



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
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Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
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By email

20 March 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to express concerns that have been shared with me by organisations from across the creative and charitable sectors, both of which are being significantly affected by the coronavirus outbreak, and to call for immediate action to be taken to support these vital sectors and the people who work in them.

The cultural sector

Both before and after the Government issued its advice for people to observe social distancing measures, cultural institutions across the UK were taking the decision to close their doors. This is already having an impact on organisations and individuals across the cultural sector, some of which will benefit from the measures announced by Arts Council England, which we welcome, but many of which will not. The UK's cultural sector relies on freelancers, the self-employed and casual workers, many of whom require urgent financial support following cancellations and closures.

We would welcome your responses to the following questions:

- **Why did the guidance issued on the 16 March stop short of instructing cultural institutions to close, leaving the onus on them to decide to do so? What assessment has been made of the impact this will have on the ability of cultural organisations specifically to claim on insurance, and/or other forms of compensation?**
- **What financial support will the Government offer for freelance, self-employed and casual workers? What else is the Department doing to ensure support for those in the creative industries whose contracts have been impacted by closures and cancellations is ready for when they need it?**
- **What will be done to help cultural organisations get back on their feet once they can reopen? Will the Government commit now to a robust stimulus**

package that will help organisations in the cultural sector to plan and to reschedule cancelled and postponed work?

- **We welcome the fact that many theatres are making productions available online, and museums are encouraging people to make use of their online collections. How do the Department and Arts Council England intend to encourage and support such activities?**

The work of charities and volunteers

Given the scale of the challenge facing the country, the help being provided by charities and volunteers across communities is invaluable. However, at this time of increased demand, charities are also facing multiple sources of financial pressure, which is putting some at risk. We urge the Department to ensure no charity is forced to stop its work as a result of financial losses due to the coronavirus outbreak.

We would welcome your responses to the following questions:

- **What funding does the Government intend to make available to charitable and voluntary organisations working directly on tackling coronavirus and its consequences?**
- **Will the Department provide emergency funds or introduce other cashflow measures to support charities at risk of insolvency due to the effects of the outbreak?**
- **Can you confirm that, as employers, charities will be eligible to benefit from the measures announced for businesses by the Chancellor? How does the Department intend to work with the Charity Commission and wider sector to ensure support reaches charities when they need it?**

The impact on tourism

UK tour operators and tourist companies face huge restrictions and shrinkage of activity. This includes a broad spectrum of companies from large holiday operators to smaller cottage rental outfits, campsites and holiday parks. Please can I ask:

- **What access will there be to government loans?**
- **What other urgent support will be available eg with regards to large scale redundancy?**
- **What thinking is taking place about forcing travel companies to offer refunds to customers Vs re-booking?**

The impact on sport

On the 19 March, it was reported that all British football will remain suspended until 30 April. Reports the same day speculate that all 68 National League teams could collapse as well. On 20 March, the Rugby Football Union ended the domestic season for all but the Premiership teams. Professional rugby league, netball and golf has been postponed and Test cricket has been cancelled. Many professional clubs have said

publicly they are at risk due to a reliance on gate receipts and hospitality, employing many workers in the local community. Marathons have also been postponed, which provide funding to many organisations in the charitable sector. Every sector in the economy is feeling the strain right now, and sport is no different.

We would welcome your responses to the following questions:

- **The Government did not intervene to postpone sporting events and fixtures but has instead allowed sports authorities to make the call themselves. What was the reason for this approach and under what circumstances would the Government itself take action?**
- **Can you also confirm that clubs are able to eligible for support from the Government? What can be done where revenue is lost rather than deferred, such as for clubs whos seasons have been cancelled or who rely on hospitality offerings?**
- **What arrangements have been made for upcoming sporting events with international competitors and followings like Wimbledon and the British Grand Prix?**

We would appreciate your response by Wednesday 25 March.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julian Knight', written in a cursive style.

**JULIAN KNIGHT MP
CHAIR, DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT COMMITTEE**

[Awaiting sign-off]