

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: EU visa arrangements for creative workers, HC 47

Thursday 10 June 2021

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Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Alex Davies-Jones; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; Giles Watling.

Questions 161 - 213

Witnesses

I: Tamara Cincik, Founder and Chief Executive, Fashion Roundtable; Noel McClean, National Secretary, Arts & Entertainment, BBC and Independent Broadcasting Divisions, Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union; Craig Stanley, Agent and Promoter, Marshall Arts Limited, and Chair of the 'Touring Group', LIVE.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Tamara Cincik, Noel McClean and Craig Stanley.

Q161 **Chair:** This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, and we have a special session today on EU visa arrangements for creative workers. Before I introduce the witnesses—I also wish to make a personal statement before we move to our first question—I am going to ask the Committee to announce any interests to declare.

Alex Davies-Jones: I would like to declare that I am a member of the Musicians Union.

Kevin Brennan: I am a member of the Musicians Union and received support from it at the last election.

Chair: Thank you. We are joined by three witnesses today: Tamara Cincik, founder and chief executive of Fashion Roundtable; Noel McClean, national secretary, arts & entertainment, BBC and independent broadcasting divisions, Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union—Bectu, in other words. I am sorry I had to take a breath halfway through there. It was quite a long job title. Also Craig Stanley, agent and promoter, Marshall Arts Limited, and chair of the 'Touring Group', LIVE. Tamara, Noel and Craig, good afternoon and thank you for joining us.

You are very kind to have agreed to come in at relatively short notice. The reason why we are not having a more extensive session today is because, unfortunately, Lord Frost, the Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, decided to withdraw earlier this week.

I would make a statement to say that the DCMS Select Committee has had considerable difficulty securing any time with the Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, Lord Frost. We were told on 16 February in this Committee by Caroline Dinenage MP that it was his responsibility to oversee the negotiation of crucial bilateral agreements to ensure that people working in the creative and service sectors in the UK can travel to and work in countries within the EU.

Following our subsequent request to the Minister, Lord Frost, we had two refusals, point blank, to appear. It was only after I tackled the Prime Minister in the Liaison Committee, where he confirmed that it was Lord Frost's job to oversee this matter, that he stated that Lord Frost should appear before this Committee, that finally, on 23 April, more than two months after we initially heard that it was his responsibility, we secured a date for the Minister's appearance, that being today.

You can imagine my dismay and the Committee's dismay at the said Minister's subsequent cancellation of his appearance this week. We all appreciate as parliamentarians that there are many important issues for the Minister to address, particularly in the light of the trade disagreement between the EU and the UK in the run-up to the G7. However, the Minister citing, as he did at the time, the G7 as a reason for cancellation raises more than one or two eyebrows, as it could hardly be deemed an unexpected event.



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Parliamentary scrutiny in front of Select Committees is of crucial importance in our democratic system and is particularly important when we have a Government with a majority of over 80. It is brought into even sharper focus when the Government choose to appoint members of the House of Lords to Cabinet. The truth of the matter is that Ministers in Cabinet from the Commons have scrutiny due to questions, urgent statements and departmental questions. They are accountable every day. It is not acceptable for Lords not to be accountable when they hold high office. I and this Committee look forward to Lord Frost joining us at the rearranged date, and we will not truck any further cancellation. Thank you.

I am sorry, Tamara, Noel and Craig for that very long statement. Craig, I saw you nodding away during my diatribe. As someone who is on the frontline, what is your thinking around the fact that we have not had an appearance from Lord Frost today?

Craig Stanley: We are very frustrated, the whole sector. I am here for LIVE, which represents over 3,000 businesses, trade associations, promoters, agents and effectively the entire live contemporary music industry, and we have embraced the work of those in the classical world as well. For him not to turn up is extremely disappointing, because the pressing issue of musicians and entourages to be able to move and continue to work around Europe is an existential threat to our entire industry. For a start to be able to understand, let alone find ways to cut through the red tape that is now going to be hindering us as we return after Covid to touring Europe, and lastly not to be able to hear Lord Frost's comments on the proposal of a support package that can help us in this transition as we have our new arrangements for Europe, is deeply frustrating.

Chair: We share that frustration, believe me. Noel and Tamara, any comments to add in that respect?

Noel McClean: First of all, thank you. I welcome the comments you made, Chair, rather than apologise for them. I am delighted to be here, of course, but in a funny way I wish I was not. Our members were looking forward to seeing Lord Frost appear and were looking forward to the Select Committee questioning him in the very diligent way that it has conducted its work so far on this issue and many other issues that affect our members. So our disappointment is incredibly deep also.

Can I add, though, that we have to view it in the round with everything else that has been promised and has not happened over the last few months since the TCA was agreed? Various Ministers promising that they are working very hard, that it is top of their inbox, the Prime Minister saying that he is working flat out to fix it, repeated promises that they are working very hard and we will see the results of that very, very soon. This coming on top of that adds to the very reasonable fear, I have to say, that our members have, which is that at a Government level—as opposed to members here today in the Select Committee—in terms of their issue, their industry and their jobs, senior Government either do not



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get it or do not care. Today's non-appearance simply adds to that and validates it more. So I am deeply disappointed.

Q162 **Chair:** Tamara, I saw you nodding. Would you like to reflect on the statements from Noel and Craig but also outline for the Committee the particular challenges faced by the fashion industry, which is an enormous revenue earner for the UK and, in normal times, is a real bright light in our economic landscape?

Tamara Cincik: This is a very valuable Committee, and I think if someone felt they had all their ducks in a row and were prepped for it, they would not cancel at short notice. That would suggest they either do not want to come under your scrutiny or they are not prepped. Either way, it is several months into the realities of Brexit and these are realities that are obviously added to by the pandemic. Normal travel and normal engagements are not at the stages that they would have been ordinarily, post-Brexit, where I think we would have seen these things in sharper focus. That notwithstanding, it is obviously disappointing that the Government's leadership on the Brexit negotiations has cancelled and has not engaged. It is the lack of engagement that is the most troubling aspect of this.

The fashion industry is the largest of the creative industries. This is part of the issue that I want to come on to later. It straddles DCMS as well as other Departments, including BEIS and immigration with the Home Office. So it is seen in very many silos. When I am engaging with civil servants we have to defer to different Departments. Once we are out of all of this, an addressing of how business is approached, how the creative industries are approached and a lack of siloing would be really helpful.

We have issues of goods, which is perhaps not the topic of today's conversation, but we also have the issue of services—talent—getting in and out. That means not only the approximately 50% of EU workers who work in the higher ends of the creative industries but the garment workers who are perceived at the lower end, who I would argue are highly qualified if not always highly paid, who do not meet the requirements of the shortage occupation list, and equally for our talent who, by working on a global stage, including with our closest partners in the EU, add reputation and value. They might be working in the EU but they are paying their taxes here, which is lucrative to HMRC. Any shortfall on that is problematic either in terms of relocation or potential damages to their businesses, so that is very worrying.

Q163 **Chair:** Tamara, to press on one point, your industry and the other industries that are represented today have effectively endured a no-deal Brexit. There has been a deal but it seems the service sector, effectively, and the movement of people has been left out of that deal. Are your concerns exacerbated by the problems in the industry such as low pay and the potential for exploitation?

Tamara Cincik: When the Leicester scandal hit the news in the summer, I asked the MAC, the Migration Advisory Committee, whether it had done



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an impact assessment on potential exploitation by not adding garment workers to the shortage occupation list, and it said it had not. For me that is a perfect storm, because what we have seen since the pandemic is Make it British has quoted to me—it is an organisation that supports British manufacturing, which I support, by the way. I support the concept of onshoring and a levelling-up agenda. But it has seen an 83% increase in requests to onshore from small and larger sector leaders, which is to be encouraged but there are massive gaps that cannot be filled in almost every factory that we have spoken to.

If you do not have these garment workers on the shortage occupation list and you are currently offering them a three-month visa—which quite frankly is insulting to a Lithuanian woman who is probably in a family and has kids and responsibilities—then you are potentially looking at exploitation as an unforeseen outcome by not having them on the shortage occupation list. As well, we have not set up the T-levels, until September 2023, that would support domiciled talent going into those jobs. It is a perfect-storm example to me of where different Departments are in charge of something but no one has seen it in the round as an issue.

Q164 Chair: Yes, that is a familiar tale. Does that mean you are saying there is likely to be more Leicester scandals without this issue being sorted out?

Tamara Cincik: It is a concern for me, with businesses quite rightly wanting to bring business back to the UK because of the pandemic and the issues raised with the Uyghurs and dealing with China and other areas where there are definitely higher rates of MSA in the supply chain.

I am not saying every business. I spoke to Boohoo yesterday and it says it is tackling this in its supply chain, obviously as a large, online retailer, as much as possible and it has brought in Leveson to tackle that with KPMG. At the same time, if you do not square this in the round, if you do not deal with the aspect of not having these workers because of some ideology about higher wages and not address that £22,000 earned out of London is not a bad wage for somebody who is in a family where their husband is earning, and putting a limit on the wage rather than the jobs is problematic.

If you want to support onshoring, which I believe the Government do, you either have to speed up the T-levels so that we have the domiciled talent supply chain or at least allow the workers in until they have graduated.

Q165 Chair: Craig, what do you foresee as the consequences over the next year, the year after, of the lack of ability for your members to travel freely to the EU and also to move their equipment and other goods?

Craig Stanley: Chair, I would be more than happy to answer that, but I feel that a musician is probably best placed to answer, which I am not. Unlike this Committee, I met with Lord Frost. I met with him for an hour on 27 April in the company of Sir Elton John and David Furnish, CEO of Rocket Entertainment. On hearing that I was appearing here today, Sir



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Elton wrote the following, which he has asked me to read out to the Committee. His opinion about the future is: "This gravest of situations is about to damage the next generation of musicians and emerging artists, whose careers will stall before they've even started due to this infuriating blame game. If I had faced the financial and logistical obstacles facing young musicians now when I started out, I'd never have had the opportunity to build the foundations of my career and I very much doubt I would be where I am today. I call on the Government to sort this mess out or we risk losing future generations of world-beating talent."

Q166 **Chair:** Yes, that is a very powerful statement. Do you have any extra reflections on that? It very much speaks for itself, but in terms of your members.

Craig Stanley: Live music is a very broad church. It ranges from the self-employed, single musician, violinist, going to do a single gig or recording in France at very short notice, to Coldplay going out on the road with perhaps 200 people and 50 trucks, and everything in between. My concern for the musicians is that so often the question is framed within how will it impact musicians. I am equally concerned with all the behind-the-scenes staff. For every musician who is on stage, there are going to be 10, 20, 50, perhaps 100 people to get him or her there. It is that loss.

I was talking to a couple of lighting companies this week. One is already considering at least a 30% to 40% reduction in its income when we return after Covid. Another, which is one of the largest operating on this side of the Atlantic, is contemplating moving 75% of its stock offshore into European depots. This means that staff who would normally be UK based will no longer be employed. We are starting to see adverts for shows where they want crew and they say, "Non-EU nationals need not apply." That is aimed at British staff, who are being excluded. So there is this whole drain of talent going away from the industry. There is a whole drain of emerging talent that will not have the ability to grow and nurture. It goes without saying that it is in our culture that the Beatles had to go to Hamburg to become a band. That is still true today.

Q167 **Chair:** It is not about Brexit, as such. We have all heard the arguments done to death. It is not about backwards looking, is it, Craig? It is more about the here and now. Do you believe that these matters are resolvable through bilateral arrangements, and what is your feedback in terms of our partners within the EU? Would they welcome our approach to try to get these matters sorted?

Craig Stanley: I have been invited and I have sat on the cultural working group chaired by Caroline Dineneage, who sadly has not attended the last two meetings, even though she is the chair. In that group there are various subgroups and I am working very closely—it is very welcome that DCMS has been really helpful and very supportive in many ways. It is suggesting bilateral arrangements. It says that it has entered into them. We have no evidence of such. Two of my colleagues attended the Spanish consulate this morning to talk about the issues particularly with



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Spain. The gentleman they saw there acknowledged that there had been some conversation but not in any huge detail and was very sad that, after five months, no progress had been made on bilaterals to do with work arrangements.

On cabotage it is a very much more complicated issue, because on one level the DfT, which again we have found most welcoming in working with us, again has no power to drive anything through. We keep going back to Lord Frost's Department to drive these measures through. There are some solutions and workarounds, which are temporary, but we call for an EU-wide cultural exemption for trucks, for about 500 or 600 trucks is what it is, bearing in mind that the national fleet is about 500,000 trucks.

Q168 **Chair:** Craig, the picture you are painting is of paralysis. It is having talking shops and roundtables, but no one rolling up their sleeves and getting on with the job of making the deal, so to speak, the bilateral arrangements that need to happen.

Craig Stanley: I know you are putting words into my mouth, but I would agree with every one of them. It is. We have been given the run-around. At these meetings of the cultural working group, we have had five or six different Departments presenting to us. Each of them go, "Ah, yes, but," and then point in the other direction.

DCMS has also relied on a big fanfare about producing guidance. If I were being candid, it is not guidance; it has been signposting. All it has done is employ Deloitte to do a trawl through all the available information online and put it on the Government website and say, "Look, there, there's guidance." The trouble with that signposting is that quite a few sites lead us to dead ends.

As an industry, as LIVE, we published our first initial guide to the new arrangements for visas in February. The ISM has done some sterling work producing guides, which a lot of people are referencing. We are volunteering to do this; we are unpaid. We feel it is the Government's role, responsibility and obligation to our industry, to the fans and to the musicians and all those touched by music, which I believe is everyone in this country, to sort this out. They are passing the buck and it is going around and around, and it is getting very, very frustrating.

Q169 **Chair:** Noel, I can see you tensing up to come in there. Your union represents a number of creative sectors. Which have been the most affected, and is the experience that Craig just outlined one that is familiar to you?

Noel McClean: I would agree wholeheartedly with the comments that Craig has just made. I will not repeat them.

In terms of which bit of the sector, that is a difficult question. There is an immediate impact and a longer-term impact. I can explain that. It is well documented and the Committee is well aware that the issues caused by the TCA, or the deficiencies of the TCA, have been masked by the Covid crisis. People cannot tour at the moment, not because of the TCA but



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because of the various restrictions in various jurisdictions because of the global pandemic.

As people are now beginning to plan beyond that, we are starting to see the impact of the TCA. Hopefully, all being well, this is in the post-Covid environment. Short term, in the live music and live entertainment sector, we are starting to hear—many of our people, because of what they do, are backstage technicians, engineers, crew and staff. Because they work very closely with bands, it is a fairly informal kind of world. It is an informal environment and there are many conversations about how if the bands can find a way over these hurdles, that might be something. But they are saying to our people, “We are not sure we can take you with us,” and we might have to end relationships we have had for a very long time with some very famous acts. These people are well regarded.

It is probably worth mentioning and making the point that, although our people in the main are not seen, what they produce is. Most of our members who work in the live entertainment sector, it is their job—and they do it extremely well—to take an artistic vision and make it real. They make that vision a reality for people to pay money to experience and enjoy. So there are a lot of informal arrangements, a lot of informal relationships, but many of them are telling us—it has been reported—that they do not have a future in terms of European touring.

You can see evidence of that in the more formal areas, the more corporate areas. Craig touched on this. There are more formal areas where job adverts go out and there are proper contracts and all that kind of stuff. We have seen a few examples now, mainly holiday camps, cruise ships and that kind of thing, where there is a need for audio-visual technology. These are adverts with .co.uk e-mail addresses, they are adverts from organisations that are well known in the UK and they are explicitly saying, “We are looking for non-UK passport holders at the moment,” or, “UK passport holders need not apply.” They are being explicit. We have been sent those adverts and I have them on my file, so we are seeing that.

In the touring theatre sector we are starting to see it as well. I speak fairly frequently to organisations like the National Theatre and the Royal Opera House. When you are talking about a largescale touring theatrical performance, you are looking at a minimum of 18 months out with planning. Anything they are thinking about now is reasonably optimistically, but reasonability realistically as well, post-Covid, and they are not planning to tour within the EU. That is the reality of it.

If you look at the National Theatre, look back at the history, look at what they have done and look at what they have done for the UK overseas. Something like *War Horse*, an incredible production, and the soft power that brings as it tours the world. It did go to the EU in the previous tour, 2013-14. But to put this into some context, 90 days out of 180. *War Horse* spent four months in Amsterdam alone and it went to five further cities within the Netherlands. Then it went to Germany. So 90 days out of 180 is just not going to do it. It has shelved plans to tour the latest



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production, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. There are no plans to tour the EU with that, and there were previously plans.

I understand that *War Horse*, when it toured in the EU, was done on a licensed-production basis, so it was done in the language of the host nation with local staff and crew. The plan for the 2024-25 world tour, which is bigger than the previous tour, with *War Horse*, is to spend a minimum of 30 weeks in the EU. The plan was to do that on an entirely different basis, so it would be UK production, UK language, using UK staff for the cast and crew. That is all now in doubt because of these current regulations. To put that into context, were that tour to be happening this year, it would have been cancelled. Were it happening next year, it would have been cancelled. I hope that explains there is a varied impact right across the piece.

Chair: As you say, it has a very long tail to it. Decisions made now will have an impact in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Q170 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Chair, I echo your comments on Lord Frost, for the record. I extend my thanks to the witnesses for joining us at such short notice today. We appreciate your giving your testimony, and it has been incredibly powerful so far.

You have outlined in great detail the impacts this is having on your industries. Could I ask you each in turn, please—Craig, coming to you first—you mentioned that there have been a lot of talking shops and not a lot of action. What do you see as the priority area for the Government that needs to be addressed on the EU visa arrangements for creative workers to be able to move freely around the EU?

Craig Stanley: First, and I will come back to visas, there are many other areas that also need immediate attention. It would be worthwhile for the Committee to consider all those other elements as well. I am more than happy to provide more detail on that. On the visas, we broadly agree with the Secretary of State when he announced recently that perhaps 17 or 18 of the 27 member states are fairly straightforward for short-term working. That does not get over the issue that Noel has outlined for longer-term theatrical performances.

Immediately, in an open way—and embrace with the industry, because, dare I say it, we are the experts—to enter into bilateral discussions with our counterparts in Europe and find a solution for those territories where there would appear to be difficulties. I would particularly highlight Spain, which is much in the news, Croatia, which is incredibly important to the DJ market and to the festival market, and Bulgaria. There is great uncertainty over Italy and Malta. I can provide a list of where we think they would be, and indeed I have done so in the cultural working group. But we have had no evidence of what that engagement is.

Q171 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Do you feel like the Government are treating this as a priority?

Craig Stanley: I think some of the officials are. My suspicion is that it would work much better if there was more senior involvement, more



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regularly involved, with the plight of our industry. As Noel outlined, even though we are not working at the moment, it is easy to say, "They're not actively engaged" because we cannot work because of Covid restrictions. But even the smallest tour is planning three or four months ahead. I am booking shows into 2023.

I am having to guess what is happening. I am fortunate that some of our tours are very substantial. There is a substantial financial risk in having to make judgments on a complete lack of information. If there was clarity, consistency, accuracy and accessibility of information, that would greatly help to ameliorate the anxieties across our industry. It would not solve them, but it would reduce them considerably.

Are they actively involved or actively engaged? It needs to be at Lord Frost's level. We welcomed that it was mentioned as a single line right at the end of the Government press release yesterday about the first partnership council meeting. What is interesting is that the Secretary of State in February met with us and pointed to the partnership council as possibly a way forward. We were very surprised it has taken nearly five months before the first meeting, and we are a little by-line at the bottom of it. We did not appear on the agenda.

Q172 Alex Davies-Jones: Tamara, for your industry, for the fashion industry, do you feel like the Government are taking the priority areas for you seriously? What do you think should be a priority for the Government in order to tackle some of the issues that your industry is facing?

Tamara Cincik: There was guidance last week to fashion professionals saying how to check domestic immigration rules and saying that there probably would not be checks on carnets, kind of like, "You don't really need to worry about it." The reality is that, as ISM has said—I have been part of their FreeMoveCreate campaign for a number of years now, and they are fantastic at briefings—I err on the side of caution. Of course, carnets cost.

The people this is going to put at risk are primarily your freelancer economy. As with music, you obviously have the big fashion stars who are organising large fashion shows, but the majority of the fashion professionals—the creatives who work, whether that is on trade or fashion shows or on commercial shoots or editorial shoots—are freelancers, whether that is models or stylists, hair and makeup or the brands themselves. These are your SME community; these are not wealthy people.

For instance, when you look at each of the countries, you follow the links that have been set out by DCMS and you go to Austria and it says, "You need to apply to the Austrian embassy." It is not clear how long it will take to get the work permit. Then you look up annex SERVIN-4 of the TCA, if your role is included, and it says, "Have you got a degree?" Loads of fashion people do not have a degree. "Professional qualifications required for your trade." How do you quantify a professional qualification for a stylist, and six years' relevant professional experience?



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So the guidance on each of these countries varies, the paperwork varies. This is a just-in-time business model. If you want to have a whole discussion about the nature of capitalism and how we have ended up in a just-in-time model, that is a whole other discussion, but the business and the industry works on a just-in-time business model. 50% of your bookings will come last minute.

Basically, as of December, the UK is out of the EU business economy, so people are either looking to locate, which is obviously problematic in a pandemic, or trying to make enough money here, which they cannot. There is just not enough work here. Because we are high-ranking, high-calibre, we punch above our weight as a creative sector in the fashion industry, so there just is not enough work for the talent that we have. That is why we are a global export.

Q173 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Exactly. What would be your ideal solution to this issue?

Tamara Cincik: My ideal solution, in terms of this issue, would be a visa waiver and then a reduction in this paperwork, an end to carnets. They are not fit for purpose, because now you have a system where if you go with the clothes on the Eurostar it looks like you will not get stopped, but have you ever taken on an EU customs official? It is very daunting, especially for a freelancer, and I do not think that should be put on them. That makes them vulnerable. Then if you send a delivery, you get stuck with carnets, delays in haulage. I am hearing of things stuck for a month.

It is this carnet nightmare, a visa waiver and an end to each person having to look to each of the 27 countries. The EU needs to come together and holistically decide this issue, because equally work goes with Schengen. You do not go to France and come back. You might go from France to Germany. I am talking pre-Covid and pre-Brexit. You would travel within Schengen, so it needs to be unified there and that is something the EU needs to look to and Lord Frost and his Department need to argue for. My understanding is that it was offered and rejected. I am not quite sure of the politics and the lens on that, but that is something the sector needs. Equally looking at carnets. It is a cost, it is a delay risk and it is a just-in-time business model, so those things do not work together.

Q174 **Alex Davies-Jones:** That is the ideal solution. If that is not achievable for one reason or another, what would be an acceptable solution?

Tamara Cincik: Our countries, as in fashion's countries, are probably slightly different from music. It would be France, Milan, a lesser extent to Spain, but growing in Germany and Holland. Those five, and Italy, sorry, six. Those would be the countries that we definitely need to sort this out with. I know I have cited Austria. I would say that is less of an important territory for the UK fashion industry. I would also ask for a country such as France, which is seeing this as an opportunity to build its infrastructure and access our talent, our workers and our income, is it in their interests to make this easier? I do not know that it is.



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Q175 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Noel, if I come to you and ask you the same questions. What would be the ideal solution? If that is not achievable, what is acceptable?

Noel McClean: I would concur with Tamara. Make it as frictionless as possible—a visa waiver, bilateral agreements on work permits, take away some of the costs that are associated with taking work kit between EU member states. If there is going to be some bureaucracy, at least have it at EU level rather than individual member state level.

I was talking to somebody the other week who was complaining about this to someone in Government. They said the response was, “We’ve look at what you do and you’re well used to this stuff because you’ve toured the US.” The problem is that would be like saying going to the US is one thing and then applying for various forms and bits of paper that permit you to do certain activities in each one of the individual states that you happen to visit or do some paid engagement in. It is not the same. Reducing that would be immensely helpful.

In terms of prioritising, the Government need to seriously engage with the industry, because that is not an easy ask. Different parts of the industry will have different priorities, and even within the industry. If you just took the live-music bit, rock and pop arguably has a different set of priorities to opera, for example. Engage with the industry meaningfully and properly, and not the lip service that we appear to be being paid so far would be a good start.

Q176 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Craig, are there solutions that are entirely within the UK Government’s gift that we should be paying more attention to and querying more?

Craig Stanley: If I can move the conversation on to the movement of vehicles, quite simply no trucks means no tours. It is as bold a statement as that. In many ways the absence of our ability to drive and do multi-stop tours, by definition, stops tours happening. We believe that Lord Frost could go back to Europe to work with DG MOVE and follow a plan or an approach that the car transporter industry does, which is it is given an easement to do more than three stops in Europe when delivering cars to multiple dealerships. Certain sectors already have exemptions, and we think Lord Frost’s team could build on that.

While that is happening, there appear to be two proposals that have been put forward. One is called a reverse easement where successful British trucks—the DfT is advising UK haulage operators to do this if they have the means to do it, and not all do—re-register their trucks in Europe, to offshore them. Then it is in the gift of the Secretary of State, we believe—and it could be done, starting September and could be available by October—to allow those freshly minted Irish, Dutch or French trucks, which are driven and owned by British companies, to come back and operate in the UK. We believe it is entirely in his gift to do that and we cannot understand why he cannot.



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The DfT has also come up with a rather exotic plan that involves re-registering the truck with French number plates, giving up your British number plate, then re-registering that truck back as a French number plate but with British paperwork. We think this is complete flim-flam. It if works, fantastic, but it seems to be grasping at straws.

The solution to the problem is to go back and get a cultural exemption for the movement of trucks. Otherwise touring will stop, and I would not want to be Lord Frost, to be remembered as the person who killed international live touring for music, because that is what he is facing at the moment. There is no getting around it, no trucks means no tours.

Tamara Cincik: Could I answer that question quickly? There are two aspects. They might not be in Lord Frost's gift, but they are in the UK Government's gift. One is adding garment workers to the SOL, the shortage occupation list, and one is stopping their decision to end the VAT retail export scheme, because that will not support retailers in the UK post-pandemic with our tourist industry, when we have international tourists who come here and have previously enjoyed a tax exemption on their luxury buy. That is something we have been asking for them to do as well. That is nothing to do with going to Brussels, both of those are entirely UK Government decisions.

Q177 **Julie Elliott:** I thank the witnesses for coming in at such short notice as well. I also want to place on record my support for the Chair's comments at the beginning of this meeting regarding Lord Frost. I completely agree with him on this issue, and I want that placed on the record.

I will start by asking Craig and Noel a question. We had the Secretary of State before the Committee a little while ago and he said to us that, "Some paid touring activities are possible without needing visas or work permits" in 17 out of the 27 EU states. Do you know what he means by "some," and is it enough to mitigate the issues that you have raised so graphically this afternoon?

Craig Stanley: I said earlier that we can broadly see what the Secretary of State was saying. The problem is that the devil is in the detail on visas and work permits, and those terms are often interchangeable, which leads to even more confusion. We can enter into the countries, it is whether we can earn a living there. For the vast majority of them, that requires a work permit. For a fair number of them it would appear that, for short-stay working, it is fairly straightforward, so he is correct in that assumption. However, when you dig underneath the surface, you realise that some of the countries limit it just to musicians and put very onerous requirements on their support crews.

For example, in Spain, which is one country that is often cited, it is our understanding that the musicians, for short stay—which is fewer than five days—will require a C-class visa, which I believe is €113. There is a lot of misunderstanding. Our understanding is that if you are worker you may have to apply for a D-class, which costs £232, plus you have to get a medical certificate, plus you have to get a police ACRO, which is another



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£89, for each member, and you have to provide backup, supporting paperwork and so forth.

So, yes, he is right in some countries, but by definition again, with a tour you cannot always pick the countries that you want to get to without passing through others. In order to pass through others, you may want to be doing shows in them, so it is like a giant jigsaw. Just for some to be working does not actually help.

Q178 **Julie Elliott:** What I think you are saying, Craig, is that theoretically there are technically ways to do certain things but, in the real world, they are completely impractical and very expensive. Is that the gist of what you are telling us?

Craig Stanley: Yes. I can give you an example of that. The Monteverdi Orchestra is booked to play in Spain for three engagements in December. There are about 70 people touring. They are facing, depending on whether it is a C-class or a D-class, something between £10,000 and £14,000 of additional costs. They will then make a loss on that contract. They are now talking with the people who booked them in Spain about who would shortfall that loss.

Q179 **Julie Elliott:** Noel, what is your take on this?

Noel McClean: Similar. Whether it was accident or design, the statement from the Secretary of State gave the impression that, of the 27 member states where UK workers were able to go paperwork-free, frictionless, to visit and work, in 17 of them you can do that, and that is absolutely not the case. There are varying degrees of bureaucracy still associated with those 17 member states. He has not identified them, by the way. I looked on the DCMS website because I thought, "That's good, and surely when I look at this newly published guidance on the DCMS website, those 17 will leap off the page and it will be immediately apparent to me which ones he is talking about." That is simply not the case. There is a technical statement there, and below it lies a load of reality that does not quite match up to the expectation that you can do what you did before. That is absolutely not the case.

Q180 **Julie Elliott:** I want to ask you all, starting with Tamara, assuming there are no EU-wide changes to movement of creative workers before then, where do you expect the UK's creative industries will be in a year's time?

Tamara Cincik: By then we will have hopefully come out of lockdown. There has been an economic downturn and you have a largely freelance economy. By the way, what all these industries share is people who have gone into something because of a sense of drive, of passion. It is not a job that you go into, in the majority, because you are ambitious for economic wealth. You are driven by your career on a really existential level.

I anticipate a major brain drain. I don't think a lot of that would necessarily go to the EU because, certainly for the fashion professionals, it is easier for them to go to the US because of a shared language and it



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is a bigger market where you can be in one country and you can travel within it. I have already seen a lot of people getting a second passport. That has already happened. You have a lot of people who are here but they have sorted out a German, Irish, French or whatever passport. I think there will be more of that.

What you are seeing with the brands is they are looking at major hassles with paperwork, and not all of them have the capacity to organise an EU distribution hub, which is what the Government guidance suggests they should do. The money that was cited for SMEs is not fit for purpose. When they have rung up, they have had 90 minutes on a call with an adviser to get £2,000 and have given up. They are frustrated, they are tearing their hair out. They are saying that they are either going to relocate, or if they are insistent on staying here, they are then adding the hassle of looking at Portugal to do manufacturing for their EU website and UK manufacturing for their UK website, which is really arduous and very problematic.

For the larger businesses that have call centres, they are looking to relocate their call centres. Obviously there is going to be a downward line in international language speakers in the UK, who are on a lower income. It is going to be less attractive for graduates to stay here after they have done their degrees, if they come here and take those customer-service jobs, so they are relocating those to the EU. Equally, the jobs in distribution are going to the EU because they are taking their haulage to the EU. Again, the lower pay-scale jobs are relocating, which is possibly not an intended consequence but will be an outcome of this.

The brain drain will take time, because people are emotionally attached to where they live. A lot of people have made living here work for them, despite the fact that they have not necessarily made all their money here, because they love it here. London especially, Manchester and other cities that are hotbeds of the UK fashion industry are fantastic places to live.

We have also seen a lot of people move out of London and the cities, as I am sure you have, due to the pandemic. People are looking at things anyway with a new lens because the pandemic has given them that time to reassess. I think you will see the higher-end level, the A* students, the top level, moving more to America because it is a bigger market and you have one visa to deal with. Other people will try the EU, and for production more will go to Portugal.

Noel McClean: I worry. I do not think we will be there, but in a year I think we will see the start of the future. We will see more movement of UK-based haulage and UK-based equipment supply to the continent, into the EU. To a point Craig made earlier, that is fine for the organisations but that kit has to be maintained and serviced. It will not be maintained by UK workers; it will be done by EU workers.

I think we will see a drift away from the industry. We have to bear in mind where we are and what we are coming out of, any resilience has



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been sucked out and people are struggling. On the cusp of recovery, they then get hit with this. That undoubtedly means people will leave. We will suffer skills leaving the industry and going somewhere else. Then we will start to see the EU beginning to recover and consolidating more bases over there. There might be a short-term need for UK technicians and engineers to help train people up, but we will see the start of a process.

We have warned the Government repeatedly. Covid gave us a little bit of time, not very much but a little bit of time, and they have completely wasted that time. They have wasted it. If we waste any more time and we turn our attention to this in one, two or three years' time, we will be approaching this with a reduced skills base in the UK, and in the EU we will be approaching a developing and maturing market that we will struggle to break into. The comment was made earlier that what happens in the next couple of months will set the tone for the next five or 10 years, and I think that is absolutely true.

Craig Stanley: I entirely agree with what Noel just said, bearing in mind that in contemporary music 85% of European tours originate in the UK. That means predominantly they have UK staff, UK suppliers, UK trucks, UK buses, UK caterers. 85% is a very dominant position, and I do not think any other industry has such a dominant position. That will be lost. Many suppliers will move offshore. They are already planning to do so. That means they will be employing local staff. Many of the very experienced and trained staff, by necessity, have had to get other work during Covid. There is very limited incentive for them to return, to go into an uncertain future.

American acts, when they come over, in the vast majority of times—85% or 90% if not more—take on British staff to supplement their European tours and they use British equipment. They will start to move to Schiphol, Frankfurt and warehouses in the middle of Germany and take on the gear there. All of that will be lost, the rehearsal things will be lost.

There is a real danger that international orchestras or British orchestras will stop. That is not just the visa issue; it is to do with cabotage and their own vehicles, because they cannot just put their gear, their very expensive, delicate instruments, into any truck. They have to put it into their own truck. If they cannot drive it, they cannot tour, so you are going to stop the Royal Philharmonic from touring. It is as bold as that.

Q181 **Julie Elliott:** If the Government secure reciprocal bilateral agreements with EU member states based on our rules for the movement of creative workers, will that be enough to mitigate the issues you have raised?

Craig Stanley: It would go a very, very long way. Live music revels in the fact that we are entrepreneurial, we are problem solvers. That is what we do. We work to very tight deadlines. The sector is here to find solutions, but you have to give us a few crumbs and we will work with them. But if we just run against a brick wall, all we are getting at the moment is a flat head.



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Q182 **Julie Elliott:** Noel and Tamara, would you agree with Craig that, if the Government get some of these bilateral agreements, it will help?

Noel McClean: As long as it happens soon, yes, because I think there is a threat if it is left too long. Yes.

Q183 **Julie Elliott:** When would you say it needs to happen by? I know “yesterday” is the answer.

Noel McClean: As soon as possible. Within the next few months. Before the end of the calendar year we want to see some progress. I could say lots about lack of progress. Some urgency on this. For the Secretary of State to announce in May that he now had a chance to look at the full extent of these restrictions, and they vary enormously by country, we were waiting four months for him to tell us what we could have told him four months previously. This is the lack of progress. He was told that. This Committee told him that, and yet that is his big announcement, “I’ve looked at it and it is very, very complicated.” This is May, from an agreement signed in December and, within days, the alarm bells were ringing, phone calls made and emails sent. We get to May. Sorry, yesterday, please.

Tamara Cincik: The thing for my sector is it might iron out the issues with services, with the people, with talent, but it does not iron out the issue with the goods. I think that issue would remain. I speak as someone who has worked in Switzerland, where it has been easy to get in and out for me as a talent but it has been less easy for the goods to get in, so you get hit one way or the other. We are seeing a very varied landscape of delays and added costs. It seems to be particularly worse coming from Germany. Cotton thread comes from a company called Gütermann for most businesses.

Although I want to say on record that, of course, I support onshoring, currently we have one button factory in the UK. Zips do not get made in the UK. Unless we had massive R&D investment into raw materials and an onshored, levelled-up agenda that addressed these core issues—all our clothes have these belts, zips and buttons on—then that is problematic because these delays are not just coming from the EU; they are coming from the countries where we have lost trade deals as well.

We need to sort out this whole thing, but for us in the fashion industry the goods issue is as worrying for businesses as the service issue. I absolutely endorse the problems that are being engendered. In the majority, the freelancers or the SMEs are being hit the worst. That for me is heart-breaking, because they are the ones that are filling my inbox with stories. They have tried dealing with the consultants that DIT have in place and they feel like they are in a rabbit warren of hell when they are already being hit with paperwork that they cannot cope with, and escalated costs and delays.

Do not forget that many businesses over the pandemic, when retail units were shut, moved very successfully—and they should be celebrated for this—into online sales, and the EU represented the majority of their sales.



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That helped them to survive a very challenging year. Then, boom, from 1 January they have been hit with costs. So many people had to close their website or say they could not sell to the EU because they had outraged customers saying, "I've been hit with extra costs and delays" and sending it back. Those relationships that take ages for someone to nurture have been destroyed by this, and that is such a tragedy.

Craig Stanley: Can I add to the question Julie asked about timing?

Chair: Yes, briefly, if you can.

Craig Stanley: We understand that it takes time, but the flim-flam has to stop. In the meantime, DCMS could look at providing shortfall funding, short-term funding, now, to offset the additional costs of getting visas, the additional costs of carnets if it cannot be negotiated very quickly for them to be removed, to give advice lines so that specific cases for young and emerging artists who cannot afford professional advice can have access to it. That is entirely in the gift of DCMS to start on Monday. I have been asking for the last three months for it to do that, and it says it is considering it.

Q184 **Giles Watling:** Thank you, all three, for coming in today. We appreciate your attendance. We all agree that things are not moving fast enough and we all agree that we would like to see a pan-European settlement rather than dealing with individual member states, to make life a lot simpler for everybody. I absolutely take Craig's point about cabotage and carnets, et cetera.

I want to put this statement to you that we are throwing away business as things stand. I personally know of broadcasters who have relocated to Frankfurt, for example. Would you agree that that is what we are doing as things go on, and we are starting a haemorrhage?

Craig Stanley: I would go as far as an avalanche at times. I think it will be when we return after Covid, because there is just not enough business within the domestic market to support the incredible world-class collection of musicians, backstage talent, designers, manufacturers and rehearsal facilities. There is just not enough work, so either they will go to Europe, they will give up or they will go into bankruptcy.

Q185 **Giles Watling:** As part of this £116 billion and very fast-expanding creative industry, the performing arts sector is absolutely vital for our soft power. Noel, any comments on that?

Noel McClean: I spoke earlier about the National Theatre, but look at opera as well. I will explain why I am doing this in a minute. There are three grand opera houses in the UK and five major UK opera companies. There are 200 in Europe; we have five. For UK talent to sustain itself, they must be able to move through multiple jurisdictions relatively seamlessly, as straightforwardly as possible.

The point is that there is an ecology here. For the viability and health of organisations like the National Theatre and the Royal Opera House, while they are individual institutions, they are part of an ecology, which is the



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creative sector. When they suffer, everything suffers. There is so much at stake here. I agree with the word “avalanche.” Once we see Covid restrictions removed, hopefully soon, I think the full scale of the problem will be laid bare for all to see, and it is going to be horrific.

Q186 **Giles Watling:** I would imagine the same applies to the fashion industry, Tamara.

Tamara Cincik: Yes. It is not for want of us telling Government officials. I can go back to emails I sent in early 2018 where I outlined these issues. I have been like a broken record. It hints at something deeper, which I think is more troubling, in that there is a lack of attention or care towards a sector that was growing 11% year on year and that adds a lot of value. Although it is important to talk about soft power, it is hard power because it is jobs, incomes and livelihoods. It is very worrying, but it also hints at the STEM education agenda. The respect that has been put towards the arts has been diminished by an education system where the arts have been an add-on or an afterthought in many cases, which is worrying. I think that hints at why it is not getting the position of authority that it deserves as such a large employer.

Absolutely, you cannot make enough money from the UK market when you have all this talent. It just doesn't add up. While I am all for having different trade deals that open up different markets in different territories, we have a massive market—it is larger than the American market by a wide margin—20 miles away, with which we share a history, physicality and sensibility and it would be ridiculous to overlook that market while exploring others. It would be ridiculous to trammel on those pre-existing relationships. You don't work like that in business. Of course you look at new markets, but you do not decimate the one you are already working with very successfully. It doesn't work.

Q187 **Giles Watling:** We are world leaders, let's not throw that away. Okay, good point to make.

I would like to move on to another subject. The Government published guidance to get us through all this. I have looked at it and there is the bespoke, tailored transition self-checker, which you can check. I am sure you have all had a chance to look at the guidance. How effective do you think it has been?

Craig Stanley: As I said earlier, it is not guidance; it is signposting. For me, a large part of guidance is about interpretation for informed discussion, to say it could happen or this or that. They are just saying, “Go and look at the Norway website.”

Q188 **Giles Watling:** I see, yes. What more would you like to see?

Craig Stanley: We have suggested to them—I have put it in writing to DCMS and I have raised it on numerous occasions in the cultural workshop group—that they could look to the industry, recruit experts from within the industry and fund a resource that could help to guide, especially the younger and newer people in the industry who don't have



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the deep resources to seek expert advice on specific matters, on how you get through all the additional bureaucracy.

Giles Watling: The guidance is there, but I found it fiendishly intricate and quite difficult to follow.

Craig Stanley: Also they are relying on the EU member states to publish accurately. They are not. Some of them have hardly published anything because they just say, "We are closed for Covid." They have not moved on. Some of it is two years old, some of it even longer.

Q189 **Giles Watling:** So it has just shut down?

Craig Stanley: Yes, it is very patchy.

Q190 **Giles Watling:** Anybody, any comments on the guidance?

Noel McClean: Just to agree. It seems to me that the Government spent a lot of money, I would guess, using Deloitte to come up with something that is incorrect and insufficient. There are many visa companies out there around the UK. I am sure one of those could have done a much better job. I understand the ISM has written to Alastair Jones pointing out the inaccuracies, where it is incorrect and where the information is missing. I would agree with that. I would not describe it as guidance. It is the corralling of various websites and bits of information put on to one page. It is not very good.

Tamara Cincik: It feels a lot like a cut and paste. What we do is we get the guidance and we share it. I still get the panicked emails because they can't make sense of it. As I said, when they dig into it and they bother to ring the consultants that have been brought in by DIT, they are going around in circles with people who are supposed experts, who don't understand the intricacies of the sector.

Q191 **Giles Watling:** You get the emails. Where do you refer to? Where do you go? Where do you get your sources?

Tamara Cincik: For my data or from them? BEIS I find much, much more engaged with the concerns of the sector, I have to say, than DCMS. I don't know why, but I find it is trying to share information. As I said, the recent guidance that came out, when you start drilling into it and then you go to the Austrian website and it says you need a degree and some kind of work qualification, that is just not fit for purpose for these kinds of jobs.

What Noel has been saying, that had they hired experts all along rather than whoever they have hired, it would have made it far easier for the sector, because it would have been understanding of the issues that they are facing. Unfortunately these consultants are not. That is not necessarily a Brexit issue. I saw this as well with PPE. I did a lot of calls on PPE and a lot of experts who did not understand manufacturing and supply chains were consultants on that. I think it is the same with this.

Q192 **Giles Watling:** They were experts?



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Tamara Cincik: They were hired consultants; they were not experts. That is the problem. It is the hired consultants who are making the work that determines the lives of the experts, and I do not think that is the right way around.

Giles Watling: I understand. There is a wonderful irony in that.

Q193 **Kevin Brennan:** Thank you very much, Craig, because we have been scratching our heads for many months about how we, as a supposedly important parliamentary Select Committee, could secure an audience with Lord Frost and you have told us how it is done now. We just need to get Sir Elton John to come to the Committee, and Lord Frost will quickly agree to a meeting. Is that right?

Craig Stanley: It so happens that Sir Elton John—we are very fortunate—is a long-term client of our company. We have a close relationship with him.

Q194 **Kevin Brennan:** When you asked for a meeting with Lord Frost along with Elton John—who, by the way, is a great, great treasure of our nation and a brilliant songwriter and musician—how long after Sir Elton's name was mentioned did Lord Frost agree to meet?

Craig Stanley: We owe a debt of gratitude to Lord Strasburger, who was the honest broker who set up the meeting and also attended.

Q195 **Kevin Brennan:** Who is Lord Strasburger? Do we need to contact him to secure a meeting with Lord Frost, do you think?

Craig Stanley: I would not dare to suggest to the Committee how you do your business, but it might not be a bad idea.

Q196 **Kevin Brennan:** Okay. You referred earlier to the first meeting of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement Partnership Council. I think you said this matter did not feature on its agenda, despite the fact the Prime Minister said, "We are working flat out to fix it" and the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said it was at the top of his inbox. I have the agenda here for yesterday's meeting of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement Partnership Council, and there are nine items on the agenda: introduction, welcome, opening remarks from the co-chairs, formal adoption of the agenda, then the first discussion is sanitary and phytosanitary measures, customs and trade facilitation, fisheries, law enforcement, long-term visa fees, participation in Union programmes, update on institutional framework, including tentative timetable of meetings, Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, Civil Society Forum, any other business, concluding remarks." Are you shocked that despite the fact the Prime Minister said, "We are working flat out to fix it" and the Secretary of State for DCMS said it is at the top of his inbox, not only is it not at the top of their inbox, it is not even on the agenda?

Craig Stanley: It is a source of deep sadness. To say that people are upset is a mild understatement within our industry, but it goes back to—



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Q197 Kevin Brennan: Do you think the Government are taking us all for fools here by continually making remarks that this is a priority, signalling to the various industries represented here today that they are working flat out to solve it, and yet on Lord Frost's first meeting yesterday, it is not even on the agenda?

Craig Stanley: It is not, but then again if I draw your attention—I am sure you have seen it—to the release that was on the Government website of what was covered after the fact, there is one line at the bottom of it saying that the visa arrangements were brought up by the UK Government.

Kevin Brennan: Right, sorry, it was under "any other business."

Craig Stanley: Yes.

Q198 Kevin Brennan: It was important enough for somebody to remember it under "any other business" in the first meeting of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement Partnership Council. That is what you are telling us, is it?

Craig Stanley: But it reflects the absence of true engagement, we believe, across the last five months. Officials at the DCMS have been very helpful, but I don't think they have the authority or the power to drive things through. I have great feelings for them, because they have been taking a battering at every meeting with good grace, but in actual fact it needs ministerial-level and, I dare say, Secretary of State-level involvement as a minimum.

Q199 Kevin Brennan: We have a picture here, haven't we, of a Department and its officials that is apparently trying very hard to promote this issue up the agenda, but that has absolutely no influence within Government? It is a Government that is fragmented and where one part of the Government doesn't know what the other is doing, or certainly is not listening to the other part of the Government. Is that a fair characterisation of your experiences in dealing with the Government over the last few months?

Craig Stanley: It has been. It has been very saddening for officials at the DfT to affirm to us—and the Road Haulage Association, who we have been working very closely with, have been excellent in support for this sector—that there is no intention at the moment to reopen the TCA on matters to do with cabotage and truck movement, to have that as a bold statement. There is no intention to reopen.

Q200 Kevin Brennan: Do you think that statement is a reflection of UK Government policy, rather than the European Union's position on this matter?

Craig Stanley: We have been petitioning our friends and colleagues through Europe, who rely on us. We are agents of artists, as many of my colleagues are. We sell artist talent to Europe. Those promoters out there need our talent, their buildings need our talent and the fans want our talent. As they grow more and more, particularly around the economic



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argument—because for every pound or every euro spent in the venue, there might be several pounds or euros spent in the local economy—there will be a fast-growing economic argument and pressure. That is what we have now been sowing the seeds for as an industry throughout Europe with local concert provider associations, talking to the European Arena Association and to various theatre organisations across Europe, as indeed the theatre, the opera and the classical world are also all doing. It will be the economic argument that drives the Europeans back.

Q201 Kevin Brennan: Can I ask each of you in turn, is there anything that has improved for your sectors regarding working in the EU over the past five months since we left the European Union?

Craig Stanley: No.

Tamara Cincik: No is the short answer.

Noel McClean: No.

Q202 Kevin Brennan: I appreciate your brevity, everyone, on that question. That will be reflected in the record.

We had an announcement recently, Craig, that the Government were announcing a trade deal with Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway, and press reports indicated that, as part of that trade agreement, UK bands would be able to tour freely in Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Leaving aside the fact that, in the last decade, not one of the top 10 UK acts has ever played in Liechtenstein or that only Ed Sheeran has played in Iceland on two occasions in that decade—I have to say Sir Elton John is very popular in Norway, because he played there 12 times in the last decade, which is far in excess of anybody else—is there any hope in that agreement that, if it can be done with those non-EU countries quite quickly and quite easily, and I appreciate that some of them are very small countries, something similar, if the Government put the effort in and had the will, could be agreed with the European Union?

Craig Stanley: I would absolutely agree with that sentiment. Our company booked those shows in Norway, so I am very familiar with the terms of those engagements. Indeed, we book shows into Iceland. The published numbers were not quite right for Iceland, but you are quite right, if it can be done there, why can't it be done across Europe? We are at a loss to understand why. I think so much of it is because we get a strong feeling that there is not active engagement and active support to believe that this is a world-leading sector that is facing annihilation.

Q203 Kevin Brennan: We know they are not taking it seriously, because it is not even on the agenda. We have already established clearly in fact that they are not taking this issue seriously.

Are you aware, Craig, of the Carry On Touring campaign, which came out of the petition to Parliament by somebody called Tim Brennan—no relation, I should make clear—and a letter that it has written, which I think has been signed by over 1,000 people, to Lord Frost, but which is yet to receive a reply? It was 26 May and we know Lord Frost takes his



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time in responding to things, but are you aware of that campaign and what would be your comments on him not replying yet?

Craig Stanley: I am very familiar with it. It just highlights that the one thing about our industry, even though we are competitors in so many ways, is that because of this we have really joined up. I have spoken to Tim and many others across different pressure groups, whether it is We Make Events or many others, so we are very joined up and we agree with each other on so many things. Lord Frost needs to respond, it is quite simple.

Q204 **Kevin Brennan:** I will ask each of you in turn this final question. What message do you want Lord Frost to take to the EU? Perhaps in addition to that, what would you like us to ask him if and when he finally deigns to appear before us?

Tamara Cincik: First of all, I think he needs to take the sector seriously. Fishing has become a trigger word, which is no disrespect to the fishing industry as it stands, but the consistent prioritisation of an industry that is equivalent to east London's fashion industry nationwide with a minimal amount of jobs is politically charged and therefore becomes problematic on a business and workforce level. I think the absence, as you have highlighted, Kevin, highlights a lack of not awareness, because they are certainly aware of us, but a lack of attention. That needs to change.

The visa waiver is something I would totally love, and in writing about carnets and also goods that are travelling without you. I don't want freelancers stuck at Eurostar with over-zealous customs officers. I know how daunting it is, having been a freelancer.

In terms of that campaign, we signed up to it. I think we were the only fashion industry organisation that did, because I try to align myself with many different creative industry campaigns to get fashion on the agenda, because quite often it has been overlooked.

In terms of DCMS, I would like to be on the steering group. I have asked. I think there is one fashion organisation and the rest are for music. That is not good enough. That is my ask.

Noel McClean: There are a number of things here. You have to question whether anything has improved. I have given you a very brief answer, along with the rest of the witnesses, but if we could just take a minute to go a little further, I would say things are worse in terms of how people are viewing this issue. Make no mistake, people are furious. We got off to a bad start and the Government have managed to make the situation worse at every turn, whether it is an unfulfilled promise, whether it is empty words that don't appear to mean anything, whether it is claiming that action has taken place but no evidence to support it whatsoever, or even if it is the Secretary of State saying things that people told him months ago almost as if it is a new piece of work that he has managed to uncover, or whether it is more recently.



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The whole thing about Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein in particular, was greeted with derision. It is not just the issue, because of course any step forward is helpful, but when you wrap that up with statements calling it ambitious and almost heralding it as some kind of huge negotiating triumph, when Liechtenstein in particular is not only landlocked, it is one of two countries on the planet that are double landlocked. It has no airport, so to get access to it you have to go through other EU or EEA countries. Even when you get there, I am sure the good people of Liechtenstein are very nice, but if you put every single citizen in a venue the size of Wembley stadium, it would still be two-thirds empty.

Of course every step forward is helpful, but please stop these empty words, these heralding of triumphs that are not triumphs and don't make much difference and turn your minds to the things that will make a difference and take it seriously.

I want to make this point as well, if I can. You have Carry On Touring. Bectu support that and a number of other campaigns. You have on this issue freelancers, employers, engagers, industry bodies, trade bodies and trade unions all speaking with one voice, not to quote or misquote the Prime Minister, "Not a jot or tittle between them." That is a unique set of circumstances. When that happens, it is significant. Maybe it says to you that you have something wrong.

Kevin Brennan: Thank you, Noel. That was very clear. Craig, I will give you the last word on that.

Craig Stanley: I think everything has been said. We feel we have just been ignored. They don't realise how significant we are. The other issue is that, because of Covid restrictions, it is too easy to fall into the trap of, "Oh, they are not working in entertainment." We are planning, and also people are making commercial decisions on whether to keep their companies going. There are very real and significant risks of major job losses and closures.

Kevin Brennan: It is real business, it is real people, it is real jobs and you have made that very clear.

Q205 **Clive Efford:** A lot of the questions we are asking will cross over. You may have given information already, so I am not asking you to repeat yourselves. I will not be offended if you refer me to what you said earlier, but we will cover the ground now.

I also want to associate myself with the opening comments of the Chair regarding Lord Frost. I find it extraordinary, as somebody who opposed Brexit, but I accept it has happened. I was told constantly in the run-up to Brexit that we were taking back sovereignty. I find it strange that, having taken back sovereignty to this Parliament, the Government don't want to talk to us and be held accountable by us. It is an extraordinary turn of events, but there we are. I look forward to him appearing before this Committee eventually.

Can I turn to you first, Craig? This is a question for all of you. In the EU,



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are your counterparts lobbying their Governments to work with the UK to resolve this problem or do they feel this is an opportunity that is falling in their laps and that they see this as people offshoring now from the UK to Europe, that there is an industry that is going to grow rapidly in Europe at the expense of the UK? What are the problems they are facing, and are they lobbying Governments in a similar way to you?

Craig Stanley: Deep down, our industry is based on talent and, at its essence, it is based on creative talent on stage, people writing great music and performing great music, and the UK produces great music. There is no escaping that we are the generators of that talent, so in my business, which is being an agent and promoter of talent, the Europeans want our talent, so they are putting pressure on their Governments to get this sorted. But they themselves are overrun by concerns due to Covid, because many of them have not earned €1 in 15 months, 16 months. There are very few industries that can continue like that.

But as Europe opens up, there will be a groundswell of support from purchasers of talent out in Europe, festivals, concert halls, promoters and so forth. Honestly, though, there are certain suppliers who see it as a business opportunity and what is happening is that the UK Government's slowness to respond and lack of commitment is opening the door for European companies to take our jobs.

Q206 **Clive Efford:** Noel, on the technical side, are your counterparts making the same noises to their Governments as you are making to ours?

Noel McClean: At an EU level, yes. Apart from the point Craig makes, talent is always better through cultural exchange. Coming from a trade union, obviously solidarity is an important part of that as well. For those two reasons, yes, and it is an open door. Bectu has affiliations to Europe-wide trade union bodies, and they are on board, they are on side. One of them appeared at the Carry On Touring event recently, once we invited them. The head of Bectu, my boss, Philippa Childs, has signed—along with a number of other people—a letter directly to Ursula von der Leyen on this issue, so there is pressure being put on the EU side as well.

Q207 **Clive Efford:** Tamara, by all means comment on that, but what are your thoughts on the stop-the-clock visa concessions to make it easier for models to work in London Fashion Week? Has that made an impact?

Tamara Cincik: It makes it easier for EU or non-UK models to come here. It doesn't, of course, make it easier for our models to go to the EU. It seems to hint that the UK Government folded first, if this was a poker game. London Fashion Week is 3% of business for models, so I think a focus on London Fashion Week does not give the lens of the whole sector within the UK or indeed with our international partners.

Of course any support that leads towards greater freedom of movement for anybody—and it is primarily models who are those people and they are generally young people as well, let's face it, they are teenagers or early 20s young women and men, who are obviously going to be terrified of dealing with customs and immigration. They are basically our children.



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Of course anything that makes it easier for them, the stop-the-clock concept is great, but it seems to be easier for people coming in rather than us going out. If we are here talking about the UK Government, they need to support the same. They need to be lobbying for that for our talent going out into the EU, because that doesn't help us at all.

- Q208 **Clive Efford:** Craig, you spoke earlier about the impact on the haulage industry, the fact that we have such a large portion of the concert haulage industry based here in the UK. I think the figure is about 85%. Can you give any examples of where people have relocated already? Has it started? I know you said it is going to happen in the future unless things change, but has it started already?

Craig Stanley: The DfT floated back in February/March a suggestion that it could drive through this reverse easement. To my knowledge, perhaps half a dozen of the larger specialist haulage companies have started to relocate or have certainly started the process of relocating part of their fleet to EU member states, principally Ireland and Holland, with one or two other places, possibly.

The problem that comes is that, across the whole UK fleet, not all of those operators, who again have been severely handicapped financially for the past 15 to 18 months, have the resources or indeed the energy at the moment to go and start up another business when they are already running a successful business in the UK. The dilemma they face is that if they move their trucks, re-register them and become EU operators, they also have to get EU driving licences for their drivers and they have work permit issues. To what extent that will be, no one is very clear. If they do all that, it may be that the UK Government doesn't give the reverse easement anyway, so they could be sinking hundreds of thousands of pounds, if not more, into an endeavour that is a white elephant. What we seek is clarity.

- Q209 **Clive Efford:** We talked about haulage, but isn't there a huge rig-hiring industry based here in the UK for the hardware, all the equipment, the lighting and everything else that is provided for large tours? Isn't that largely based here in the UK, too?

Craig Stanley: Absolutely, as are the associated technical staff. This is where the industry started, and that could be one reason why we are market leaders. We are very, very good at it. We also speak English, which is very attractive to our American friends when they come over and tour Europe, so they can have English-speaking crews. But none of the solutions that have been proposed helps the classical industry, not one of them, because none of these solutions, apart from a cultural easement for cabotage, takes into account own-account vehicles.

- Q210 **Clive Efford:** Noel, are there examples of where people with those skills are now basing themselves in the EU in order to overcome these problems?

Noel McClean: Skills or equipment, because the skills are UK workers. They are highly skilled, highly experienced and with a long tradition and



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history of doing this work. That has been explained. I am aware of some organisations that have opened up offices. I am not quite clear whether that is just a brass plate thing or whether it is the prelude to something else further down the track. Of course that is a worry, because once that equipment and/or vehicles go offshore, it is the associated maintenance and servicing of that stuff that will be done in the EU, not in the UK, and that will certainly not be done by UK workers, because otherwise what would be the point in all that business upheaval?

Q211 Clive Efford: You said earlier that you need to see some movement on this issue in the next few months, otherwise it could impact for the next five to 10 years. Do you get any indication at all that the Government get that?

Noel McClean: No, none whatsoever. In fact, quite the reverse. Look, I said before that people are furious, and they are. Apart from a lack of progress and lack of movement, they see a lack of commitment. People are genuinely saying that the Government don't get it, and they can't not get it because it has been put on their desk, it has been put in their emails, it has been put in front of them, so it must be that they don't care. So the short answer to your question is, no, I do not see any progress. I don't see that anything has changed.

Craig Stanley: May I just return to that issue of understanding and comprehension of our industry? It is all very well to say, "Go and move half of your fleet over to Holland," but there is also a time issue through the year. There are certain times. In summer festival time you need lots of trucks in Europe, for obvious reasons. But perhaps going into the winter and autumn seasons, you need those trucks back in the UK. If a decision is made to move trucks to Europe, we might then have the irony of not having enough specialist trucks and specialist drivers to fulfil our requirements at the high density times of the year. If we don't take trucks as an industry to Europe, there is insufficient fall-back capacity in Europe to fulfil our tours.

I predict that, unless this is resolved, major tours will be booked, tickets will be sold and we will not be able to get gear from A to B to fulfil those shows, and we will lose major tours, small tours and medium-sized tours across all musical forms of expression next summer. What I am trying desperately to do is for those who are involved in Government, who are trying to find solutions to this, to understand the very basic principle that we work months ahead and that the problems will come next summer.

Q212 Clive Efford: Tamara, you have talked about the problems that the carnet system has created, but what does it mean in terms of the industry if things are not changed? What does it mean for how the industry operates in the future and the implications for jobs?

Tamara Cincik: We have a series of perfect storms. One aspect of what you have just been asking my colleagues about also relates because what happened historically—when I say historically, we are talking the last 20 years—is that a global brand looks to launch into the EU, into Europe, in



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London, and therefore that has supported global tourism and travel, all of which have obviously been haemorrhaging money over the last year plus. The loss of that retail export scheme on top of the lack of attractiveness now to do so has an impact.

Then you have the loss of jobs that are going to be symptomatic of the unilateral decision to end the VAT retail export scheme. Then you have the fact that studying here is going to cost more than double for an EU student. They are not going to come, which means they are not going to want to work here. The aspects for the creatives are so problematic that we are already seeing a haemorrhaging of talent. Model agencies and creatives are looking at what is going to happen to the talent. All it does in the round, the long and the short of it is that it lowers the global reputation and therefore it lowers not only the presence but also the talent. What I would hate to see is my generation and the generation just under me relocate because they are like, "Oh, we can't afford to be here." It just diminishes what is already a global sector, because there are other countries where these industries are being taken very seriously beyond the EU, for example China and Nigeria.

There are other counties where there are growing and thriving markets. They are becoming very attractive to the current talent in the UK. Equally, it could mean that the current map, which has historically been New York, London, Paris, Milan and London, is taken out of the equation quite easily. I think that has already been the direction of travel for a number of years for some of the businesses. A lot of the buyers don't even come here to do their buying, they go to Paris, but I can see quite easily that it becomes another territory and London isn't one of that top four. That would be a tragedy.

Q213 Chair: Tamara, on that point regarding London's status or the UK's status, it wasn't always so that the UK was a very big player in this space: 20 or 30 years ago we were not. Is it your fear that, basically, this is just going to turn back the clock, that we are going to go back to a much more marginal role as a result of not being able to interact in the way that we need to in terms of creatives?

Tamara Cincik: Yes. When I go to the Royal College of Art's graduation show, which I think is next week—it will be virtual this year—it is so moving. They are ahead on innovation in terms of sustainability, extended producer responsibilities and circularity. Honestly, I learn so much from them every time I go. Equally, it was the St Martins BA graduation show this week. We have amazing talent coming out of the UK education system, and there has been amazing growth and steps in terms of sustainable brands manufacturing here, whether that is denim coming out of Wales or avant-garde brands showing at London Fashion Week.

Technically what I have seen over my long career is, yes, you have the Alexander McQueens and Hussein Chalayans of a generation ago, who were exceptional, yet there could be some shows where you are like, "Does this really deserve a show?" I have not seen that recently. I have



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seen amazing talent, either at London Fashion Week or sharing their work across the UK.

I think there is a real risk to that, because reputation in an industry that I don't think a lot of people go into to grow an income, it is not a classic career that you go into where you know where you are going to be. You have to work very hard for it. Reputation is part of that package, and anything that damages reputation makes it less attractive. Once it is less attractive, people relocate, so it is a perfect storm.

Chair: Tamara Cincik, Noel McClean and Craig Stanley, thank you very much for your evidence today. That concludes our session.