

Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

17<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Dear Secretary of State

My name is Nigel Price. I am a prominent UK jazz guitarist and previous APPJAG award recipient.

I write to you today, with the support of another 68 Parliamentary Jazz Award recipients, led by Dame Cleo Laine, to inform you of the alarming financial state of many of the UK's grass roots jazz venues as we move into 2022.

The funds recently allocated via the 'Cultural Recovery Fund' and the 'Emergency Grassroots Venues Fund' has simply NOT REACHED grassroots venues. We have already seen several clubs close their doors permanently and the future of dozens of others is now hanging by a thread.

We cannot allow this vital part of our heritage to be eroded.

The issue is very specific. Without permanent premises or company status, any application to Arts Council England's current Cultural Recovery Fund or the Emergency Grass Roots Venues Fund is prohibited. Around 90% of UK jazz venues therefore do not qualify for any financial assistance. It should be noted that this includes many actual Parliamentary Jazz Award winners. This is surely not a workable scenario and needs to be addressed.

Project grants are permitted for these promoters but there is a further problem. The brave souls who run these provincial jazz clubs have absolutely zero experience in the world of funding and Arts Council England (ACE) applications. I myself know how tough these applications are; having toured the UK with ACE support nine times. I have failed more times than I have succeeded. Whilst 'on the road' I have had many conversations with these amazing people, and those who have previously attempted ACE applications all say roughly the same thing – "It was horrendously difficult, took forever to complete and we didn't get the money anyway."

Even if promoters manage to get a bid of their own submitted, they are extremely unlikely to succeed because they are then in direct and fierce competition with professional bid writers, who are often employed by larger establishments to ensure a successful outcome.

Paul Kelly, Director of Swanage Jazz Festival and an experienced bid writer illustrates this in detail:

“Let’s Create, Arts Council England’s ambitious 10 Year strategy published in 2021, has a bold vision. ‘By 2030, we want creative nation in which every one of us can play a part. England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.’

Let’s Create is built around three outcomes – Creative People, Cultural Communities and A Creative and Cultural Country. A key means of delivering this outcome lies in Arts Council England’s (ACE) grant funding, access too much of which is via Grantium, its online grants application system. Grantium has long been disliked by applicants for its complexity and even some Arts Council Officers have expressed reservations. When ACE released its Let’s Create Delivery Plan late in 2021 and revised its funding criteria, some of us hoped it might also reform Grantium and make it more user friendly.

Not so; Grantium has become even more complex, even to the experienced fundraiser, and very little of it directly refers to the creative idea that is being bid for. This sits at odds with ACE’s strategic objective of creating a nation “in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish”. Rather than encourage diversity, access and creative development, Grantium is highly likely to deter potential applicants, especially at the grassroots, especially where relatively small amounts of funding can make a huge difference to both non-profit voluntary organisation and the often many professional artists they employ or who wish to bid for funds themselves. The sheer complexity of the 45 page, 24 section Grantium form deters those who want to deliver creative projects and employ professional artists, with need of only modest amounts of funding. It is these people, many of whom willingly give their time for free, on which the bedrock of creative activity in England is built. If this country’s arts and culture are to thrive, Grantium needs urgent reform.”

A scan down the list of past recipients of the Cultural Recovery Fund tells you that those successful applicants now have a very secure future.

That's brilliant. In stark contrast, those who were unsuccessful or indeed *unable* to ask for help have been left with absolutely nothing and face a bleak and rocky road ahead of them. Can you imagine the state of morale amongst these people? Typically a club will be run by an individual or small committee who, driven by their passion for the music, often soak up financial shortfalls with their *own* money. This from Simon Brown, Director of Norwich Jazz Club:

"I continue to run Norwich Jazz Club out of a desire to perform and to advocate the music I love - but which I've come to feel is a faintly naïve qualification when in order to succeed (at least in the current climate) your best qualification is as a professional funding applicant. Each gig I stage now generally falls slightly short of washing its face and I underwrite the losses out of my own pocket. With the background cost of living on the rise it's probably not a position I'll be able to maintain for much longer."

This next illustration is from Julie Sheppard, Director of 'Jazz Jurassic' Lyme Regis.

"The regional jazz circuit relies on a band of volunteer promoters operating out of a variety of local venues. They have little support for the vital work they do - and many will soon "retire" with little sign of who will replace them. If jazz is to thrive outside the big metropolitan centres then this fragile part of the ecosystem needs bolstering. Where will that support come from? Arts Council? Jazz Promotion Network? Local councils? And who is giving voice to their challenges and needs?"

Promoters all over the country are echoing these sentiments. Make no mistake. We are in very real danger of losing a valuable part of our heritage.

Throughout the pandemic, limits on audience capacity and fear of infection have battered an already struggling industry. Without some assistance we are going to see more casualties very soon. Just in the last few weeks we have seen clubs throw in the towel: Peterborough Jazz, Herts jazz, Folkestone Jazz Club, Shepperton Jazz Club. Who's next? The regional UK jazz clubs are the very arteries that supply the veins of larger clubs. Legendary venues like Ronnie Scott's wouldn't even exist without this utterly essential infrastructure. Young up and coming musicians gain the invaluable experience they need by playing at these clubs and we risk losing them at our peril. In very real terms this

means that the future of UK jazz is under threat. If we don't act now then we will have a very stark future.

Putting art and culture aside for a second, it's also worth recognising that the revenue from UK jazz is without doubt of significant value to the UK economy.

My view is that this situation could actually be rectified quite simply. One solution is to create a 'proper' grassroots fund that will go further than the recent ACE fund by *specifically* supporting clubs that hold events in non-dedicated premises, and hold no company status. If such a fund were to be created it is an absolute requirement that the form will *have to be simpler*. The applications would be made by regular, ordinary people. *Not* professional bid writers. Without these kinds of concessions their applications *will* fail.

I hope I have put across the message clearly and that this letter will encourage a meaningful response. I have copied this letter to Darren Henley, CEO Arts Council England and the All Party Parliamentary Jazz Appreciation Group for discussion amongst APPJAG members and their colleagues in both Houses of Parliament.

Without immediate action the face of the UK jazz scene *will* irrevocably change for the worse.

I have personally invited other past recipients of the Parliamentary Jazz Awards to add their signatures to this letter and the response has been nothing short of overwhelming, with other respected figures within the UK Jazz scene also volunteering their support below.

We implore you to help us keep the music we all love alive here on these islands by making funding more available and attainable for grassroots venues.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Price - 2010 APPJAG Ensemble of the year  
(Nigel Price Organ Trio)

With the support of Parliamentary Jazz Award recipients:

Dame Cleo Laine DBE - Services to Jazz Award (2009)  
Claire Martin OBE – Jazz Album of the Year (2021)

Guy Barker MBE - Jazz Musician of the Year (2013)  
Dr Tommy Smith OBE – Jazz Education of the Year (2016)  
Cleveland Watkiss MBE – Jazz Vocalist of the Year (2017)  
Julian Joseph OBE – Jazz Broadcaster of the year (2006)  
Dennis Rollins MBE – Jazz Educator of the Year (2008)  
Elaine Delmar – Parliamentary Special Jazz Award (2013)  
Alyn Shipton – Jazz Broadcaster of the Year (2010)  
Dr Ian Darrington MBE - Jazz Educator of the Year (2011)  
John Eno BEM – Jazz Education of the Year (2020)  
Chris Hodgkins - Services to Jazz Award (2015)  
Ian Shaw - Jazz Vocalist of the Year (2018)  
Liane Carroll - Jazz Album of the Year (2018)  
Xhosa Cole – Jazz Newcomer of the Year (2019)  
Mike Flynn, Jazzwise - Jazz Publication of the Year (2010)  
Jean Toussaint - Jazz Education of the Year Award (2018)  
Callum Au - Jazz Album of the Year (2021)  
Empirical - Jazz Ensemble of the year (2008)  
Tony Kofi - Jazz Ensemble of the Year (2005)  
Georgia Mancio - Jazz Vocalist of the Year (2021)  
Paul Pace - Services to Jazz Award (2008)  
Phil Robson – Jazz Musician of the Year (2009)  
Mark Lockheart - Jazz Musician of the Year (2010)  
Gareth Lockrane - Jazz Album of the Year (2010)  
Kathy Dyson - Jazz Educator of the Year Award (2010)  
Zoe Champion - Jazz Vocalist of the Year (2019)  
Kate Williams (& Georgia Mancio) - Jazz Album of the Year (2020)  
Pete Oxley, the Spin, Oxford - APPJAG Live Jazz Award of the Year (2012)  
John Turville – Jazz Album of the Year (2011)  
Alison Rayner - Jazz Ensemble of the Year (2018)  
Emilia Martensson - Jazz Vocalist of the Year (2016)  
Jasper Hoiby - Jazz Ensemble of the Year (2017)  
Professor Catherine Tackley – Jazz Publication of the Year (2013)  
Luca Manning - 2020 Jazz Newcomer of the Year (2020)  
Christine Tobin - Jazz Vocalist of the Year (2014)  
Henry Lowther - 2019 Parliamentary Special Jazz Award (2019)  
Nick Smart - Jazz Education of the Year Award (2013)  
Tim Garland - 2006 Jazz Musician of the Year (2006)  
Jim Mullen - 2017 Parliamentary Special Award (2017)  
Mike Walker, Impossible Gentlemen - Jazz Ensemble of the Year (2013)  
Phil Meadows - Jazz Newcomer of the Year (2015)  
Nikki Iles – Jazz Album of the Year (2019)

Paul Hobbs/Kathryn Shackleton, Watermill Jazz, Dorking – Jazz Venue of the Year (2019)  
Paul Deats, Peggy's Skylight, Nottingham – Jazz Venue of the Year (2021)  
Brian Kellock – Jazz Ensemble of the Year (2011)  
Joanna Mayes, St Ives – Jazz Venue of the year (2015)  
Dr Corey Mwamba – Jazz Media Award (2020)  
Fergus McCreadie – Jazz Album of the Year (2019)  
Ryan Quigley – Jazz Ensemble of the Year (2009)  
Sam Crockatt – Jazz Album of the Year (2009)  
Ross Dines, Pizza Express, London – Jazz Venue of the Year (2007)  
Ian Mann – Jazz Media Award (2019)  
Pete Rosser and Judith Waterhouse, Wakefield Jazz Club – Jazz Venue of the Year (2005)  
Fiona Ross, Women In Jazz Media – Jazz Media Award (2021)  
Lance Liddle, Bebop Spoken Here – Jazz Media Award (2018)  
Jill Rodger – Services to Jazz Award (2018)  
Jon Newey, /Jazzwise – Jazz Journalist of the year (2012)  
Peter Fairman, Fleece Jazz – Jazz Venue of the Year (2009)  
Gill Alexander – Jazz Venue of the Year (2008)  
Simon Purcell – Jazz Educator of the Year (2006)  
Sebastian Scotney, Jazz London News – Jazz Publication of the Year (2015)  
Kevin Le Gendre – Jazz Journalist of the Year (2009)  
Josephine Davies – Jazz Instrumentalist of the Year (2009)  
Digby Fairweather – Special Award (2021)  
Stuart Nicholson – Jazz Journalist of the year (2007)  
Debra Milne – Lockdown Innovation Award, The Globe, Newcastle (2021)  
Buster Birch – Jazz Education award, Original Jazz Summer School (2021)

Other signatories:

Clark Tracey BEM (for music promotion) – for Herts Jazz (recently closed)  
Jacqui Dankworth  
Alec Dankworth  
Laurie Jacobs - Peterborough Jazz Club (recently closed)  
Simon Brown - Norwich Jazz Club  
Julie Sheppard - Jazz Jurassica  
Paul Kelly - Swanage Jazz Festival  
Trefor Owen - North Wales Jazz (recently closed)

Ashley Slater - for 'Loose Tubes'  
Clive Davies – Times Journalist

CC Executive Committee of the All Party Parliamentary Jazz  
Appreciation Group: John Spellar MP, Lord Mann, Lord Colwyn, Lord  
Alton, Greg Knight MP, Alison Thewliss MP, Chi Onwurah MP, Ian  
Paisley MP, Sarah Champion MP, Chris Hodgkins (Secretary).  
Darren Henley, CEO. Arts Council England