



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Jo Stevens MP

jo.stevens.mp@parliament.uk

18 March 2021

Dear Ms Stevens,

**Support for cultural sector freelancers**

I am writing on behalf of the [Institute of Conservation](#) (Icon) to commend your recent calls for support for the cultural sector in the House of Commons debate on Thursday 2 March 2021.

Icon is a charity and membership organisation, 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.

Many of our members work in institutions such as national and regional museums, but many work in private practice or as freelancers. The ecosystem of the commercial part of our sector is very fragile as the pipeline of work for microbusinesses is often highly dependent on the action of the larger institutions that commission conservation work.

Many conservators are a part of the “excluded” group that you highlighted during the debate. These conservators have missed out on financial support for businesses due to ineligibility for key schemes. Whilst, in theory, individual conservators were encouraged to apply for the Cultural Recovery Fund, in practice the eligibility criteria made this nearly impossible. The newly announced top up to the Cultural Recovery Fund fails to rectify this problem and continues to focus on protecting institutions over livelihoods. Icon therefore believes that future grant schemes need to understand and address the barriers inadvertently built into post-Covid funding to better support microbusinesses as they struggle to rebuild their order books.

We also share your concern that the current Government does not fully understand the challenges faced by cultural and creative freelancers. This is why Icon is [backing](#) calls on the Chancellor made by IPSE and the Creative Industries Federation to establish a freelance commission.

Icon warmly welcomes your advocacy for the sector and is keen to support you in this area of work. I have attached a briefing outlining Icon’s concerns and recommendations for recovery in more detail. I hope you will let me know if there is anything else that we can do to help you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sara Crofts'.

Sara Crofts BArch (Hons) MSc IHBC FRSA

Chief Executive