

Chancellor of the Exchequer
The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ
United Kingdom

Tuesday, 24th March 2020

Subject: COVID-19 and Support for Freelancers and Sole Traders

Dear Chancellor,

We are in extraordinary times. The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to significantly restrict economic activity, as it should as we choose to prioritise protecting the lives of those at risk.

The support packages announced by Government for businesses and employees are very welcome and are certainly a comfort for many in the country.

However, those who work as freelancers and/or sole traders – as many professional ecologists and environmental managers do – are not supported with these packages and will be disadvantaged in relative terms by being eligible only for Universal Credit. This limited income will have very real and significant impacts on their livelihoods. Added to this, freelancers and sole traders are not covered by insurance for this kind of unprecedented eventuality where they may not actually be sick or injured but will nonetheless be unable to work.

Freelance and sole trader ecologists are often seasonal surveyors, meaning that the majority of their work is limited to the period of March to September. The implication of this is that restrictions on working now and the near future will have potentially long-lasting impacts on their income and livelihoods. Seasonal surveyors are often early in their careers, if they are not supported now we may lose them from the sector entirely.

We should not forget that whilst of course we put every effort into combatting the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic there is also an ongoing climate emergency and biodiversity crisis that will still need addressing – by professional ecologists and environmental managers – once we emerge from the other side of these unprecedented circumstances. Ensuring that they are still able to contribute to the sector in a meaningful way and not struggling to support themselves and their families is critical to enabling them to contribute in the future.

We urge Government in the strongest sense to introduce a package of support measures for freelancers and sole traders that supports them to same extent as PAYE employees.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Max Wade CEcol CEnv FCIEEM
President



Ms Sally Hayns CEcol MCIEEM
Chief Executive Officer