



For the attention of the Chief Executive Officer / Managing Director.

I am writing to you, respectfully, and to many of your senior colleagues in the British Film & TV Industry on behalf of many thousands of Bectu's freelance members who work in the sector in relation to worker's welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past week we have been inundated with calls from members who fear they may have lost a significant portion of their expected 2020 income overnight. The film industry has come to a standstill, and crew are facing unprecedented challenges in the upcoming months, with potential impact from the virus lasting at least a year.

In the past couple of days, major industry players have committed to reinstating all PAYE crew across all of their current productions in Britain, and have signed up to the government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (JRS) which allows employers to furlough, and continue to pay workers. We sincerely welcome this decision, and believe it to be the most responsible response available to any company at this time.

However, in a survey of over 2,000 members conducted on Sunday, the overwhelming majority of respondents told us that they had real concerns about employers willingness to engage with the JRS and we hope that your company will do everything you can to be flexible and supportive of them on this.

We recognise that this is an unprecedented challenge that everyone is facing. Bectu is calling on all employers in the sector to mirror the good practice of major industry players, and undertake the following measures with immediate effect:

- To confirm that your company will continue to pay anyone that it can continue to pay with the assistance of JRS programme.
- Re-engage staff who have been recently laid-off wherever the JRS programme permits it.
- Do everything that you can to ensure that people who have been working on 'Daily' contracts receive the maximum support available to them in line with the undertakings that major companies in the industry have been prepared to make.
- Avoid any unnecessary terminations of existing contracts during this crisis.

An early confirmation of your company's willingness to support workers in this way will be welcomed by the people who regularly work with you and it will relieve a great deal of the anxiety that is being felt throughout the industry at this time.

We would also like to urge you to add your weight to Bectu's campaigns in defence of our industry's freelance workforce. We are pressing the Treasury to re-think the way that the crew who work on your productions, and who are employed through their own Limited Companies are treated. We hope you will support Bectu's calls for people to be allowed to treat dividends as income for the purposes of the Self-Employed Income Support Fund (SEISF), and also to call for a removal of the £50,000 'cap' which will hurt people who actually earn less than £50,000 and will result in unequal treatment in comparison to PAYE workers who benefit from the JRS 'furlough'.

In addition to this, we have serious concerns about 'PAYE freelancers'. These are people who work multiple short fixed-term contracts in the average year (our survey suggests that

the majority work more than three short-fixed term PAYE contracts per year and 13% of them work more than **nine**).

It is our current understanding that the majority of these workers do not qualify for any assistance at all during this crisis and we are urging the government to allow people who were employed long before the current 28th February deadline to be re-engaged and furloughed under the JRS.

We would like to take the time to thank you if you have already implemented any of the suggestions that we have made in this letter, and are actively supporting your crew during this time. We would also like to thank you in advance for any support you are able to give to our campaigning.

Once this emergency is over, we believe that serious attempts to maintain goodwill will pay dividends and Bectu will be doing everything that we can to recognise and amplify good practice from employers at this time.

The workers that we are working to support here have been instrumental in the growth and success of the British film industry, bringing nearly £8bn in Gross Value Added to the UK economy¹ and now it's time for you to show your support to everyone who have worked on your productions.

Should you require any assistance in supporting any of the objectives in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us directly. During this difficult time, Bectu is open to sharing our industry advice to employers and if there is anything that we can do to help you, please let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Spencer MacDonald – National Secretary
Nia Hughes – Organising Official
Gerry Carr – Assistant National Secretary – Regional Production Division
Paul Evans – Assistant National Secretary – London Production Division

On behalf of:

- All Bectu London Production Division members.
- All Bectu Regional Production Division members.

Resources:

- <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>
- <https://bectu.org.uk/topic/covid-19-coronavirus/>
- <https://filmtvcharity.org.uk/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

¹ <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/screen-business-summary-report-2018-10-08.pdf> (p7)