



Write to your MP

We are aware that there are lots of templates in existence already, and we advocate them all, however we want to add our suggestions for those who may not have yet been able to access others. Please investigate other templates to make sure your email / letter is the best of all worlds.

Important things to remember:

- It is important your letter is not simply copy and paste; if it is suspected of that, it will be ignored.
- It must be personal to you, the sender. Write personally about your experience.
- It should be personal to your MP. Include messages that will resonate with them.
- Try and make comments / ask questions that would be difficult for their assistant to answer. It is more likely to reach the MP this way.
- Always include your name and address on the letter so they can verify you as a constituent.

Some Key Points:

- "Individuals" need support now because there is no work in much of the entertainment industry and that looks likely to continue in the short and medium-term.
NB: "Individuals" may be individual companies or individual organisations.
- The industry requires support to ensure it will be possible to re-open in the long term. Such help may include direct financial support to allow buildings or organisations to continue to function or an extension of the self-employed Income Support Scheme.
- Other support which might be useful may include helping producers fight for the ability to insure their productions for loss of performances. They are currently very fearful of investing money to re-open a show only for another lockdown to return. We would like the government to provide a backstop in this eventuality, for example.

We would encourage ALD members to write both about their own personal issues as well as that of the industry as a whole. They are completely inter-dependent. We would also encourage members to ask their non theatre friends and family to write to their local MP's. these are the people who go to performance arts events and their views on losing the art institutions is equally valid.

Include some of the fact and figures, such as:

- UK Theatre is facing a potential £3billion loss in revenue this year (Creative Industries Federation / UK Theatre).
- UK Theatre delivers a return of £5 to the exchequer for every £1 invested.
- 70% of UK theatres and performing arts businesses will run out of cash by the end of the year without Government intervention.
- The UK Theatre industry generates £133million in VAT from London theatres alone (2018).
- Approximately 290,000 jobs in the UK Theatre industry are currently at risk.
- The UK Theatre industry generates £1.28 billion in ticket sales nationwide, playing to an audience of 34 million (2018).
- It attracts 100,000 international tourists every week to watch a West End show.
- Contribution to the wider local economy: for every £1 spent at the theatre, £3 is spent on food, drink, accommodation and travel.
- Supporting local communities, providing social hubs, education centres and meeting places, reaching out to the old, young and disadvantaged.
- The UK Creative Industries will be hit with a drop of £74bn (£1.4bn/week) and a gross value-added drop of £29m or 30% without government support (CIF).

On the following pages are two sample letters. Please take the time to read them over and notice the personalisation aforementioned.

Find your MP <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

If you require any further help or advice, please contact us at: office@ald.org.uk

EXAMPLE #1: Please note, some information in this example are now superseded by new information. Please ensure you use any up to date information you have at your disposal should be inserted and the content further personalised to yourself or your MP.

Thank you to Simon Pike for this letter.

Dear [Name of MP],

This morning, I participated in the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Lighting Designers, and the situation is even bleaker than I had previously appreciated. In a discussion on the impact of coronavirus, a senior industry person said that, even if general life returns largely to normality during 2020, the theatre industry will take 3-4 years to return to its pre-Covid health.

Here are a few comments from that meeting that particularly struck me:

- One major management company of theatres has mothballed them until next May.
- Even if a theatre has cancellation insurance, this would not apply to new commitments.

There are concerns about a 'second wave' of coronavirus at the end of this year. A pantomime is a major commitment to its producers. Therefore, expect a Christmas of 2020 without pantomimes.

- Before a theatre can reopen, all aspects of its operations must meet coronavirus guidelines. As I am sure you will appreciate, the front of house facilities of many theatres - from the Watermill to the West End - are very cramped. Therefore, even if the auditorium can comply with the guidance with only some seats in use, it may not be possible to make the front of house compliant.
- A substantial proportion of the audience for London theatres comes from people who work in central London. However, many of these people expect to work from home for the foreseeable future.

The Government's response has been successful in supporting many industry sectors that have been particularly badly affected by COVID-19, but the entertainment and leisure sector is very diffuse, and many freelancers and companies that support theatres are not eligible for the current support measures.

As a former actor, you will know how precarious the theatre sector is, even in good times. Many theatres (most?) will not be able to reopen until all of the restrictions on social distancing are lifted. Without specific Government assistance to these theatres and to the full ecosystem of companies and freelancers that support them, much of the expertise that makes the British Theatre scene a world leader will have been lost by that time. This will affect particularly badly the people just starting their careers, who often represent the diversity in the workforce.

I would therefore be grateful if you could emphasise to the Chancellor the importance of continuing support to companies and freelancers working in theatre until the time that the theatres are realistically able to reopen to the public.

Yours sincerely,

[Your full name]

[Your full address including postcode]

EXAMPLE #2: Please note that whilst this example is slightly longer, there are substantially more facts and figures for you to use as you see fit.

Our thanks to Rob Halliday for this letter.

Dear [name of MP]

I work as a [job title] in the live performance sector of the entertainment industry. I am one of the large team of people who work behind the scenes to deliver these shows. We should be invisible while you enjoy a performance, but that performance could not happen without our work. A very conservative estimate suggests that for every performer you see on a theatre or concert stage, there are between twenty and hundred more who have been part of allowing that performer to appear in front of you - from the crew backstage in the theatre during each performance, to those who designed and installed the show, to those who constructed the physical production, and on through an entire chain of suppliers who supply the technical equipment and other specialist requirements for the unique, bespoke creation that is that show.

The Government's own figures suggest that this creative industry of which I am part was until very recently worth £110billion to the UK economy, and was the fastest growing sector of that economy. This has obviously now all changed.

I am writing to you because I am worried about my future and about the state of my industry as a whole as we attempt to move back out of lock-down into this world irrevocably changed by Coronavirus. I have been successfully working in this field for [NUMBER] years I have never experienced anything as devastating as this.

I, and my colleagues, am extremely grateful of the support that the Government has offered up to this point. I operate as a [freelance, sole trader, employee of my own limited company, other] and have been supported by the [furlough scheme, self-employment support scheme]. [OR NOTE THAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS ANY SUPPORT AND WHY, PARTICULARLY IF FREELANCE OVER THE £50K LIMIT, SELF EMPLOYED IN OWN COMPANY PAID BY DIVIDENDS, OR JUST STARTING IN INDUSTRY, AND REMOVE THE SIX WORDS OF THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE NEXT PARA - START IT ON 'WITHIN DAYS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY...']

That support has been indispensable because within days of the entertainment industry being closed down, all of my work for the rest of the year had been cancelled. A recent survey by the Association of Lighting Designers, a membership organisation for those working in entertainment lighting, has suggested that the same is true of almost everyone working in this field. To put it bluntly: with no shows being performed, no immediate likelihood of theatres re-opening, no concerts, no festivals and no corporate events, there is no work for any of us.

In the short term, for me this means: [Delete /edit as appropriate]

- I am not working and I have no work planned for the future
- I have no income
- I am using my savings to live
- I estimate my savings will be exhausted in one week/month/two months/three months/before the end of the year
- I have applied for Universal Credit
- I have applied for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme

and in the longer term: [Delete /edit as appropriate]

- I shall have to default on my mortgage

- I shall have to seek alternative employment
- I shall be unemployed and have to continue to claim universal credit
- I [and my family] will experience extreme hardship and I will be forced to abandon my current career.

While I am aware that the Government has now extended its support schemes to October, it is clear that there is effectively no chance of theatres opening up or other live event taking place by then. Working out how to perform shows with social distancing and other regulations in place is very difficult, both from the point of view of the audience and of those performing the show and working behind the scenes. I do not think that I will have work in my industry until 2021, and this view has been shared publicly by a number of leading international theatre producers. [OR IF NOT ABLE TO ACCESS THOSE SCHEMES NOTE THAT THEIR CONDITIONS ARE UNCHANGED AND SO YOU ARE STILL NOT ABLE TO ACCESS THEM]

I am therefore respectfully asking for your help in two areas:

1. Encouraging the Government to extend the support offered to those working in live performance until such time as performances can actually take place again, safely. Do not simply 'turn off' the life support at a fixed point without considering the differing timescales for different industries to return to work. We will still need this support. Theatre alone, a sub-set of this creative sector, employs over 290,000 people. The industry trade bodies SOLT and UK Theatre estimate that at least 70% of those jobs are now at risk. The creative sector - that £110billion industry that acts as a standard-bearer for Britain around the world - will not be able to recover if there is no-one left to work in it. It will be more cost-effective to support those skilled, talented people so they can return as theatres are able to re-open than to try to re-build that workforce in the future.

2. Encouraging the Government to support the arts and live performance sector so that it can get going again. There is no point in supporting us as individuals if we end up having no industry to go back to. SOLT/UK Theatre is predicting that 70% of UK theatres and arts businesses will run out of money by the end of this year. Without those shows, the money the industry has generated will be lost to the Treasury. The obvious means of support is financial, of course. But there are other support mechanisms which would prove invaluable. For example, I am hearing that show producers can no longer obtain insurance to cover them for lost performances. They are unwilling to risk the investment required to re-open existing productions or create new ones if there is a chance of losing that investment should another Coronavirus-related shutdown be required. The Government could surely provide this kind of backstop guarantee. Until shows can start happening, nothing else can start happening throughout the entire supply chain of those who appear in, run, create and supply shows.

It is easy to forget that the performer you see on stage, in whatever style of performance you enjoy, is just the very tip of the iceberg of this enormously successful British industry. I would ask for your help through any and all appropriate business in Parliament to ensure that the issue is understood and that help and support is made available to ensure that this unique industry in which Britain is a powerhouse, and the people of whom it is made, are able to survive.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Job Title - Self Employed LD, Video Designer, Production Electrician etc for Live Events/Theatre/whatever fits you best]

Further information you may like to use or ask your friends and family to use in their letters:

Society of London Theatre Box Office Data 2019:

2019 ticket sales data for SOLT member venues, which include all of the commercial West End and London's major subsidized theatres:

- Attendances of 15.3 million – nearly 1 million higher than Broadway
- Gross revenue of £798,994,920
- Average ticket price paid £52.17
- VAT generated for the Treasury of £133,165,820
- 80.7% of available seats filled (up from 77.5% in 2018)
- 18,364 performances

Industry Facts & Figures:

- 34 million people go to the theatre each year - more than see all League football matches in the whole UK
- In 2019, ticket revenue was over £1.3 billion and theatres employed over 290,000 people
- 70% of those jobs are currently at risk
- 70% of theatres will run out of cash by Christmas

Tourism and the night-time economy:

- Around 37,000 people see a show in the West End every night
- Overseas visitors make up nearly ¼ of audience members.
- **Loss to HMT of VAT payments** (over £130mn for West End theatres alone) plus enormous economic impact on all related hospitality and related businesses – multiplier estimated at 5-6 times in major cities – if theatres are forced to shut down permanently.
 - London accounts for 47% of all theatre performances in the UK and 43% of theatre venues across England[1]
- ● The UK's theatre industry plays a key economic, social and place-making role. Theatre and the performing arts make a powerful contribution to our society and to our national identity. They make areas richer culturally and financially, and they make places more
- attractive to live and work. Much innovation takes place in the regions, for example HOME in Manchester was the first arts organisation (and therefore theatre) in the world to have 100% of staff trained in climate literacy.
- ● Theatre is a major UK export internationally (productions, staffing and licensing) and contributes to the UK's soft power; from The Ferryman on Broadway, to English Touring Theatre's Othello at the Dubai Opera House, to the Curve theatre Leicester's production of Grease in Dubai, are just a few examples.
- ● Our talent creates some of the most recognisable and bankable international hits in film and TV, but all the initial support happens in theatre, for instance Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Fleabag or Peter Morgan and The Crown.
- ● SOLT and UK Theatre work with theatres on how to best fulfill requirements for patrons with access needs, as well as encouraging access to theatre for young and diverse theatre goers. We also support theatre workforces through training and career development, including addressing skills shortages, entry routes, in career training and inclusivity.

Additional information gathered as a result of our ALD Members Survey in May 2020 included key points such as:

- 63% of members classed themselves as freelance/self-employed over the last 4 years.
- 80% had all their work between March to mid-May 2020 cancelled.
- 90% had their work through to June 2020 cancelled within two weeks.
- 77% had their work through to September 2020 cancelled within the first month.
- 46% had lost at least three quarters of their annual income by May 2020.
- 87% are not confident that their confirmed work for the rest of 2020 will take place.

- 75% believe that the live entertainment industry will not re-start until after September 2020
- 42% believe it will not start again until 2021 at the earliest.
- 33% do not believe they will work in the industry again until 2021.

- 89% agree that the industry will be fundamentally damaged by the current crisis.
- 71% agree that they will have to accept changes to their terms and conditions of employment / engagement after the crisis.
- 52% agree that this will include lower fees / rates of pay.

- 47% thought it unlikely or very unlikely they would stop working in the industry.
- 41% stated they were not currently sure if they would not return to the industry.