

Founded in 1932



All correspondence to the Secretary, the Association of Circus Proprietors
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Telephone: 07050 28 26 24 E-mail: secretary@circusgb.com

Dear Prime Minister,

6th July 2020

The Association of Circus Proprietors is the only Government recognised body for the UK commercial circus industry.

Our Association has been in existence since 1932 and is privileged to represent one of the UK's greatest art forms, circus which was created here in England over 250 years ago and has entertained crowds all over the World ever since. In terms of its performance circus is very diverse with artistes and staff gathered together from all parts of the globe and, importantly, it is accessible to the widest possible audience, in terms of affordability, geography and catering for individuals with access needs. Circus is often a child's first introduction to the performing arts. It must be preserved.

The circus industry is already in serious trouble and unless you act quickly Prime Minister, allowing circus to open for summer (our peak season), it is possible that a great British institution will be lost forever. As circus is classified as an 'outdoor' event, our members had expected to be allowed to open again shortly after the 4th July and were very disappointed not to be included in the list of businesses allowed to reopen announced last week. Yesterday, we received a call from the DCMS explaining that although they thought we should be allowed to reopen on 4th July, Central Government is stopping this and the earliest we could be given the green light is the 14th July, so the clock is ticking.

Oliver Dowden's 5 step roadmap back to performance was not helpful, both in its absence of any dates and its omission of any mention of circus.

We have been working with the DCMS Leisure Task Force to establish COVID-secure practices but nothing seems to have been taken into account regarding our unique set-up. In terms of Structures, circuses perform in mobile Big Tops which unlike theatre buildings have excellent ventilation via the Big Top's flexible and airy design which can be further enhanced by raising the tent 'sidewalls', easily reconfigured mobile seating, outdoor Box Offices and catering units and multiple one-way entrances and exits, all ideal for social distancing.

In regard to our performers and staff safety, circus employees live and work on site and can work within troupe 'bubbles' and families, and performances can use recorded music and no vocals to minimise aerosol transmission.

Sadly, circuses seem to have fallen through the cracks of all the rescue package schemes - we pay rent to individual landowners as we tour - and do not have business rateable properties. In addition no commercial circuses have qualified for any of the £160m emergency Arts Council funding despite generating

significant income to the economy through the 30+ UK circuses and internationally visiting shows such as Cirque du Soleil which combined are seen by around 20 million people a year.

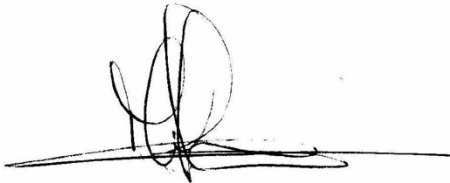
In addition last night's announcement that a £1.57bn culture lifeline was to be given to the Arts made no reference to circus.

Circus over the years has also learned to adapt & diversify, classic Circuses still thrive with a whole array of family shows such as Circus Extreme, Zippos Circus, Cirque Berserk, Planet Circus, Gerry Cottle, Blackpool Tower Circus, Gt Yarmouth Hippodrome etc, plus alternative Circuses that were inspired by Archaos in the 1980/90s which in turn forged the way for, Cirque du Soleil & the Circus of Horrors, all finding new audiences under the general banner of "Circus".

Its greatest slogan '**The Show Must Go On**' could well become a thing of the past if urgent assistance is not forthcoming.

Please save the Circus – we have two weeks before the end of the road.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Burton', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Martin Burton
Chairman, Association of Circus Proprietors

The Association of Circus Proprietors of Great Britain

Zippos Circus, Circus Wonderland,
Circus Fantasia, Happys Circus
Gerry Cottles Circus, Circus Berlin, Circus of Horrors
Duffys Circus, Cirque Berserk, Russells Circus,
Circus Extreme, Cirque Hilarious.
Great Yarmouth Hippodrome, Blackpool Tower Circus,
John Lawsons Circus, Planet Circus,

The Association of Circus Proprietors is Britain's only registered Trade Association for Circus