



NCSOFT®

ad sent 21.10.08

David Lepper MP

Re: Age rating system for video games

Dear Mr Lepper,

As you will have noted from a letter sent to you on 2nd August from Michael Rawlinson of ELSA (the Entertainment and Leisure Software and Publishers Association), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is currently consulting on how video games should be classified in future. Since you are the MP representing our main offices in the UK, I do sincerely hope that we will be able to count on your support in this critical consultation.

We want to see a major upgrade in UK games classification that will both improve and secure child protection, both now and in the future, and which will go a long way towards helping harmonise video games age rating across Europe. To do so, we want the UK to adopt – and put on a legal basis – the PEGI age rating system. PEGI already classifies all video games on a voluntary basis, but in the UK it currently exists in a dual rating system with additional, limited classification by the UK film ratings board, the BBFC.

Dual ratings cause confusion to customers, parents and guardians and hinder effective protection of minors. In more than 40 per cent of cases, the BBFC ratings tend to be lower than PEGI ratings because, we believe, the BBFC lacks expertise and uses the wrong methodology to classify games. PEGI checks all game content and recognises that players influence and alter the narrative, events and outcomes of their games. BBFC simply “samples” gameplay, failing to recognise that games are “non-linear” entertainment unlike a film which always has the same “beginning, middle and end” (and outcome).

We believe that game players – of all ages – are better protected and informed by a ratings system which fully understands its medium. You can see, therefore, why PEGI is fully supported by the entire games industry; BBFC is not.

The current consultation, however, is not just about updating age ratings now, but about securing a future regulatory regime which adapts to the ever-increasingly complexity of computer games. BBFC only applies to actual products bought in stores. However, computer games are increasingly being bought and played online and across national borders. It is the online world where children, in particular, face the greatest potential for harm. PEGI has been adopted so far by 29 European countries, with more states expressing interest in joining. It has common standards for rating and, crucially, it exists as a protective marker for the online world, as well as the physical, offline, world.

My company and its employees in your constituency produce exciting innovative games which bring pleasure to millions. We recognise that our products require a system of markers so that adults and children in many countries can understand more about the content they contain and the possibilities of interactive play they bring. We cannot see a future where single-country regulation will offer the very best protection for children and teenagers – instead we need a system that, like the Internet, works across many country borders. PEGI is already the most sophisticated games rating system in the world and with the right support might yet prove to be the only international system properly protecting children in the games world. In short, we believe PEGI is the future-proof age ratings system for the internet age.

