



Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
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24th February 2021

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to you in advance of the 2021 Budget that is to be announced next week. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Government on the success of the vaccination programme which I hope will continue to reduce hospitalisations and enable the UK to gradually leave lockdown.

The Government's roadmap for irreversibly ending lockdown restrictions in England in a step-by-step manner is welcome. However, it raises questions around the types of support that will be made available to ensure that the re-opening of the cultural industries is a success. With theatres, concert halls, cinemas and some venues re-opening with capacity restrictions, potentially as soon as 17 May, and without restrictions as soon as 22 June, I urge the Government to work with unions and the industry now, to ensure that venues are in a position to safely and successfully reopen on 17 May.

As you know, the cultural industries have suffered greatly since the onset of Covid-19 and its reopening will not be as simple as flicking a switch. These industries employ thousands and produce billions for the UK economy, it is therefore in all our interests for the reopening to be a success so that the industry can assist the Government's objective to build back better. I am asking you to consider the following measures in the Spring Budget:

- **Extension of government support schemes:** The extension of CJRS and SEISS are necessary at least until restrictions end. Normal production will take time to resume and it is critical that a cliff edge is avoided, with a tapered withdrawal of the schemes to ensure that no one is left without support.
- **Support for excluded freelancers:** Thousands of creative freelancers have fallen through the gaps in government support schemes and suffered great financial hardship as a result. Provisions must be made to ensure that these excluded groups are accounted for and included in financial support schemes on the road to the recovery.
- **Seat Out to Help Out:** For most venues, operating at a 50% capacity when they reopen will not be financially viable. To help the industry to get back on its feet the Government should consider a Seat Out to Help Out (SOHO) scheme to subsidise spaces that are required to be empty, until at least such a time that they can operate at full capacity.
- **Clarity on testing:** The Government must give theatres and venues more clarity about testing. For example, cast members need to know how often they will be required to get

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tested, and audience members need to know if they are required to have tests before visiting a venue. The Government must make this clear ahead of re-opening, to afford industry the necessary time to organise a structure for testing within the venue.

- **Insurance backing for theatres, venues and events:** The government has rightly provided the film and TV industry with an insurance scheme to enable them to restart productions. Theatres and venues require this same support otherwise they risk losing millions if hit with closures, as happened in December.
- **Support for touring professionals:** The live events industry has been devastated by the pandemic, and the EU trade deal as it stands presents a huge barrier to working in Europe which will hamper the industry's recovery. The government must reopen negotiations with the EU and secure a free cultural work permit and carnet exception that will allow touring professionals to work throughout the EU.

The cultural industries have been amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic, leaving thousands of skilled creative workers out of work and without help from government support schemes. There is now finally light at the end of the tunnel, so I am asking you to consider our statements and create provisions to enable one of the UK's most lucrative sectors to get back on its feet after a time of national crisis.

The Government must act now and work with the industry ahead of its re-opening, to ensure that its recovery is efficient and safe for its workers and the millions we entertain.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philippa Childs". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Philippa Childs
Head of Bectu, a sector of Prospect Union

Copied to Rt Hon Oliver Dowden

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