



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

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21 December 2016

Our Ref: 294491

E. Goodman
PO Box 570
Redhill
RH1 2QB

Dear E. Goodman

Thank you for your letter of 21 November to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, about the Digital Economy Bill. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team.

There is no question of a blanket ban on certain types of sites, as in some other countries. It is the Government's policy that controls on pornographic material should aim to strike a balance between freedom of expression and protection of the public, which should be proportionate to the potential harm that might be caused by such material.

Rather than arbitrary blocking, the Government is establishing a robust regulatory system and introducing measures which will allow the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) as the regulator to identify non-compliant sites and work with them to comply with the law. For sites that continue to remain non-compliant with UK law, the regulator will be able to instruct payment providers and other ancillary providers to withdraw supporting services from non-compliant sites. In addition, the BBFC will be enabled to direct Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to prevent access to a particular site. Far from having uncontrolled power, the BBFC will have to make decisions as to whether sites should be blocked on a case by case basis and will be required to inform the Secretary of State before doing so.

The Government is committed to ensuring the continuation of a free, open and secure internet, that supports our economic prosperity and social well-being, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't act to prevent children accessing harmful material online. Government policy is that controls on such published material should aim to strike a balance between freedom of expression and protection of the public, and should be proportionate to the potential harm that might be caused. Freedom of speech is clearly important and this legislation is not about preventing adults from accessing legal content, it is about ensuring children have the same safeguards online as they have offline.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Department
for Culture
& Sport

Pedro Monteiro
Ministerial Support Team

Our Ref: 204481

E. Goodman
PO Box 270
Redhill
RH1 2DS

Dear E. Goodman

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Thank you for your letter of 5 November 2016. I have discussed this with the Ministerial Support Team. We will be in touch with you again in the next few days.

There is no question of a blanket ban on certain types of sites, as in some other countries. It is the Government's policy that controls on pornography should aim to strike a balance between freedom of expression and protection of the public, which should be proportionate to the potential harm that might be caused by such material.

Rather than arbitrary blocking, the Government is establishing a content rating system and introducing measures which will allow the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) to register to identify non-compliant sites and work with them to improve their lawfulness. The BBFC will continue to remain non-compliant with UK law, the regulator will be able to restrict payment providers and other ancillary providers to websites supporting explicit content. In addition, the BBFC will be granted to direct internet service providers (ISPs) to prevent access to a particular site if it is found to be in breach of the law. The BBFC will have to make decisions as to whether sites should be blocked on a case by case basis and will be required to inform the Secretary of State before doing so.

The Government is committed to ensuring the contribution of a free press and secure jobs that supports our economic growth and social wellbeing, but this does not mean we should act to prevent children accessing harmful material online. Government policy is that controls on such published material should aim to strike a balance between freedom of expression and protection of the public, and should be proportionate to the potential harm that might be caused. Freedom of speech is clearly important and this legislation is not about preventing adults from accessing legal content. It is about ensuring children have the same safeguards online as they have offline.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

