



Consultation on Setting up a System of Age Classification for Video Games Response by North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee.

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee welcomes this consultation opportunity on Video Games Classification. We fully acknowledge our perspective is one of Child Protection and that our expertise does not extend to the gaming or retail industries. Our response is reflective of our area of interest and experience.

We fully support a reform of the Video Game Classification System in order to offer better protection to children and young people.

Firstly, we endorse an extension of statutory classifications to all games rated 12 plus.

We have considered the four options for future video games classifications laid out in the consultation paper and we favour Option One, Hybrid Classification System.

Overall, our assessment of this option is that it combines the merit of both the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) and Pan European Game Information (PEGI) systems in a way that increases the protection of children. One potential flaw with this option, which has been identified by Dr Byron, is the differing age ratings used by each system. This clearly has the potential to be confusing for parents and consumers. In order to combat this difficulty we would suggest that either over-stickering is used, as used in Portugal, or that the front of the game boxes carries the BBFC age rating symbol and the back of the box contains only the PEGI pictogram and not an age rating.

The key advantages of this option are:

- 1) Parents are already familiar with BBFC, therefore this option would not involve a significant change in classification that would be bewildering for consumers.
- 2) Combining the PEGI system will help to increase familiarity of this system.
- 3) This is important in terms of future development in the gaming industry, as parents become increasingly involved in European markets and online environments where PEGI is more prevalent.

In relation to how this system would work for the key stakeholders we feel this system would maximise consumer confidence and would also promote easier marketing for retailers and would be an opportunity for the games industry to emphasise how important it is to them that children are protected. We do not have any suggestions to improve the system for any of these key stakeholders.

We believe that this proposed system addresses the evidence on potential harm raised by the Byron review as it extends statutory classification of games that rate 12 plus, which is inline with what is known about child development.

While we agree it is difficult to predict how the games industry will progress, it is likely that markets will become evermore expanding, including online markets, and for this reason it would seem to be important to ensure that UK consumers become familiar

with this system that uses PEGI in order that they have a foundation knowledge when buying from other markets.

We do not have any views on the costings of this proposal as this lies outwith our area of expertise. However, we would re-iterate that the safety of children should be the priority regardless of the costs involved.

Finally, in relation to the determining factors that would decide whether a game becomes subject to statutory classification at 12 plus, we would tentatively propose that the current BBFC and PEGI 12 and 12 plus classification criteria should be used as a starting point for more in-depth consultation.

We hope that this response has been helpful.

Bob Neilly,
CHAIR
North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee