



UPDATE ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND FUNDING

We would like to draw your attention to the increasingly cautious position being taken by local authorities and, particularly, the powers that local Directors of Public Health have for closing down events, often at the last minute.

The Southampton Boat Show is an example of this where, on the eve of the show opening, the local Director of Public Health acted without warning. Up to that time the organisers had been working closely with the local authority, which was supporting the event.

Coupled with increasing numbers of local lockdowns and the absence of insurance, this substantially increases the financial risk for event organisers.

Although we have been raising concerns about the actions of some local authorities with DCMS and other Government bodies, they have now confirmed to us that they have no power to control local authorities and, despite the option for appealing to the Secretary of State, it is extremely unlikely that he would ever overturn an LA's decision as it could lead to him being blamed if something happened.

Consequently, we have now stated to DCMS that unless they find a way to overcome this situation, we cannot encourage organisers to take the risks, particularly given the lack of financial support many have had during this pandemic. One suggestion we have put forward is that the Government should underwrite the risks.

With the rising number of COVID cases and curfew restrictions now being put in place, it is more difficult (and risky) than ever to organise a viable and safe event. However, as we emerge from these measures in the future, we will still need assurances that we will not be at risk from the whim or over cautiousness of some local official.

It should be recognised that some local Authorities have endorsed small festivals and events in their region and witnessed successful productions without safety issues. Several of these have produced positive reports on how the EIF/DCMS guidance was very clear and helpful, if followed along with the guidance for performing arts. There is no reason why any local Director of Public Health should have an event cancelled: save local lock down, of course.

We are encouraging national Government to monitor the local decisions and encourage authorities to work with event organisers on presenting COVID safe outdoor events, including Christmas fairs and concerts, but it seems their powers to make this happen are very weak.

If you are currently planning an event, we would strongly recommend that you consult with the local Director of Public Health in addition to the Safety Advisory Group and other officials at an early stage in order to reduce the risk of a last minute shut down.

While writing we would also like to make you aware that we are aware of the need for funding for our sector over the Winter months and we are currently putting together a proposal for the Treasury

for an **Event Industry Emergency Fund** to be established to help businesses get through to next season. Any information you are able to share with us about your business' monthly fixed overheads (after furlough ends) and the numbers of full-time staff employed would be welcome in helping to assess the level of funding needed.

Fortunately, EIF used funding raised by the Purple Guide to undertake a comprehensive research project into the outdoor sector last year which has helped us gain Government recognition. We have also now employed lobbying support from a former MP to help get our message directly to Ministers.

Rest assured we are continuing to fight hard to help everyone through these extremely difficult times.

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