

Written evidence submitted by Arts Scape Limited (trading as ArtsScape)

ArtsScape is a business affairs consultancy founded 7 years ago by its two directors, Caroline Barnett and Bernadette Thomas, who are the sole directors and employees of the company.

We set up ArtsScape to provide a cost-effective alternative to law firms specifically targeted at the arts sector. We provide consultancy services to arts organisations including theatre, dance and opera companies. Many of our clients are charities who are subsidised by Arts Council England. Our clients include the Royal Opera House, Rambert, the Almeida, the Society of London Theatre and Shakespeare's Globe.

Our business has been badly affected by the Coronavirus, as our clients are in the sector that is worst hit by the pandemic. As has been widely reported, the theatre sector faces ruin. Research by UK Theatre suggests that 70% of theatres will run out of money by the end of this year and that for many it will be sooner. Four theatres have already gone into administration and there is concern that this number will soon rise dramatically. A report by Oxford Economics warns of a "cultural catastrophe" with 400,000 job losses (representing one fifth of the workforce) and £74bn of lost earning across the creative industries sector as a whole, with theatres facing a £3bn revenue loss (61%) and the loss of 12,000 jobs (26%).

There are currently no plans for the re-opening of theatres to audiences and social distancing measures will make it uneconomic for theatres to operate. The Culture Minister yesterday announced a five stage roadmap for the re-opening of theatres, but this contains no planned dates and no plans for financial assistance.

We believe that there are gaps in the schemes offered by the Treasury for businesses which are structured in the same way as ArtsScape. We are excluded from the support schemes offered by the Treasury, as we are limited company directors who pay ourselves via a small salary and dividends. We are unable to take advantage of the furlough scheme as this would mean that we could not work at all and would have to turn away the small amount of new work that may come our way, letting down our clients. The only scheme that is open to us is to apply for a loan, but we have no premises and low overheads and we do not wish to take on any liabilities at a time when the sector that we serve is in peril.

June 2020