



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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

29 June 2020

Dow Olive

I am writing in support of Peterborough's theatres. Like other organisations, they have struggled under the lockdown restrictions. Yet unlike those in other sectors, which are preparing to resume something approaching normality, they have no immediate prospect of being able to restore regular performances.

At the New Theatre, in central Peterborough, it might be November or later before productions can resume. This is having a significant impact on the theatre's financial resilience. The same applies to the Key Theatre and The Cresset in Bretton.

I appreciate that the Government has made discretionary grant funding available through Peterborough City Council, but this has inevitably been focussed on meeting the wider needs of businesses. The Arts Council has also offered some emergency assistance, but not enough to meet operating costs over many months. We need Peterborough's cultural institutions to survive.

Far from relying on subsidy, the New Theatre has been operating entirely on its own box office receipts. After the troubled history of this venue in recent years, it would be a tragedy if my city lost its main theatre just when it appeared set for success. Likewise, the Key Theatre and The Cresset are crucial to Peterborough's future regeneration and growth.

I am sure you agree that we cannot allow Coronavirus to close our theatres for good. The Government's help in preventing this outcome would be hugely appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Bristow MP
Member of Parliament for Peterborough