

I am Martin Burton, Founder and Director of Zippos Circus. Founded 47 years ago Zippos is now Britain's premier circus. In a normal year we travel from London to northern Scotland and back again from February until November, and then spend November, December and early January in Hyde Park for London's Winter Wonderland. As a Level 1 Sponsor I bring acts into the UK from all over the world. For some a visit to Zippos Circus is a regular annual outing, for many it's a family's first experience of live entertainment in a world where children are brought up to be entertained by television and video streaming at home. Our sister show, Zippos Cirque Berserk, plays exclusively in theatres and has sold more tickets than any other show in the Edinburgh Festival 2018 and again in 2019

Zippos Circus is based at – Circus Headquarters, Enborne, Newbury RG200LD

• *What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?*

The Government closed all theatres on 17th March 2020 and our theatre tour was immediately cancelled without warning. All theatres and tenting circuses, along with Fun Fairs and other outdoor entertainment were closed from that date. We currently have no idea when we can reopen.

• *How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?*

The circus and fun fair (Showmen) sector has been completely ignored by any of the Chancellors schemes. Traditionally circus artistes are self-employed, due to the risks involved in their acts. Most of Zippos artistes are international, here on a Tier 5 (Creative & Sporting) visa with no recourse to public funds. Currently at the time of writing we have 20 stranded (because there are no flights home) circuses artistes living at our Circus Headquarters in Newbury, West Berkshire who are relying on the local Food Bank to feed themselves as they have no money and no income. The circus itself has been unable to access grants from our Local Authority because we do not pay Business Rates. We do not trade from our headquarters; we trade from a Big Top tent in fields and parks throughout the UK. Money owed to the circus by Theatres for work completed is slow to be paid as the theatres are struggling with ticket refunding depleting their own income.

• *What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?*

The circus has a better chance than theatre's to restart quickly once we are allowed to do so. We can quickly put up posters, built up the Big Top tent in a prominent park/open space and open. But it costs money to do so. And we won't have money to re-open (to pay for publicity, insurance, pay to get transport back on the road, pay flights bring foreign artistes back to the UK, pay rent on parks in advance, pay the VAT and other bills which have been building up whilst not trading, plus pay for the "new" requirements of cleansing and sterilising of people and equipment undoubtedly required at a future re-opening date). We need grants to give us money to re-open, we need free / reduced rent on parks and other Local Authority sites to help us get going, and most importantly we need VAT reduced to

5% to allow us to get by when trading on reduced seating capacity due to social distancing and crowd aversion from the public.

• *What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?*

The circus sector and other Showmen feel forgotten by the DCMS, which seems to understand BUILDINGS but has ignored / forgotten the outdoor event industry. The circus sector has recently celebrated 250 years since the modern circus was invented by an Englishman, Phillip Astley, and we seek recognition for our unique cultural heritage to survive another 250 years. Please don't ignore the circus!

• *How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?*

Circuses have always evolved, in response to public demand. Circuses are very much a family entertainment and while post Covid-19 millennials will be undoubtedly looking for entertainment, will families, especially those with young children, be crowd averse? The DCMS and the Government need to put as much effort into telling the public they can go out (when the time comes) as they have spent telling the public to stay at home currently. Perhaps 6 regional events, similar to, but smaller than, Hyde Park Winter Wonderland could be organised around the UK and funded by the DCMS / Government, so admission was free and people got used to going out en-masse once again. We need to show the public (when the time is right) that's it's OK to visit large outdoor events again.