



Department for
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Giles Watling MP
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Dear Giles,

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 October, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, regarding support for theatres during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your correspondence has been passed to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) as this issue falls within the department's remit. I am responding as the minister responsible for this policy area. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to you and I appreciate that the situation has moved on since you wrote.

The government recognises the huge contribution the arts and cultural sector makes, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people and communities. We appreciate that this is an incredibly challenging time and that there are many cultural organisations and professionals who are currently facing difficult and uncertain circumstances.

Guidance on reopening for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) sectors in relation to COVID-19 can be accessed [here](#).

On 22 February the government published the [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#) document setting out the roadmap to take England out of the current lockdown. This document explains how the restrictions included in this guidance will be lifted over time.

The roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. Whilst dates remain conditional, we know that DCMS sectors have been calling for “no earlier than” dates, and the roadmap provides these at 5 week intervals between each step. This is to allow the government and health experts time to assess the impact of the previous step and provide a week’s notice before changes occur.

As outlined in the roadmap, at **Step 2**, drive in cinema and drive in performances will be the first level of activity permitted, but no earlier than **12 April** with social distancing remaining in place. The proposed Events Research Programme into the safe reopening of venues will also commence in this step.

In **Step 3**, indoor entertainment including theatres and the remainder of outdoor events will be able to resume no earlier than **17 May**, with social distancing and capacity caps continuing. Non-professional activity will also be able to resume at this time. Large events above the Step 3 capacity restrictions will be permitted no earlier than **21 June**. The decision to remove these limits will however be subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme and



will potentially require the use of testing to reduce the risk of infection, subject to further evaluation.

Ahead of **Step 4**, the government will conduct a review of social distancing and other long-term measures that have been put in place to limit transmission. The results of the review will help inform the timing and circumstances under which we may be able to lift social distancing guidance and other measures. Current social distancing measures will remain in place until the outcome of that review are known.

The timings outlined in the roadmap are indicative, and, before taking each step, the government will review the latest data and will only ease restrictions further if it is safe to do so.

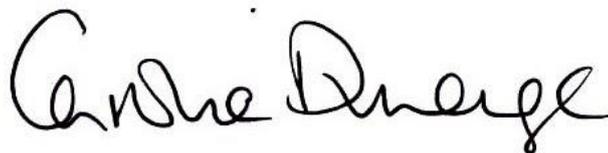
The [Performing Arts Guidance](#) which outlines the government's current position will be updated in due course as restrictions are eased. The measures in the guidance are for both professional and non-professional arts activity, please refer to the section "[Performing arts activity for professionals and non-professionals including individuals and groups](#)" for further considerations to make across these settings.

We continue to work hard with theatres and other indoor performance venues to support them during this time. For example, as well as extending the Job Retention Scheme until March and increasing the Self Employed Income Support Scheme to 80% of average profits, the unprecedented £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) has already benefited almost 3,800 organisations and the individuals supported by them. Additionally, the Chancellor announced in the March 2021 Budget an additional £300 million to support theatres, museums and other cultural organisations in England through the CRF. The Chancellor also set out that we will provide £90 million funding to support our government-sponsored national museums and some cultural bodies in England due to the financial impact of COVID-19. This funding is on top of the £1.57 billion CRF in 20/21, and together, these investments mean that our total COVID support for culture is now approaching nearly £2 billion.

The government has always been clear that reopening and moving forward with the performing arts roadmap is dependent on the prevalence of COVID-19. We would advise that the best way to keep up to date with the situation is through the [government's website](#) which is updated as soon as new measures and advice are agreed.

I hope you find this information useful.

With best wishes,



Caroline Dinenage MP
Minister of State for Digital and Culture