

MAYOR OF LONDON

Andrew Dismore AM
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Dear Andrew,

Thank you for sharing the correspondence from your constituent [REDACTED] I understand [REDACTED] concerns at this uncertain time. Please accept my apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

London's creative industries are worth £58.4 billion a year and account for 1 in 6 jobs in the capital. We know that COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our cultural and creative industries, including our world-class theatres. During the crisis, I commissioned evidence to determine the likely economic impact of COVID-19 on cultural businesses in London and held roundtables with industry leaders to hear their concerns. My Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries, Justine Simons, also held a roundtable with creative freelancers and self-employed workers.

Both myself and Justine lobbied the Government hard to put the concerns of businesses and workers to government and ask for support for the culture industry (including theatres) and creative workers.

The key steps I have taken to support the cultural sector during lockdown, and am taking to stimulate recovery, are:

- A £2.3 million Culture at Risk fund, which is helping some of London's most at risk creative and night-time businesses, such as cinemas and music venues.
- Pay it Forward London, a platform created in partnership with Crowdfunder, to enable Londoners to support their favourite small businesses. I have recently created a £1 million match fund to provide further support up to £5,000 for participating businesses.
- Supporting the London & Partners led 'Because I'm a Londoner' campaign, built around a London Alliance for consumer confidence.
- Relaunching the London Is Open campaign, highlighting the reopening of London's economy, with a particular focus on hospitality and retail.
- Urging London's major commercial landlords to provide rent relief – a practice which has been led by Transport for London (TfL) across its significant commercial estate.
- Substantially expanding TfL's Streetspace programme to maximise capacity for cycling and walking into and across central London so people can get to attractions safely.

I recognise that many workers, particularly freelancers, the self-employed and those on zero hours contracts are falling between the gaps of Government support. Equally, many theatres are only just beginning to open with social distancing or are still not able to open at all.

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That is why, while I have welcomed the Government's announcement of £1.57 billion to support the culture and the creative industries through the pandemic, I have been clear that it is not sufficient. Justine and my Culture and Creative Industries Unit continue to work with Arts Council England and industry bodies to raise awareness of individuals and supply businesses the funding is unlikely to reach. This includes those on zero contracts.

And last week, I wrote to the Prime Minister calling on him to protect the West End, home to many of the capital's most iconic theatres and a thriving 24-hour culture. I have called on Government to:

- Provide targeted support for jobs and the workforce extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for retail, hospitality, leisure, and creative businesses that cannot operate on a financially sustainable level under continued social distancing requirements.
- Extend support for freelancers and the self-employed. The cultural and creative industries that characterise central London are hugely dependent on these workers.
- Confirm an extension to the business rates holiday or a discount for businesses in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) for the next year, guaranteed now.
- Create a direct financial aid scheme for hospitality, retail, leisure and cultural businesses in the CAZ.
- Introduce a support scheme for small and medium-sized businesses that are struggling to meet their rent bills due to coronavirus, which could help to facilitate negotiations between landlords and tenants in cases where rent is in arrears.
- Prioritise investment in NHS Test and Trace and more support for hospitality businesses to implement systems. It is now clear that we need to learn to live with the virus, and Test and Trace plays a large role in giving the public confidence.

The UK faces a devastating jobs crisis and the Government must act. I will continue to lobby the Government to extend the furlough and self-employed (SEISS) schemes to support employment in the worst-hit areas and sectors – including in theatre and the creative industries.

I believe that with the right support culture and the creative industries in London can be an essential part of our recovery, delivering jobs and economic growth that will be much needed.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London