

**15 November 2024**

Dear Rebecca,

Music Venue Trust is a UK registered charity established in 2014 that acts to protect, secure and improve the UK's Grassroots Music Venue circuit. Music Venue Trust provides advice to the government, the cultural sector and the music industry on issues impacting the network of venues and is the nominated representative that speaks on behalf of the Music Venues Alliance, an association of over 800 venues from across the UK.

Camden is an area that is world renowned for its creative and cultural impact. It has a long-standing reputation as a borough of creative and dynamic operators and providers of grassroots live music and evening & nighttime hospitality. However, the climate for evening and nighttime culture and hospitality has become increasingly challenging to operate within. Over the past 20 years 35% of Grassroots Music Venues (GMVs) have closed in the UK and this is still ongoing. At the start of 2023 Music Venue Trust reported that the UK was continuing to lose GMVs at an average rate of one a week.

In order for Camden to maintain its reputation as a borough of live music and its pledge in the 2024 drafted ENTE Strategy plan to 'support our creative and rebellious culture, nurture and protect community heritage, grow the economy and create good work opportunities which are accessible to all' we urge the council to remove its cumulative impact licensing policy to both support new business operators who want to enter the market and help existing premises with flexibility on their licensable activities.

GMVs provide new and emerging artists and musicians with a space to hone their craft, develop their fanbase and increase access to cultural opportunities for the local community. MVT makes the case to Government and industry that they are the 'research and development' arm of the music industry. However, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the economic resilience of Grassroots Music Venues has been pushed to the limit. In our 2023 Annual Report we announced at Parliament the startling statistic that the average profit margin of a GMV is 0.5%, and that at its core, the provision purely of live music is a loss-making activity. The national subsidy invested by GMVs in order to provide grassroots music is £114.8 million, and it is other revenue streams like the often late-night provision of food & beverages, which enable GMVs to provide their cultural activity.

Through this cultural heavy-lifting GMVs make an enormous contribution to the national economy. MVT was able to report that the total contribution to the economy was over £500 million, and across the UK over 28,000 are employed by the sector. Music Venue Trust recognises that GMVs contribute to creating a rich cultural environment for the local community, boost the local economy and increase footfall to high streets. In Music Venue Trust's Annual Report, we announced that GMVs generated 23 million individual audience visits across the year.

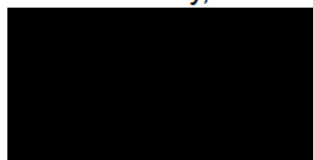
In respect of any cumulative impact policy considerations, Music Venue Trust experience is that venues rarely operate at full capacities or for full hours. What we have found is that not being able to operate whole premises to extended or later hours means operators risk losing valuable income by being limited in the scope of their programming, rather than resulting in increasing

footfall in the location over the calendar year. As such the removal of this licensing policy for especially for cultural premises would have no negative impact in the borough. Instead the removal of the cumulative impact licensing policy in Camden would be a lifeline for these grassroots music venues, which are essential to the borough's cultural vibrancy.

The current policy restricts both new licence applications for premises and variation applications for the existing venues in the borough, thus creating an unnecessary barrier for small and medium sized venues trying to establish themselves or expand their offerings. By lifting these restrictions, Camden can help support and grow their cultural offering, boost the local economy, and ensure that grassroots venues are not restricted by unnecessary policies.

A more tailored and supportive licensing framework focusing on each application on its own individual merits would better balance the needs of venues, residents, and the broader community, securing Camden's place as a cultural beacon for generations to come. It is the aim of Music Venue Trust to protect, secure and improve grassroots music venues, therefore we hope our submission is considered and our views are fully taken on board.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Asquith

**Venue Support Team Manager**  
**Music Venue Trust**