

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

25 March 2020

Dear Chancellor,

Support for the cultural heritage sector during COVID-19

I am writing on behalf of the [Institute of Conservation](https://www.icon.org.uk) (Icon) regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural heritage conservation sector and the urgent economic assistance required.

Icon is a membership organisation and charity, which brings together those with a passion for conserving cultural heritage. We represent around 2,500 individuals and organisations comprising professional conservators, heritage scientists and many others with a commitment to ensuring the long-term survival of objects and collections, historic buildings and archaeology.

We sincerely commend your package of targeted measures to support people and businesses through this period of disruption and welcome your open line of communication with sectors. You will undoubtedly be aware of the scale of the crisis the COVID-19 pandemic represents to the UK's cultural and creative sectors that rely on audiences, visitors and participation, as well as a significant number of freelancers working within these industries.

I have written to your colleagues at DCMS to outline the challenges presented by COVID-19 on the cultural heritage conservation sector, including loss of income for the significant number of freelancers whose work relies on being on site and interacting face to face with clients and uncertainty of employment for conservators working across institutions forced to close their doors due to social distancing measures.

Thinking ahead, the future financial health of the conservation sector cannot be ignored. Conservation is a source of economic prosperity and growth, contributing to business, industry and employment. The sector is deeply interconnected with other parts of the economy, maximising the commercial value of the tourism and cultural sectors and creative industries. Conservation supports local business and investment by preserving heritage assets that act as important "pull" factors to places and catalysts for economic revival.

However, in order to achieve this, the sector needs urgent support to cope with the unforeseen financial challenges outlined above, including:

- **Further clarity and continued communications on timescales for implementing social distancing policies to help the sector plan ahead.** This is vital so that plans and strategies can be put in place to ensure the collections housed in the UK's institutions are looked after and can continue to engage and fascinate visitors once sites reopen.
- **A targeted and coordinated emergency package of support for the cultural heritage sector.** We commend your package of measures to support businesses but urge Government to ensure help is available for cultural organisations of all types and sizes, including charities. Clarity and support from Government and funding bodies to help cultural organisations navigate the process of applying for existing support will also be needed.
- **We wholeheartedly support IPSE's [call](#) for a Temporary Income Protection fund or some other measure for the self-employed to cover loss of income.** We welcome the Government's measures to improve access to the welfare system and credit and tax deferrals but share IPSE's concerns that the self-employed remain exposed.

I hope you will consider the above points as you and your officials continue to develop and implement economic measures to support individuals, businesses and employees across the UK. We are working closely with The Heritage Alliance and other sector bodies to coordinate our efforts and to offer guidance to cultural heritage organisations at this challenging time. We are also collecting evidence, case studies and feedback from our members to understand key issues and challenges for the profession as they emerge. I would be happy to discuss these points further if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



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Chief Executive