What is our aim?
To repeal and revive the provisions of the Video Recordings Act 1984 so that the offences contained within it are enforceable again.

What is the Video Recordings Act 1984?
The Video Recordings Act (VRA) 1984 introduced a system of classification for films and some video games contained on physical products such as video cassettes and DVD's. That Act provides a series of offences concerning the supply of video recordings. For example it is an offence to supply a video recording that is unclassified and it is an offence to supply a video recording in breach of its classification certificate.

Why is it necessary to repeal and revive the 1984 Act?
Unfortunately, during preparations for the Digital Economy Bill in August 2009, the Government became aware that the VRA 1984 was no longer enforceable in UK law because of a failure to notify certain provisions of the Act to the European Commission, as required under the Technical Standards Directive. The provisions of the 1984 Act have now been notified to the Commission under that Directive, and the repeal and revival of these provisions will make the offences in the 1984 Act enforceable in the courts once again.

What are the benefits to business?
Once the VRA is revived businesses wishing to sell videos and DVDs in a responsible manner will no longer face competition from those who are selling unclassified material and material outside its age rating.

What are the benefits to consumers and citizens?
Until the VRA is revived publishers of DVDs and 18-rated video games can distribute their goods free of classification requirements, and retailers can sell or supply classified and unclassified material to anybody regardless of age with limited statutory powers to stop or prosecute them. This means that material depicting extreme violence or sexual content can be sold to anyone, including young people. The revival of the VRA will restore the proper protections that the public have come to expect around video classification and distribution.

What can’t you deal with this in the Digital Economy Bill? Why are you seeking separate legislation for this?
Our concern is to ensure that these public protections are in place as soon as possible. Taking early steps is the quickest way to achieve this.

The Digital Economy Bill will introduce changes to the Video Recordings Act to bring in a new system of classification for video games specifically. It is important that the 1984 Act is put back on a proper footing so that it can be amended by the Digital Economy Bill.
What about classification of video games?

We plan to amend the VRA 1984 (VRA) as part of the Digital Economy Bill to introduce a new system of classification for video games, using the enhanced Pan European Games Information (PEGI) system and to appoint a new statutory body (the Video Standards Council) to undertake the role of classifying games.

What about protecting the public in the meantime?

The purpose of reviving the VRA is to close the loophole in the enforceability of the offences and to restore the public protection as soon as possible.

We have spoken to the retailers’ trade associations and have agreed with them that retailers should not change their current policy concerning the sale of entertainment goods covered by the Act.

We have been working with the Crown Prosecution Service to draw up clear guidance for prosecuting authorities (including Trading Standard officers) on how to deal with prosecutions pending or forthcoming, until the VRA is revived.

http://www.bis.gov.uk/digitaleconomybill/

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