

P-05-1013 Provide financial support for self-employed individuals within the Welsh live music industry, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 05.03.21

In his letter of 12 February, the Deputy Minister acknowledges the Welsh Government's lack of understanding in respect of the Welsh freelancer community and outlines an intention to conduct qualitative research, which in turn will be the start of a commitment to develop a stronger evidence base and narrative. However, with a nebulous objective and no firm indication of a timeline, this undertaking is meaningless and provides no direct, immediate financial help to those freelancers who have been denied any assistance to date by the woefully inadequate Freelancer Fund.

The people who have been excluded to date will continue to be denied any immediate assistance as the Welsh Government appear to be intending to use the new round of funding to provide further support to members of the freelance community who have already been supported. In my previous two responses to letters from the Deputy Minister, I made the point that the Freelancer fund is defective for a number of reasons including subjective underwriting discriminating against certain sectors of the arts, and also applications have been supported on a first-come basis with awareness of the fund poorly communicated in the first place. In short, those who were lucky enough to get through the door will be receiving more support, whilst those with their noses pushed against the outside continue to be deprived of any financial help.

Furthermore, the Deputy First Minister has not responded to the requests of the Petition Committee when they asked for urgent consideration be given to better compensate people not supported so far by the Freelancer Fund. Nor has the Deputy Minister adequately addressed the clarification further requested in respect of clarification for self-employed support within the arts sector, specifically the professionals that are the subject of this Petition.

Finally, I would ask the Petition Committee to continue their previous support for some sort of 'bounce back' fund designed to assist artists and crew working within the pub music sector, a part of the music scene that Wales has rightfully been famous for.