Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing in response to the delayed publication of research from the Events Research Programme (ERP) into Covid-19 mitigations in sport, entertainment, and business conferences settings. As the Secretary of State responsible for our sector, we are urging you to publish the results in full and without further delay, to prevent additional damage to the Creative Industries.

In addition, we are calling on the Government to urgently release the overdue live events guidance for Step 4 of the roadmap. Our sector needs adequate time to plan events held from 19 July, and if the required safety measures and ongoing mitigations are not published as a matter of urgency, our once thriving sector will be at risk of collapse.

The Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) and wider music sector appreciates and understands the desire of Government to proceed irreversibly with the next step in the roadmap. In addition, we welcomed the ERP to assist in the delivery of live events. However, without the research findings, many in our sector will be unable to play a part in the safe return of live events under stage 4 of the roadmap from 19 July.

As a reminder, the ISM is the second largest representative body in the music sector. We are politically independent and pride ourselves on our policy and research work. Set up in 1882 we represent almost 11,000 musicians, many of whom are orchestral and gigging musicians, conductors, composers and singers, whose livelihoods depend on the staging of live events with other performers, organisers, and audiences.

To date, many of the pilot events that have taken place, have done so at a financial loss to their organisers. They participated at great expense to help the Government and our industry understand the implications for staging live events safely. Therefore, a delay in the publication of the data is hugely disappointing. We are calling on Government to maintain its obligation of transparency and uphold its assurance that the data will be made available to the public and the event organisers who have taken part.

For months, the music industry has been calling for a Government backed insurance scheme that, according to UK Music, would allow £2 billion worth
of activity to go ahead at a cost of £650 million. By implementing this solution, the Government would remove a major barrier to the return of performance.

However, worrying reports have recently emerged of festivals and live events that have had to cancel due to the risks associated with planning and organising events without a Government backed insurance scheme. Now, festivals are having to cancel because of the delayed publication of the ERP and the lack of new Stage 4 live events guidance. The latest such cancellation came from Kendal Calling music festival, the organisers of which wrote in a statement that:

‘Monday also saw a less publicised delay; the release of the long-awaited research from the Event Research Programme (ERP) and with it, crucially, the publication of safety guidance on how we run events... Capacity or density restrictions, track and trace protocol, testing regime, covid certification – a host of unknown actions required yet potentially requested too late to be implemented.’

We are deeply concerned that cancellations such as this one will become commonplace as events and festivals struggle to implement necessary safety measures, leading to a loss of vital work this summer for many of the musicians we represent. In fact, according to research from live music industry body LIVE, the four-week delay to reopening will lead to around 5,000 live music gigs being cancelled.

Despite the cross-party calls from MPs in the House of Commons on Tuesday, the government continues to withhold the release the report in full. As the Secretary of State responsible for the programme, we join with others from across the sector in urging your department to make the ERP research available immediately and publish the live events guidance for Stage 4 of the roadmap. After the enormous challenges presented by the last year, this is crucially important in protecting the future of our sector.

Yours sincerely

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