

LETTER TO LORD HALL FROM KEITH MASSEY

Sent: 31 March 2020 14:10

Subject: FREELANCERS & THE BBC

For the attention of Lord Hall of Birkenhead

Dear Tony,

I am writing to ask you to consider making a public statement as Director General of the BBC, expressing concern for the 150,000 essential freelancers employed in the television industry – many of whom are unable to access government emergency support in this coronavirus crisis, as they are freelancers.

Sadly, in the Chancellor's aid package, many in the industry including our members in the camera department who, because they have limited companies, pay some salary on PAYE and the rest by dividend and for some inexplicable reason do not qualify?

The top creative camera people have a limited company because of liabilities and also in having the responsibility to purchase very expensive equipment. Indeed, when I purchased my electronic equipment it was valued at twice the value of my house. Many 'indies' and broadcasters now insist on production personnel being a limited company because of HMRC rules.

A considerable number of BBC productions in all genres are now made by independent production companies, all using freelancers, and these companies are under the BBC umbrella of public service broadcast funding by the licence fee, for which the BBC has responsibility and control. Indeed, when the case for preserving the BBC is made, the first thing that is mentioned is the world-class cinematography wildlife programmes with Sir David Attenborough – made by freelancers.

Attempts are being made to make the Treasury aware of this grave situation, but if something is not done, from our side, camera men and women – who have lost months of work – will be going bankrupt and there will be no one with vast experience and passionate, creative know-how to make the programmes.

If you would give this some consideration I should be grateful.

Kind regards,

Keith

Keith Massey
Ambassador



Guild of Television Camera Professionals



International Association of Wildlife Film-makers