thewlis graham associates
EXECUTIVE SEARCH AND CONSULTING

Candidate Brief

British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)

Chief Executive Officer

AD0601

September 2026

Managing Director
Sarah Thewlis
sat@thewlisgraham.com

Contents

Welcome from Natasha Kaplinsky, President of the Board of Directors

Dear Candidate,

I am delighted that you have expressed an interest in applying to be our next Chief Executive Officer for the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The information in this candidate brief and on our website will tell you more about the role.

The BBFC is an independent media content regulator. We classify theatrical films, home entertainment content, including on streaming services and DVD, and websites that are delivered through the UK's mobile networks. Our mission is to help families to choose content that is right for them and avoid what is not, and to protect children and vulnerable adults from harmful content. We carry out wide-reaching consultation and research to track changing social attitudes towards media content in order to keep a very high level of trust with the British public. The standards enshrined in our Classification Guidelines focus on child protection and the position of vulnerable adults, and they are revised every four or five years after an extensive process of public consultation.

The BBFC is a non profit-making company limited by guarantee. As well as being a statutory regulator, we increasingly work in partnership with home entertainment and other technology- based companies to deliver trusted classifications though self-regulatory models. We are financed by fees charged for classification. We receive no government money for our core function. We are operationally independent of the government and of the film and home entertainment industries. As well as classification, information provision is increasingly important. A wealth of information about us can be found on our website at www.bbfc.co.uk.

Our core mission is to be the trusted guide that helps UK audiences choose what is right for them. We work in a changing landscape of media consumption, including proliferating digital platforms and emerging new technologies. We have been able to balance our statutory duties with innovative technology and with expanding voluntary partnerships across the screen sector. We recognise the deep concern of parents about the availability of deeply inappropriate and often disturbing content online. Following on from Baroness Bertin's independent review into the future regulation of online pornography we are keen to support the government with our long-standing expertise and to take on a formal role in auditing this online area. As part of our commitment to child protection, we have been working with charities and other stakeholders, and we were delighted to establish our Safer Screens Forum.

This is an excellent leadership opportunity for a candidate with a strong sense of public service, outstanding ambassadorial and relationship building skills and commercial acumen. If this is a role that interests you, we would welcome your application. Details of how to apply are in this brief. If you then have any further questions about the role, please contact our recruitment partner Sarah Thewlis. Her email is applications@thewlisgraham.com.

Yours sincerely

Natasha Kaplinsky

2. About the BBFC

Established in 1912, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is an independent media content regulator. It classifies theatrical films, home entertainment content including DVDs and VOD, and websites delivered via the UK's mobile networks. Its mission is to help families choose content that is right for them, and avoid what is not, and to protect children and vulnerable adults from harmful content.

During 2025 the BBFC classified 1,315 features for cinema release, the highest number ever. 2025 also marked the fifth anniversary of the groundbreaking self-rating partnership work with Netflix. Aswell as setting the gold standard for how a regulator can work with a streaming service, it has been received very positively from parents. The most recent data has shown that 96% of parents find the age ratings on Netflix helpful when deciding what their children can watch on Netflix. The BBFC have continued with this self-rating partnership model with Prime Video and are working closely with Warner Bro/HBO Max to utilize their expertise in this area.

You can view our recent annual report [latest annual report](#)
You can see classification guidelines [here](#).

The Board

The BBFC Board is made up of seven Directors who each bring expertise from a variety of disciplines including the cinema, television, Video on Demand (VoD) and media industries and from public service, social welfare and charity roles.
The seven members currently include four Statutory Classifiers: our President, Vice Presidents and Chief Executive, who are designated by the Government to collectively classify films and series under the Video Recordings Act 1984 (VRA) and are responsible for all policies relating to classification. It also includes three Independent Directors, who advise us on our organisational strategy and the administering of our financial affairs.

Current members are: Natasha Kaplinsky OBE (President, BBFC and Chair, BBFC Board), Murphy Cobbing (Vice President), Lord Patel of Bradford OBE (Vice President), David Austin OBE (Chief Executive), Gloria De Piero (Independent Director), Darren Jobling (Independent Director) and John Stanley (Independent Director).

You can read more about the current Board in the link below.
https://www.bbfc.co.uk/who-we-are

3. The Role and Responsibilities of the CEO

Chief Executive Officer: BBFC
Report to: President of the BBFC

Purpose:
To provide strategic and operational leadership for the BBFC enabling it to fulfil its statutory, business, and public-facing obligations.

Key Duties & Responsibilities:
Leadership and Strategy
- Formulate and implement the vision, strategy, and values for the BBFC.
- Lead the organisation with a clear strategic direction, ensuring goals are aligned and effectively executed.

Policy and Compliance
- Work with the Statutory Classifiers to formulate policy regarding the classification of films, video works, websites and to maintain published guidelines.

Classification Guidelines
- Oversee classification decisions and ensure that all statutory obligations, particularly those under the Video Recordings Act 1984, are fulfilled.

Governance and Advisory
- Serve as the principal adviser to the BBFC Board to ensure that they can discharge their statutory obligations, governance and legal responsibilities.
- Ensure the Board has access to specialist advice when required.
- Provide guidance on critical decisions and policies impacting the organisation.

Public Trust and Engagement
- Uphold and enhance public trust in the BBFC's classification decisions and BBFC symbols, including through regular research and education.
- Represent the BBFC as its public face, overseeing relationships with key stakeholders, media, and the public.

Operational, Risk Management and Financial Oversight

- Oversee the BBFC's budgets and ensure financial sustainability and solvency, effectively managing and mitigating the potential operational and financial risks associated with R&D and the introduction of new products.
- Deliver financial targets within agreed margins while maintaining efficient operations.

Staff and Culture Leadership

- Lead and inspire staff, fostering a values-driven culture that promotes innovation, collaboration, and excellence.
- Embody and champion inclusive leadership to embed equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.
- Support efforts to grow the reach of trusted BBFC classification services, the better to support those with responsibilities for children.

Research and Development

- Oversee research and development initiatives to ensure the BBFC remains forward-looking and relevant in its field.
- Evaluate strategic initiatives and manage the risks of innovation against the risks of organisational stagnation.

International and External Relations

- Cultivate and maintain international partnerships and relationships that benefit the BBFC.
- Build and maintain strategic partnerships that enhance the work of the BBFC.

Additional Duties

- Carry out other responsibilities as reasonably requested by the President or Board to ensure the proper functioning of the CEO role.

General

- To show commitment to their own professional development.
- To undertake anyother duties appropriate to the nature of the post.

Person Specification: Applicants should have:

- Consistent achievement at CEO level, or substantial senior management experience in a public facing organisation in which public confidence and reputation are central to organisational success
- An understanding of a regulated environment and a track record of excellence in governance
- Experience of leading organisational adaptation or transformation within a regulated, public-facing or mission-driven environment.
- Have experience of building a positive and productive relationship with Boards
- Be able to demonstrate inspiring leadership and motivate teams by example
- Outstanding ambassadorial and relationship building skills with a wide range of complex stakeholders and success at building trusting and productive partnerships
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to handle the media
- Demonstrable evidence of linking diversity issues to policy and delivery
- Experience of working with Government, Parliament and Whitehall
- Strategic and operational financial experience and commercial awareness
- The ability to understand the strategic implications of emerging technologies, including AI, and to lead organisations through technological change and drive innovation without losing sight of the organisation core purpose.
- A commitment and lived experience to the Nolan principles
- A genuine interest in screen entertainment and recognition of it as an important social, educational and cultural medium.

September 2026

T: +44 (0) 20 7850 4781 E: enquiries@thewlisgraham.com
Thewlis Graham Associates, Floors 1-3, 4-5 High Town, Hereford HR1 2AA

4. Salary and Benefits

Salary £150K per annum

Contributory Pension: The BBFC operates a scheme where the employer contributes a percentage according to age (5% to 15%) and the employee contributes 5%

Life Assurance

Holiday 25 days rising by one day each year until a maximum of 30 days is reached

Health and Wellbeing.

NB.
The current CEO, David Austin, is retiring in July 2027. Upon retiring as CEO, he will continue serving on the Board and will remain one of the four statutory classifiers alongside the President and two Vice Presidents. The new CEO will attend Board meetings but will not be a member of the Board.

If you have read all this information and still have a query, for a confidential conversation with Sarah Thewlis, Managing Director of Thewlis Graham Associates, please email applications@thewlisgraham.com.

5. Timeline, Application Process and How to apply

Timeline

Dates	Activity
1 October 4pm	Applications close.
W/C 12 and 19 October	Thewlis Graham consultant interviewing of interested candidates.
W/C 16 November	Shortlisted candidates to meet with the current CEO, David Austin at BBFC offices
W/C 23 November	BBFC first interview in person at BBFC offices
W/C 30 November	Final interview and assessment at BBFC offices
June 2027	Induction preparation
1 July 2027	New CEO formally starts

Application Process

Thewlis Graham Associates will acknowledge all applications. These will be assessed against the criteria in the Job Description and Person Specification section and the people who best meet these will be invited for interview with Thewlis Graham online.

Those candidates not invited to interview will be advised by email by the end of November. Longlisted candidates will be advised by email. After a consultation between the BBFC and Thewlis Graham Associates, a Shortlist will be drawn up and Shortlisted candidates invited for interview with BBFC at their offices in London.

How to apply

To apply for this position, please complete the three steps below, emailing your documentation to applications@thewlisgraham.com quoting reference AD0601.

1. Your CV in Word format only.
2. Your covering letter in Word format only, to cover the following points:
    - Your reasons as to why you would consider yourself suitable for this role, and why you are interested in the role.
    - Email address and mobile number of two professional referees. (Please note referees will not be approached without your prior permission).
    - Please keep the letter to a maximum of three pages in total.
3. Please complete the Diversity Monitoring form, please see link below on page 10.

Please ensure that you include your mobile phone number and email address in your application. Do not hesitate to contact applications@thewlisgraham.com if you have any queries.

If you would prefer to receive this candidate brief in a more accessible format, please contact us.

6. Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring

Diversity and inclusion monitoring is independent of the recruitment process but please do send a completed form with your application. Thewlis Graham Associates is committed to monitoring and analysing diversity information so that we can ensure that our processes are fair, transparent, promote equality of opportunity for all, and do not have an adverse impact on any particular group.

The link to this form is here: link to survey
If you have any problems with this, please contact via email: applications@thewlisgraham.com.

Any information provided on this form will be treated as strictly confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. It will not be seen by anybody directly involved in the selection process. No information will be published or used in any way which allows any individual to be identified.

Thank you.