

# New Culture Commissioner named and Taskforce set up to aid sector recovery from coronavirus

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, has appointed Neil Mendoza as the new Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal. Mr Mendoza will provide an expert and independent voice to the government, and will advise on how UK culture and heritage can begin the road to recovery from the pandemic.

Mr Mendoza has built a successful career within the creative, heritage and financial sectors and has been a consistent champion of the cultural scene.

In this new role, he will draw on his experience within the cultural sector to garner the strongest, most innovative ideas for its renewal and present them to DCMS Ministers and officials. He will initiate an ambitious philanthropic focus on arts and culture, and help ensure Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England and other important bodies work together with DCMS to develop and deliver support to the sector.

## **Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:**

Our local, regional and national institutions have been trailblazers in coming up with innovative ways to reach audiences during the lockdown. Our focus now turns to paving the way for the reopening of the country's cultural hubs including theatres, galleries, museums and entertainment venues, when it is safe to do so.

Neil's appointment as Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal and the creation of a new taskforce is all part of the government's commitment to help get the cultural and creative sectors back up and running.

## **Neil Mendoza said:**

Our culture holds us together. Arts, music, theatre, museums and heritage and culture in all its other forms are a vital part of people's lives up and down the country. Our outstanding creativity and arts excellence sets an example for the world. The people that work in cultural sectors want to work, to help continue to support and inspire their communities.

DCMS intends to help them do just that through this pandemic and be ready for renewal once social distancing is over.

## **Welcoming the appointment, Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair, Arts Council England said:**

Neil Mendoza has been a champion of art and culture throughout his career and I am delighted that he will bring his extensive experience in the creative, heritage and business sectors to his appointment as Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal. Culture and creativity will be vital to rebuilding communities across the country and in sustaining our international standing as a creative nation. Helping the sector to reopen is a priority for the Arts Council and I very much look forward to working with Neil in support of the aims of the Taskforce.

Venues have been closed due to the pandemic, which creates very serious challenges for these sectors. As part of the Cultural Renewal taskforce (focusing on recreation and leisure) announced last week, an Entertainment and Events Working Group will now be created, bringing together representatives from around the country to develop advice and guidance on the reopening of cultural venues across the nation, helping to get employees back to work and audiences once again enjoying our thriving cultural sector.

Working with organisations such as Society of London Theatres (SOLT), UK Theatre and Arts Council England (ACE), the working group will include representatives from regional and London-based theatres, performing arts and other creative organisations as well as medical advisors. It will focus on considering how to begin rehearsing and producing theatre, music, film and dance. The group will also consider the potential implications of a return to work for both disabled artists and audiences and the work of suppliers in the sector.

The panel will help identify and resolve specific issues, and play an important role in the development of guidance for the sector to restart. It will inform the work of the Cultural Renewal taskforce as we start to rebuild, renew and regenerate the nation.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to editors:**

- Mendoza is Provost of Oriel College, Oxford, following a career building businesses in the creative and finance sectors. He is Chair of The Landmark Trust and the Illuminated River Foundation, and recently retired as a Commissioner at Historic England. He has been a Non-Executive Director at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport since 2016 and led the Mendoza Review of Museums in England (2017).

- Five new ministerial-led task forces have been set up to develop plans for how and when closed sectors can reopen safely, following publication of the UK's roadmap to rebuild Britain.□□
- These task forces are: Recreation and leisure, Pubs and restaurants, Non-essential retail, Places of worship, and International aviation □.
- DCMS is establishing the recreation and leisure taskforce which will be supported by working groups including the entertainment and events group and others like sport, museums and galleries, heritage, tourism and libraries.
- The Entertainment and Events Working Group will include representatives from: Royal Albert Hall, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Really Useful Group, One Dance UK, Cadogan Hall, Association of British Orchestras, Nimax, Leeds Playhouse and The Royal Opera House.□