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## UK CINEMA ASSOCIATION CONFIRMS NEXT STEPS ON INNOVATIVE SUBTITLING TECHNOLOGY FUND

**LONDON: 9 May 2019 - The UK Cinema Association, the trade body representing UK cinema operators, has today confirmed the next steps in their pioneering Technology Challenge Fund, established to stimulate technological innovation that will allow people with hearing loss to have a more inclusive cinema experience.**

The Fund was launched in partnership with Action on Hearing Loss in October 2018, with an 'invitation to apply' which saw over a dozen different applications offering a range of different potential solutions to the challenge.

Following extensive consideration by an expert panel of industry professionals and a 'user panel' of deaf and hard of hearing cinema-goers, three proposals have now been short-listed for the first round of funding. Two of these – put forward by the National Theatre and Greta & Starks respectively - involve the use of assistive eyewear, while the third – proposed by Screen Language relies on a secondary screen.

The availability of subtitled screenings has long been an issue of contention. While subtitles are a vital solution for many who are deaf or hard of hearing, the reluctance of many cinema-goers to attend such screenings means that offering widespread provision is challenging for many cinema operators.

The provision of 'closed' captioned subtitles – where text is only visible to the individual on a personal device such as a screen or specially-adapted glasses, has long been seen to offer one way forward.

Commenting on this latest development, UK Cinema Association Chief Executive Phil Clapp said:

“While there is still a great deal of development work and testing to be done, we have been pleased by the quality of the proposals put forward and are hopeful that at least one of the short-listed applications will eventually provide a viable solution.”

Jesal Vishnuram, from Action on Hearing Loss added:

“Action on Hearing Loss are committed to supporting the development of new and innovative technology to improve the lives of people with hearing loss. The Cinema Subtitle Challenge Fund is a great collaborative venture that has led to some very exciting opportunities to genuinely improve the cinema experience for people with hearing loss.”

While each of the final three solutions are at varying stages of development, the next step will be to arrange a practical demonstration to assess the operational viability of the proposal before further funding and R&D takes place.

## **Notes for editors**

**For further information please contact Grainne Peat on 07967673188 or email at [grainne.peat@cinemauk.org.uk](mailto:grainne.peat@cinemauk.org.uk)**

### **About UK Cinema Association**

The UK Cinema Association (UKCA) represents the interests of well over 90 per cent of UK cinema operators. Our members range from the largest cinema circuits to a wide range of single site owner-operated companies. The UKCA advocates on behalf of the UK cinema sector at international, national, regional and local level as well as working with other sectors of the industry, particularly colleagues in film distribution, to promote the value of cinema to the wider public and identify and share best practice.

The UK cinema sector is recognised as a world leader in its efforts to meet the needs of disabled customers, with cinemas continuing to strive to make watching a film as fully inclusive and as positive an experience as possible.

### **About Action on Hearing Loss**

Action on Hearing is the UK's national charity helping people who are confronting life-changing deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss.

The people they support may struggle with their condition. Or they may live well with it, but face ignorance and barriers in their way. Action on Hearing Loss enable all of them to take control of their lives without assumptions being made about what they can or can't do.

Action on Hearing continue to deliver and improve vital services through research and funding so that people with hearing loss can live the life they choose - at home, at work and when they're out and about.

### **About the Technology Challenge Fund**

The UK Cinema Association in partnership with Action on Hearing Loss (AOHL) has launched this Technology Challenge Fund, as an attempt to stimulate and support the development of a technological solution that will allow people with hearing loss to enjoy a more integrated cinema experience.

In doing so, it wishes to cast the net of potential partners wider than just the cinema sector to involve those working in the technology and academic sectors. The Association will provide some initial financial incentives for engagement and then – as appropriate - some further limited funding for development of promising concepts, all with the hope that support from wider industry partners can be drawn in as the process develops.

Should a suitable and viable product be developed that the cinema sector approves and meets the desired criteria set out in the aims and objectives, Action on Hearing Loss, will help to find a suitable commercial partner to develop and create a market ready product.

The successful applicant will have full Intellectual Property (IP) ownership and will take a percentage of the revenue from product sales. The UK Cinema Association and Action on Hearing Loss will promote the product across their networks both across UK and internationally.

### **Primary objectives**

The aim of this competition is to catalyse innovation in technology that will allow people with a hearing loss to have access to an inclusive cinema experience.

The ideal solution must:

- Allow people to have an integrated cinema experience with the general public i.e. people should be able to view subtitles without disturbing other viewers who do not want to view subtitles.
- Be easy to use for both the venue and user
- Be financially viable for venues to install and use
- Be compatible with existing cinema infrastructure

Projects are expected to develop and test a working prototype in a 'real life' cinema environment with end user feedback.

#### Funding and project details

Up to £75,000 is available to support innovative projects in this competition.

This is divided across two phases:

- up to £25,000 is available for phase 1 (up to £5,000 for each phase 1 project)
- up to £50,000 is available for phase 2 (up to £25,000 for each phase 2 project)

#### Expert Panel members

Mark Barlow	General Manager UK Theatres, Natl Amusements
Leah Byrne	Audience Development Manager, Picturehouse Cinemas
Calum Corser	Central Operations Support, Odeon Cinemas
Ed Rex	Patron, Action on Hearing Loss
Ben Luxford	Head of UK Audiences, British Film Institute
Jerry Murdoch	Country Manager UK & Ireland, Cinema Next
Gráinne Peat	Policy Executive, UK Cinema Association
Tim Potter	Regional Sales Manager, Cinema Next
Rick Williams	Access Specialist, Freeney Williams
Paul Willmott	Technical Director, Saffron Screen
Demir Yavuz	Head of Technical Operations, Universal Pictures
Stephane Zamparo	Subtitling Manager, Motion Picture Solutions

#### User Group members

Bryony Parkes  
Deafinitely Girly (Twitter alias)  
Ellie Parfitt  
Ed Rex  
Liam O'Dell  
Tim Reedy