he is going on an adventure to 'defeat hottentots'. Later, the character shouts 'We're being attacked by hottentots!' after seeing a gang of chimney sweeps (who have faces blackened with soot) dancing on a rooftop. He then proceeds to launch fireworks in their direction.
7. At U, the guidelines state that 'Discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly disapproved of.' There is no disapproval of the language used in *MARY POPPINS*, and so a PG rating was required.
8. The decision received considerable attention from the press, both in the UK and around the world, with factual reporting as well as opinion pieces both supporting and criticising the decision. David was interviewed about the reclassification live on the BBC.
9. The Classifiers suggested that it might be wise in future to publish a statement on our website about any reclassification decisions that generate similar levels of media interest, to ensure that accurate information is readily available for anyone who needs it.

## **Ensuring greater consistency across VoD**

10. The Classifiers discussed a policy proposal to allow BBFC age ratings issued by self-rating partners such as Netflix to be made available for wider online use by other VoD services licensed to carry BBFC ratings. This proposal will promote greater ratings consistency across the VoD landscape, to help families make safe and informed viewing decisions. The Classifiers approved the new policy to be implemented on a 12 month trial basis, after which the BBFC will review its impact and effectiveness.

## **Pornography Review**

11. David and Matt provided an update on the BBFC's engagement with the Government's review of pornography regulation, legislation and enforcement. We have met lead reviewer Baroness Bertin and officials from DSIT to brief them on the BBFC's statutory and best practice voluntary regulation of pornographic content, and the current availability online of violent, abusive pornography that we would refuse to classify for release offline. We have also made a written submission to the review's call for evidence.

**AOB**

12. There was no other business.

**Date of next meeting:** 16 April 2024