

## Written evidence submitted by MugStock Limited

- What is the economic and cultural contribution of the UK's festival industry?
  - As a small, grassroots music festival run by volunteers MugStock has been able to demonstrate an economic impact of over £1,000,000 over the course of 4 annual events. As one of the smaller players in this arena, we can only imagine the enormous impact that the whole sector has.
- What has been the impact of cancellations on local economies and those who derive income from festivals during 2020?
  - We know personally of many freelance artists, technicians and musicians whose livelihoods have been entirely curtailed. The support for these individuals has been tokenistic at best, with Creative Scotland's funding for individuals running out literally within minutes. Getting any degree of financial support beyond Universal Credit has been a literal lottery for these individuals. Post pandemic people will still expect events to take place, but it is questionable whether the trained staff will be available and key suppliers still operating. We desperately need to protect these industries right now.
- What are the risks to festivals taking place in 2021 and beyond, and how can these be mitigated?
  - The greatest risk at the moment is the complete lack of certainty about whether events next year will be able to go ahead, and if so in what form. In Scotland the Tiers system allows outdoor events under only the lowest tier. Given that tiers can change with very little notice event organisers are being asked to take an enormous gamble in beginning to plan an event. We could invest huge amounts of time and effort and money into planning an event, which could be forced to cancel any time up to the first day, and potentially even mid way through. No insurance company will underwrite this risk. If the UK Government is serious about maintaining the country's pride in our unparalleled cultural sector they should consider underwriting the risk so that event organisers don't have to. Our event is run on a not for profit basis and no we have no financial safety net whatsoever. Even the largest commercial festivals don't operate with the sort of margins which would allow them to absorb the impact of a last minute Covid-19 related cancellation. Either we take huge and unwarranted risks as individuals, or we play it safe and call next year a write off, or the Government, whose policies have explicitly created this dilemma could step in and offer security.
  - If events are allowed to go ahead, the next risk is the risk that public confidence in events is not high enough to create sufficient ticket sales.
- What measures are needed for audiences to attend festivals without social distancing, and how realistic are they?
  - In the context of outdoor events social distancing should be less of a priority than for indoor events.
  - System such as this one <https://steripods.com/> would be well worth perusal, and the Government could help events meet the costs of implementing these as well as helping to reassure Local Authorities of their validity.

- How has the structure of the UK festivals market evolved over recent years, and what has this meant for consumers, artists and the wider industry? What further changes might be anticipated?
  - The festival industry in Scotland has changed dramatically over recent years. Several of the most established events have ceased to exist (Wickerman Festival, Electric Fields, T in the Park). More smaller, grassroots events have popped up. The cost of policing for events has been a controversial issue. Police in Scotland charge upwards of £50 per officer per hour plus VAT, and have carte blanche to dictate the level of policing which will be supplied and charged for. There is a wide disparity in consistency between the approaches taken by police forces in different areas, with the region of Dumfries and Galloway standing out as having seen dramatic increases in the levels and costs of policing at festivals in past years. Notably 2 of the events which have ceased to exist – Wickerman and Electric Fields were based in this region.
- How can festivals be supported to reduce their environmental impact and tackle the dangers of illegal drug use?
  - Festivals make good efforts to promote sustainability. More can be done to promote car sharing and use of sustainable transport, however it will always remain difficult for family focussed events to discourage families from jumping in their own car with all of their camping gear and accessories.
  - In terms of tackling the dangers of illegal drug use, a harm reduction policy is likely to have the most positive overall impact. The approach taken by Boomtown festival is exemplary and merits replication:
 

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxkO1qrkz9U&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxkO1qrkz9U&feature=emb_title)