

12.10.23

Councillor Gary McKeown
Chair, Licensing Committee
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Dear Councillor McKeown,

I am writing to you today as the owner of one of Belfast's longest established cinemas, Movie House at Cityside (Yorkgate), to once again request that the committee considers a new film rating option for a specific movie due to be released in your jurisdiction.

In March 2022 the committee awarded a 15A rating classification for the film The Batman, which allowed parents the right to bring their children to the cinema to see the film at cinemas within the Belfast City Council Area.

We ask you to consider this again for the upcoming film Five Nights at Freddy's which is due to open in cinemas on 27 October.

As background information, we currently use the guidance passed by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification), which as you will know issues certificates of U, PG, 12A, 15 and 18. Many cinema owners across the UK share my view that some movies should have a new rating of 15A that would give parents a greater power to choose what films their children can see.

In 2002, the BBFC adopted a new 12A certificate to replace the existing 12 Certificate. 12A simply means that those under 12 can watch the film as long as they are accompanied by an adult parent or guardian. We believe this should be the case for some 15 movies, offering a 15A option in which parents can accompany their children to the cinema, if they believe the film is appropriate.

The BBFC states on its website that statutory powers over film remain with the local councils, which can overrule any of the BBFC's decisions on appeal, including altering the age ratings for films shown in their area.¹

Over recent years there has been a significant shift in the way families consume film and parents prefer to be the decision makers. Parents find it hard to understand why they have the power to choose a 12A film for their children but not a 15 rated film. This can cause frustration and embarrassment for those who arrive at the cinema and are then prevented from seeing the film.

We anticipate that this will be the case for Five Nights at Freddy's, which has been awarded a 15 certificate in the UK. In the Republic of Ireland it has been given a 15A while in the United States it is a PG-13 meaning any age can see it with parental consent.

¹ <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/education/university-students/bbfc-history>

Five Nights at Freddy's is based on a video game which uses a different rating system called PEGI. This game has a PEGI age rating of 12 so part of the fanbase will be early teens who will want to see this movie.

I write to ask the committee to consider issuing a 15A rating on Five Nights at Freddy's on this occasion allowing parents to make the choice as to whether to accompany their children to see this film.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Michael McAdam
Managing Director, Movie House Cinemas