

Written evidence submitted by Tourlite Design Limited

Tourlite Design is an event lighting and production design consultancy. We are a family ran business and have serviced the arts, music and events industry for over 10 years. With clients stretching internationally from Norway, Australia and the USA, our work has taken our designs to all corners of the world. Our clients commission Tourlite Design to create unique stage designs and visual productions which involves creative collaboration with other companies and freelancers, as well as employing crew to execute productions in venues and overseas.

We are submitting this evidence due to the severe impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the arts industry and the failure to directly support the large network of business effected by it.

To what extent do Government measures protect viable jobs in the future and reduce the risk of long-term unemployment?

Within the Arts sector, it is hard to see any significant support that the government has directly delivered to protect so called viable jobs. For an industry that is founded on sole traders and freelance workers, other than the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant and furlough programmes, a large majority of people have been left unsupported. A significant amount of people working in the Arts operate as limited companies and are small business owners. It is no secret that small business owners have been ignored during the pandemic and excuses have been made to protect these decisions. Arts sector workers are uniquely skilled, however transferring these skills into other active industries is extremely difficult because of the availability of work. As a result, many people, lighting designers, sound engineers, musicians and so on, are being forced to work in unskilled low pay jobs. When the Arts can return to normal, a huge amount of this work force will be unable to return to their Arts careers because the demand for their service will not be there. Venues have closed, equipment suppliers have shut down and concert touring will be restricted for a long time to come. Touring bands and theatre groups have lost huge sums of income during the pandemic and many of our clients are preparing to scale back any future tours in terms of personnel and production. This obviously has a knock-on effect, for example – if a touring band can no longer afford to take a lighting design on a tour, there will be no need for a technician to set it up, it doesn't require as many crew to load equipment into venues, the supplier doesn't get a rental job which in turn means it doesn't need as many staff to prepare equipment, the rental supplier doesn't need as big a stock of equipment and so manufactures do not get as many orders. By not being able to protect the arts industry, one financially based decision can and has cost the jobs of many.

At the start of the year there was a prospect that Tourlite Design would take on a full time design assistant and surpass annual turnover targets, however the business now finds itself with 70% less income, high tax bills and the prospect of expansion now out of reach.

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