

Call for evidence – Economic impact of coronavirus/COVID-19

Written evidence submitted by the Association of Photographers Limited (AOP)

Executive Summary

- Who we are and what we do
- Our mandate
- Economic impact of coronavirus/COVID-19 on the self-employed
- An income crisis as well as a health crisis
- The importance and value to the economy of the UK's creative industries
- What government can do

Who we are

1. The AOP is a not-for-profit professional trade association, founded in 1968. Its aims are to promote and protect the value, professionalism and standing of its members and to vigorously defend and lobby for the interests and rights of all photographers in the photographic profession.
2. The AOP represents professional photographers, assistants, agents, suppliers and students as well as offering supporting membership to related professions in the creative industries.
3. Professional members have a wide client base of large- and small-scale businesses ranging from individual clients in the corporate sector to design groups, publishing houses, music publishers and advertising agencies. Their work is published worldwide in magazines, newspapers, books and advertising campaigns and many sell their images as fine art through galleries, both in traditional spaces and online.
4. The AOP is a member of the British Copyright Council (BCC), the Creative Industries Federation (CIF), the British Photographic Council (BPC) and Pyramide Europe (EEIG) and we fully support the 'Fair Terms for Creators' campaign: <https://www.fairtermsforcreators.org/> co-ordinated by the Creators' Rights Alliance (CRA).
5. AOP members are represented by the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACs) for collective licensing. All our photographer and assistant members are SMEs, some work in partnership with another photographer but, overall, the majority are individuals working either for their own limited company or as sole traders.

Economic impact of Coronavirus/COVID-19 on our members

6. Firstly, we welcome the steps the government has taken so far to support the economy and to ensure those key workers identified are protected and enabled to continue to provide the services we all rely on.
7. However, the measures provided thus far, fall very short of the necessary support for those who are self-employed as sole traders or who operate their own micro limited companies. This is not just a health crisis, but an income crisis for our members and for all self-employed people. Current provision does not begin to address the severity of the situation that these groups are already finding themselves in.

8. As you will no doubt be aware, **one-third** of the UK's creative workforce are self-employed – much higher than the national average of 15%.

9. A recent survey by the Creative Industries Federation showed that 60% of self-employed creatives predicted their income will more than halve in 2020, and over 50% of self-employed who responded to a poll carried out by them, have already had 100% of their work cancelled. This is devastating for them and access to Statutory Sick Pay and Universal Credit is in no way an adequate substitute for the income they have lost.

10. Our members, indeed the whole of the self-employed and freelance community, require government assistance on a similar scale to the support already provided for those qualifying businesses, employers and employees in other sectors. Please remember that the Creative Industries is a UK success story and contributes a massive £111bn to the UK economy.

What government can do

11. We echo the calls from other organisations and we urgently need a temporary Income Protection Fund to provide all self-employed people with a monthly income that equates to their average existing earnings over the past three years, capped at average UK earnings after the basic rate of income tax, and no lower than the minimum monthly of the Real Living Wage.

12. There is already precedent for this across Europe.

13. The self-employed community is at severe risk and this support is urgently required to allow our economy to be in a position to rebuild itself, once we have navigated our way through these waters.

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