



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

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

30 March 2020

Dear Chancellor,

### **Self-employment Income Support Scheme and cultural heritage conservation**

I am writing on behalf of the [Institute of Conservation](https://www.icon.org.uk) (Icon) to commend you on the introduction of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

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. Conservation is a source of economic prosperity and growth, contributing to business, industry and employment and maximising the commercial value of the tourism and cultural sectors and creative industries.

A third of the conservation sector's workforce is self-employed and I wrote to you last week outlining the current challenges faced by these workers. We therefore warmly welcome your Government's latest economic steps to support the self-employed during the Coronavirus pandemic. Many of the cultural heritage sector's workers will be able to benefit from the Self-employment Income Support Scheme and maintain their businesses and livelihoods.

However, we would argue that this support is needed now. The profits of small conservation businesses are often marginal and the effective 'take home pay' for conservators is very low. Conservators are unlikely to have reserves to tide them over until funds become available through the scheme. Universal Credit payments simply will not cover the expenses and bills that are due immediately.

There are also certain demographics within the sector that are at risk of falling between the cracks, including:

- Sole directors of limited liability companies who don't self-assess for tax and are not able to claim under the scheme.
- Conservators who started in self-employment after April 2019 or are recent graduates. These new entrepreneurs are already particularly vulnerable and require support while they grow their businesses.

- The many conservators who operate in the gig economy or juggle a variety of part-time jobs and freelance work and earn small amounts of income from a range of sources. While such individuals may be covered by the Self-employment Income Support Scheme and/or the Job Retention Scheme, navigating multiple application processes in order to access support will no doubt be a challenge.

In light of our concerns, we urge Government to:

- Implement the Self-employment Income Support Scheme as a matter of urgency.
- Consider measures to provide further interim support until the scheme is fully operational, for example immediate emergency cash grants, as called for by the [RSA](#).
- Extend the Self-employment Income Support Scheme so that it is truly comprehensive and accessible to those who need this support, or urgently provide information on how the workers not covered by the new aid measures (listed above) will be supported.
- Provide access to further business support advice to help self-employed workers navigate the different support options available.

Icon remains committed to supporting the Treasury and your colleagues across Government to ensure the scheme is as inclusive as possible and helps all within the UK's cultural heritage sector through these challenging times. We have shared our concerns with DCMS and would be happy to provide further information if needed.

Yours sincerely,



Sara Crofts BArch (Hons) MSc IHBC FRSA  
Chief Executive

CC:

The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport