MARKET READINESS REPORT

[redacted]

[redacted] writer-director · [redacted] producer · [redacted] · United Kingdom · Live-action feature, thriller · 5 August 2026
Prepared by Lift-Off Global Network · Market Representation Initiative

> The caretaker of a tidal island recognises her drowned sister's phone in a visitor's bag, and strands him overnight to force the truth out of him. But his answers open a door she may not want opened: her sister might have chosen to disappear.
>
> Contained thriller · Slow-burn · Elemental

Thank you for bringing [redacted] to the Market Representation Initiative. You arrive with more than most applicants at this stage: a finished fourth draft, a proof-of-concept short that played [redacted] and [redacted] and took the Audience Award at [redacted] 41,000 Vimeo views, and 870 people on a mailing list asking when the feature is coming. That last number is rarer than you might think. And the premise is budget-true: one island, two actors, and a tide that does half your production design for you.

This report reads the project the way financiers, producers and sales agents will, and that lens is blunt. It scores what's on paper today, names the gaps, and gives you a map for closing them.

Where [redacted] stands

BUILD FIRST — YOU ARE HERE	NEARLY THERE	MARKET READY
Strong raw material. The package needs building before a buyer conversation will land.	Package mostly complete. One or two named gaps between you and the market.	Complete package, clean rights, mapped route. We can take it upstream now.

The three tiers we use across the Market Representation Initiative. Every project on this ladder can climb it.

[redacted] is Build First, and it sits near the top of that tier. The script and the proof around it already read like a film that gets financed. Three structural gaps hold it below Nearly There: no delivered feature anywhere on the producing team, no signed cast, and a finance plan that so far lives in conversation rather than on paper. Each gap has a named fix, and none of them needs significant money.

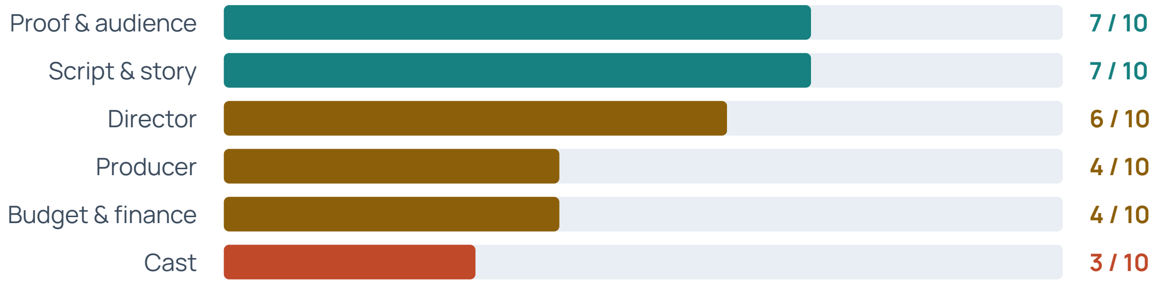
What exists today

Your one-sentence answer (a fourth draft, a 12-minute short with a festival run, roughly £19k of development spend) matches everything else in the application. That's worth saying out loud, because it's uncommon: stage claims usually contradict the details around them, and buyers read ambiguity as risk. There's none here.

Concretely: a 98-page fourth draft with rights held solely by [redacted] A proof-of-concept short with four named selections and one audience award (screener: [redacted] this report reads the paper, it doesn't review the film). £19,000 spent, including a £4,000 Arts Council DYCP grant. [redacted] attached as DoP. Both leads keen to return, nothing signed. A £50k private investor in conversation, a BFI development application planned but not yet submitted. One flag you raised yourselves, honestly: the short's ownership sits in an unwritten arrangement between [redacted] and [redacted] More on that below, because the short is the asset this whole package leans on.

The package

Financiers and producers test a development-stage feature against six things: the script, the director, the producer, the budget, the cast, and the proof you can put in front of them.



Scores reflect how the project reads to a buyer from the application alone; the short and the script weren't part of this submission. They move when the package moves.

Proof & audience — 7 / 10

This is what proof should look like at development stage: a short with named, dated selections, an audience award, 41,000 Vimeo views (your figures), 870 mailing-list signups earned at festival Q&As, and 2,300 Instagram followers, all linked. One crack runs through it: the short was made on roughly £6k of [redacted] cash and kit, and nothing about its ownership was ever written down. The short is the evidence for everything else in this application. Evidence with unclear ownership makes lawyers pause.

> → Put the short's ownership in writing between [redacted] and [redacted] including how the feature may use it. One page now saves a due-diligence problem later.

Script & story — 7 / 10

A 98-page fourth draft, one writer, rights clean, no underlying material. The premise is the strongest kind for this budget: contained, castable, and genuinely hooky. A logline that produces the whole film in a listener's head is rare, and yours does. We're scoring the pitch materials, though; the draft itself wasn't part of this submission, and the notes on page 4 raise questions only the script can answer.

> → Commission one independent, paid set of script notes before financiers read the draft. The version that goes out first is the version that gets remembered.

Director — 6 / 10

Ten years as a senior editor plus a short that won an audience award with the exact tone of the feature is a real case for a debut director. What caps the score is simple and outside your craft: nobody has financed [redacted] at feature length yet, and a first feature is always priced as risk. The number says nothing about talent; it says "unproven at 98 pages", which is a gap the right materials shrink.

> → Build a short director's statement and lookbook showing the feature's visual plan, so a financier can see past the 12 minutes.

Producer

4 / 10

[redacted] delivered the short start to finish, on budget, and is honest about the 2022 feature that stalled in post when its finance fell through. That honesty counts; most applications bury the failure. But "has your lead producer delivered a feature?" is the first question every financier asks, and today the answer across the whole team is no. This is the single biggest gap in the package, and it's also the most fixable.

> → Approach two or three UK producers with delivered micro-budget features about exec producing or co-producing. [redacted] stays lead and gains the delivery record beside him that the package is missing.

Budget & finance

4 / 10

"£350k (ish)" is a believable number for a two-hander on one island, and the £19k spent is real and itemised. What's missing is the paperwork a financier responds to: no budget top sheet, and a finance plan that currently reads "one application planned, one conversation open, remainder open". Nothing here is wrong. It's just early, and the documents are what move it from early to fundable.

> → Build a budget top sheet and a one-page finance plan listing each source, its amount and its status. Small and honest wins.

Cast

3 / 10

[redacted] and [redacted] proved the roles work on screen, and their theatre grounding (Bristol Old Vic, Royal Exchange) is real pedigree. But nothing is signed, and the recognisable television actress you've approached can't be named yet, so a buyer can't count her; an unnameable attachment reads the same as no attachment until it's papered. At £350k, cast is one of the few levers that changes the finance conversation overnight.

> → When the Bridget conversation firms up, get it on paper, even as a letter of intent. A nameable face moves this score more than anything else on this list.

Market position

The shelf

[redacted] sells as a psychological thriller: contained, British, grief-driven. That's a real shelf and a well-lit one. The buyers who took Saint Maud and The Night House know exactly how to read this film. Keep the word "thriller" in every pitch document; if it drifts toward "drama", the doors get heavier at this budget.

Comps: tone against scale

Your comps (Saint Maud, His House, The Night House) say tone, and they say it well. They don't say scale or route: all three cost several times your budget and travelled on studio, Film4 or streamer money. The precedent that says both is Lady Macbeth (2016): a contained British debut made through the BFI-backed iFeatures scheme for a reported budget around £500k, premiered at Toronto, sold worldwide by Protagonist, and launched its director and its lead. That's your route drawn on a map: public development money, a disciplined contained shoot, a festival premiere with the sales agent arriving at the finished film.

Territory logic

English-language helps you everywhere, and the film is British to the bone, so the domestic doors come first: the BFI application you're already planning, and the broadcaster-backed film funds that exist to find debut features at this scale. The Northumberland setting is an asset too. North East Screen, the region's screen agency, runs production funding for exactly this kind of locally rooted shoot, and a tidal island is the sort of thing regional funds love to see on screen. International follows the premiere, and the film's elemental, place-heavy world will travel; grief needs no subtitles.

Route to market

1	2	3	4	5	6
Script + proof of concept	Package: producer, finance plan, cast	Finance closed	Production	Post + festival premiere	Sales agent + distributors

▲ You are here: proof built, package next. The sales agent enters at stage 6, with your premiere intact.

First, about the sales agent

You said you'd like to attach a sales agent early, because pre-sales can cover a big chunk of a budget. That's true for the films pre-sales are actually bought on: recognisable cast, a director with delivered features, a proven genre package. Distribution advances at independent budgets have shrunk to almost nothing unless those elements are attached, and today [redacted] has none of them. Chasing that conversation now costs you months and makes the package look green to the exact people you'll want fresh eyes from later.

Here's the better news: at £350k the finance can close without a single pre-sale. Soft money, regional funding and private investment cover budgets like this every year in the UK. The sales agent conversation belongs at fine cut, when you're holding a finished film and an unspent world premiere. That premiere will be the single biggest card in your hand. Guard it; never let the film screen anywhere that spends it early.

How the money likely closes

The realistic shape: BFI development money first (submit the application; it's the difference between a plan and a fact), then a package strong enough to carry a production funding application, with the private £50k slotted alongside. On that investment: before anything firms up, get clear in writing what kind of money it is, what it expects back and when, and have a specialist media lawyer paper it. That's a factual note, and it's the limit of what this report can say about it; the same lawyer should sanity-check the whole chain of title, short included.

Where Lift-Off fits

Some of your proof already comes from our rooms: the short took the Audience Award at [redacted] voted by exactly the audience the feature is for. Right now, our role is this report and the build it maps. Representation upstream is earned at the point a package survives a buyer's first five questions, and the 90-day plan below is designed to get [redacted] answering them. Do the build and we can start opening doors to producers, and later to the sellers we trust with films like this. The festival network is here for the feature when it exists.

Story notes

Read from the synopsis in your application; we haven't read the fourth draft. Treat these as questions to ask of the script rather than verdicts on it.

1. **Let Nell choose on screen.** The synopsis ends before Nell decides: expose Bridget or wipe the phone. Be careful here. The entire film marches toward that one decision, and an ending that withholds it hands the choice to the audience, which slow-burn thriller audiences tend to read as the film declining

to finish. Ambiguity about what the choice costs her can survive; ambiguity about what she does is riskier, on screen and in a distributor's test scores. She can choose without a word: her thumb, the phone, the water. And the unwatched video message is the best image in your synopsis. Whatever she does, end on it.

2. **Give Aaron a want of his own.** As synopsised, Aaron spends most of the night as a locked box Nell hammers on, which risks a middle act of push, deflect, push harder, repeat. Your own synopsis holds the fix: he came back to the island because he couldn't carry the phone any more. So he wants something from this night too. To confess and be punished, to hand the weight to the one person who's earned it, maybe to be forgiven. Let his want press against hers from early on and every scene gets two engines instead of one. The interrogation becomes a negotiation, and negotiation is where great two-handers live.
3. **Make the reveal cut deeper than the mystery.** Bridget alive turns a drowning into a desertion, and your last line ("grief with no body, love with no address") shows you know it. Press one step further: Bridget didn't just leave the world, she left Nell, and let her sister keep a two-year vigil over an empty sea. The hardest version asks whether something about Nell (the watching, the minding, the one who never lets go) is part of what Bridget fled. If the script lets Nell glimpse that, the final choice stops being plot resolution and becomes a verdict on her own life. That's the difference between a tidy mystery and the shelf you're aiming at.

The next 90 days

1. **Put the short's ownership in writing.** One page between [redacted] and [redacted] who owns it, what went in, how the feature can use it. Then have a media lawyer check the full chain of title when funds allow.
2. **Approach experienced producers.** Two or three UK producers with delivered micro-budget features, invited to exec produce or co-produce. The short and the logline are the calling card; [redacted] stays lead.
3. **Submit the BFI development application.** Move it from planned to submitted. The festival run, the audience numbers and the DYCP grant all belong in it.

1. **Build the money documents.** A budget top sheet and a one-page finance plan: each source, its amount, its status. This turns "£350k (ish)" into something a financier can answer.
2. **Pin down the £50k.** Ask the investor what kind of money it is, what it expects back and when. Answers in writing once it firms up, and a specialist lawyer before any signatures.
3. **Work the 870.** A short monthly note to the mailing list; growth and open rates become proof a buyer can check. And park the sales-agent outreach until fine cut.

THE VERDICT, PLAINLY

Build First, near the top of the tier. The core of it: [redacted]s script and proof already look like a financed film, and its people-package doesn't yet, so the money has nothing to attach itself to. Money follows people. The build costs almost nothing but months: a signed page for the short, a producer with a delivered feature beside [redacted] two money documents, one submitted application, and patience on the sales agent. Do the build, then bring it back to us. This is one we'd like to see again.

Prepared by Lift-Off Global Network for the team behind [redacted] Questions about anything in this report: reply to the email it arrived with.