



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1013
Ein cyf/Our ref DET/00847/21

Clerk of the Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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19 April 2021

Dear Petitions Committee Clerk,

I write to you following a letter from Janet Finch-Saunders MS on 30 March regarding a petition relating to financial support for self-employed individuals within the Welsh live music industry (P-05-1013), which shared correspondence from the petitioner Peter Phillips, dated 5 March.

I note the continued concerns of the petitioner who feels the issues he has raised previously have yet to be adequately addressed, specifically concerns that Welsh Government support to date has failed to support some freelance Musicians still in need of assistance, and issues relating to the eligibility criteria, application process and communications for the Freelancer Fund.

As outlined in previous correspondence, when designing the Freelancer Fund difficult decisions were taken in light of the limited resources available. These decisions were taken in partnership with local authorities, the creative and cultural unions, and with the freelance community through the Wales Freelance Taskforce. It was agreed that the Fund should be focused on a small number of priority sectors aligned to the objectives of the Cultural Recovery Fund to support the sustainability of cultural and creative sectors in Wales significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Fund was delivered on a first-come-first-served basis rather than as a competitive Fund based on level of need in response to concerns raised by stakeholders associated with difficulties of freelancers providing evidence of loss of earnings. We delivered the fund in separate phases at the request of stakeholders, to help to mitigate any accessibility issues associated with the first-come-first-served approach and to give more time for applicants to prepare. Following feedback from phase one, we strengthened our communications for subsequent phases.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We are aware that at this difficult time there are many more freelancers and sectors that are still in need of support. Recognising that only the UK Government has the fiscal firepower to deliver protection which supports all individuals we continue to press the UK Government to be responsive and responsible in terms of supporting those who are still falling through the gaps.

The Freelancer Fund as the first of its kind in the UK, has benefitted a significant number of creative and cultural freelancers in Wales, and has supported 3,584 individuals with £18m in funding to date. On 22 March, I announced that the Welsh Government was launching a further phase of the Cultural Recovery Fund, with up to £30m for the first six months of 2021-22 to help support Wales' diverse culture sector through the ongoing pandemic. This includes a further allocation to the Freelancer Fund which will open for applications in early May. My officials are currently gathering feedback from our stakeholders, including freelancers and the creative unions, to identify lessons learned to shape this fourth round of financial support for freelancers so that it meet the needs of the sector. This includes a review of the eligibility criteria and exploring a scheme which does not follow a first-come-first-served approach. In addition we are undertaking an analysis of the freelancers supported to date and these findings will also be used to inform the design of future support. I am aware that the petitioner previously enquired to the Petitions Committee regarding the eligibility of tribute artists, wedding singers and pub singers to the Freelancer Fund. An eligibility checker will be available on the Business Wales website in early May, and I would advise that individuals wishing to access funding complete the eligibility checker as soon as it is available, as there will be a number of considerations which determine eligibility.

The Welsh Government recognises the ongoing challenges being faced by parts of the cultural and creative industries that are still unable to work due to the restrictions in place to limit the spread of the virus and protect public health. We note the particular impact this is having on freelancers operating in sectors such as the live music sector who are unable to work and generate an income. The Creative Wales business plan for 2021/22 includes action to provide continued support to the music sector as a priority sector during this difficult period. This includes the development of an industry led action plan for the commercial music industry in Wales that will reflect the need for both short term actions to assist the sector to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and longer term plans for developing the sector for a sustainable future in a global market. The plan also prioritises the provision of clear and up to date guidance supporting a safe return to activity. This will adopt a phased approach, working with our stakeholders as public health conditions allow to move through the levels of the Control Plan. This approach enables us to respond to any rises in transmission of Coronavirus and take action when there is certainty that the public health conditions allow for venues, events and live performances to recommence. The Test Event Programme is a crucial element of this, and the Welsh Government will look to how these are being undertaken across the UK, and take learnings where appropriate.

I understand that the petition will be considered further by the successor committee, once it has been established following the Senedd Election.

Yours sincerely,



Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism