

THE SHOWMEN'S GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN

Guild House, 41, Clarence Street, Staines-upon-Thames, Middlesex. TW18 4SY

Tel: 01784 461805 Email: Centraloffice@showmensguild.co.uk

www.showmensguild.co.uk

The Treasury Select Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA
Email: treascom@parliament.uk
Tel: 020 7219 5769

Thursday 19th March 2020

**Submission from the Showmen's Guild on behalf of their members
and members of allied trade associations within the Fairground and show Industry,
to the Treasury Select Committee on the Call for Evidence
on the Economic Effect of the Government's Coronavirus Financial Package,
on Wednesday 25 March, in the Thatcher Room, Portcullis House.**

Dear Treasury, Select Committee Members,

**The Show people of Britain need support for their industry and livelihoods;
as they cannot trade at all, with measures to combat Covid-19
and they are ineligible to access the existing Financial Assistance announced so far
as they are self-employed with small businesses, without fixed, static trading locations.**

I write to you as President of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain. This is the trade association for the Fairground and Show Community, with 2,000 members across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each of these members, for the most part, is a small businessman and all have families, numbering over 23,000 overall.

The Showmen's Guild works alongside allied trade associations in the Fairground and Show Industry including the Association of Independent Showmen (AIS) the Association of Circus Proprietors (ACP); the Amusement Catering Equipment Society (ACES) and the Society of Independent Roundabout Proprietors (SIRPS).

They, as do I myself, own and operate the fairground attractions and shows that make up the many hundreds of Fairgrounds circuses and shows across the country, including the historic Charter Fairs, Carnivals, Melas, Festivals and operating in their own right at festive occasions, as being at the centre of national celebrations, such as the Grand National; the Derby; the Boat Race and the Winter Wonderlands nationwide.

These Showmen contribute greatly towards the **£74 Billion generated by the UK Events Industry** to the economy through their taxation; the boost to local and regional economies,

including much-needed footfall to town centres and often the only entertainment for those in less well-off communities.

Additionally, there is a whole economy that supports the Fairground and Show industry, which feeds into the income generated; including:

- manufacturers;
- marketing; staff employment of up to 100,000;
- purchase of stock & fuel and
- significant rental income to local authorities for parks, supporting finances for local services in each community.

The Showpeople do not qualify:

1. **for the assistance announced in the recent budget for retail, leisure and hospitality firms relating to business rates in the coming year,**
 2. **and they are not eligible for the tax holiday that companies with a rateable value of less than £51,000 were set to enjoy,** as also set out in the recent budget.
 3. **Additionally, they are ineligible to access the extra Financial Assistance announced last week by the Chancellor**
- as they are self employed with small businesses, without fixed, static trading locations.**

This situation exists because the way that the Showmen and women operate; while very sophisticated and highly regulated by both the Showmen's Guild and allied associations and governmental authorities such as HSE; The Food Standards Agency; VOSA and DVLA ***falls outside the scope of static leisure providers; even though we work hard to earn the same leisure pound as they do.***

Now with the advice that the government have communicated ; instructing the public not to attend mass gatherings and to Stay At Home and that there would be no support from public services for any mass gatherings and to avoid all "non-essential travel", including visiting theatres, cinemas and public venues; **the Showman and women cannot effectively operate.**

What this means is that we have to cancel many events from today onwards across the country, including the historic charter fairs; all the Easter Fairs and shows in most towns and cities; and many more at the rate of up to 100 per week.

The Showpeople who have had a lean winter, with few operating opportunities. plan seasonally to boost their income at Easter, to pay ongoing maintenance and operating bills and to quite frankly, feed our families.

We have no income now; the government's actions to combat Covid-19 have, at a stroke, *taken away our business and there is no safety net financially for us.*

While the provisions both within the recent budget and subsequently, for static businesses are effective with the fight-back against Covid-19, we have nothing.

The Showmen are patriotic Great British Workers and are looking for assistance with their businesses to survive, so that they can maintain the cultural heritage of their time-honoured craft and entertain the public.

This assistance could be in the form of:

- 1. payment through their HMRC Tax Code; direct payments to their bank; relaxation of tax due this year from HMRC**
- 2. Ensuring that the banks and Finance Companies to whom many have loans, treat them with fairness and understanding in extending finance and payment holidays across the industry**

These are all provisions that are in place across many other European countries, facing the same situation as the UK currently.

This would assist the 2000+ workforce representing 23,000+ families to get through this enforced economically difficult period,

Additionally: Many of the Showmen are qualified LGV drivers Class 1 (C+E); and wish to Drive for Britain

- with much experience of driving and maintaining highly complicated large vehicles.
- **Some have CPC qualifications; but many do not,**
- **although they would like to offer their LGV driving skills with the Food Chain and NHS Deliveries**

“Driver CPC periodic training is designed to confirm, and expand on, the existing knowledge and skills of each driver to ensure that they continue to be safe, courteous and fuel-efficient drivers.

This will also enable drivers to keep up-to-date with ever changing regulations and benefit them throughout their whole career.”

- **This is all within the existing driving standard and experience that the Showmen already have and operate within, under their Special Vehicle exempt class with DVSA**
- **We are looking at ways in which the Showmen’s experience in the current unavaoability to attend CPC training can be taken into account as equivalent skilled qualification in this area of handling Large Goods vehicles belonging to the Food Chain and NHS Hauliers, that they could easily drive straight away.**
- **In the same way that other skilled workers in other sectors are being recruited to assist the country in this time of national crisis**

Thank you for taking the time to listen to us.

Yours sincerely,

**Philip Paris,
President**

Overleaf: *The Showmen’s Guild of Great Britain – background*

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain – background:

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain is the leading Trade Association for the Travelling Fairground Industry; working together with allied trade associations in the Fairground and Show Industry including the Association of Independent Showmen (AIS) the Association of Circus Proprietors (ACP); the Amusement Catering Equipment Society (ACES) and the Society of Independent Roundabout Proprietors (SIRPS).

The Guild operates from its Central Office in Staines upon Thames with 10 regional Section offices across the UK.

Its members operate at funfairs throughout the year from historical Charter Fairs; to Holiday Fairs and at most public outdoor events such as Festivals; Melas; Winter Wonderlands and Carnivals.

- The Showmen's Guild has 2144 operating Members, who are typically the heads of a family
- So, there are 24,000 Showmen family members overall.
- This equates to approximately 95% of the Showmen out there across Britain
- These Showmen operate 4067 fairground attractions overall that include 1277 adult rides; 2138 children's rides and experiences; 652 inflatable slides and other structures;
- The Showmen give approximately 305 million passenger rides annually
- at the rate of 100 fairs a week at their height, as well as their supporting attractions at: Festivals and Melas; local celebrations such as carnivals; National celebrations; such as Fireworks night; Winter Wonderlands; corporate parties and many sporting events
- The operating season is now 12 months of the year
- Safety is the number one priority for the Showmen's Guild, and it is central to the operation of our Members within the industry.
- Educational achievement is high for Show children; many have attended university
- The Showmen's Guild , with allied associations continues to represent the interests of the Showmen's industry; as well as their Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- Working with Parliamentarians with the Westminster Parliament All Party Group and the Scottish Parliament with the Cross-Party Group and representations initiated with the Welsh Assembly ; covering all areas of legislation affecting Showmen, from Education; residential Planning; Transport; respecting rights to operate fairs; defence against discrimination.