

# EVENTS INDUSTRY ALLIANCE

## POLICY ASKS - TOP 3

2023



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The Events Industry Alliance (EIA) works to ensure that the interests of business events in the UK are effectively represented, understood and communicated to Government across the three pillars of Growth, Becoming the World's Meeting Place and Developing Skills and People to unlock the industry's full potential as one of the biggest engines for growth in the economy.

**This document outlines our top three policy asks which would allow us to deliver on our stated aim.**

## 1. Increase efficiency

Post-Brexit trading conditions have had a significant impact on the business events industry. We are seeking to make it easier for foreign businesses to exhibit in the UK while at the same time alleviating the current issues of outbound trade, particularly our industry working in the EU and EEA for short periods of time.

We know that if actioned, reduced trade friction would deliver significant growth to the industry alongside the associated economic benefits. Putting barriers in place which limit the growth of events is short sighted. The measures below are designed to ensure we have an attractive UK supply chain in the business events industry.

### Inbound

- The UK needs to ensure we have coverage for workers to come for the short-term workflow and the requirements should allow for specific industry needs of entry.
- Therefore, we are asking for the creation of a new short term worker visa that is non-seasonal for business events which would allow for business visitors to easily attend and exhibit at UK based events.
- This visa type could be tied to attendance of an event to promote growth. For example, as a specific visa type, your application would require proof of purchase of a ticket to attend a specific event and then proof of attendance, verified in conjunction with the event promoter/venue (similar to the structure of educational visas).
- This visa structure would decrease entry requirements for visiting attendees whilst encouraging foreign organisers to hold their events in the UK, as attendees would just have to buy a ticket and prove attendance (whilst meeting basic foreign travel standards) to gain the right to enter the UK for work purposes for a short window surrounding the event.

### Outbound

- There has been a negative effect on the ability of British workers to work abroad in recent years and confusion has been widespread throughout the industry.
- The EIA is asking for a searchable well-designed government foreign travel advice database for outbound work requirements to provide clarity for workers in the industry, particularly the business event supply chain.
- The database could provide an explanation with relevant links for the visas and necessary requirements by providing accurate and up-to-date information that currently would require a lawyer or hours of research to gain. We are asking for a step-by-step online system that constructs a list of requirements based on inputs that can be easily used by the industry.
- This could be created in conjunction with a Business Events Office, similar to current proposals for a [Music Exports Office](#).
- This Business Events Office would have oversight of this tool as well as being responsible for easing logistical issues and promoting the industry internationally.
- 21 countries currently allow British musicians to tour without a visa (however, carnets are still required). We should ask Department of Business & Trade and the Foreign Office to request reciprocal extensions of these exemptions for workers in the business events industry, allowing them to work abroad without worrying about visa requirements.

## 2. Increase advocacy

We believe the Government should take a strategic view of events, using them to articulate Government policy and stimulate trade across the UK and globally.

We are calling on Government to recommit to the Business Events Strategy, launched in 2013 by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Sajid Javid who stated “there is a need for a more strategic, national approach and we want to seize the opportunity to present the UK as a competitive destination.”

This request for support is not financial but ties in with wishing to see greater support from Government and a reduction of interventions that can be detrimental to the industry’s international competitiveness. To deliver this the Government would need to commit to cross departmental collaboration and increased engagement to facilitate growth ensuring the UK becomes the ‘World’s Meeting Place’.

### Cross-departmental collaboration:

- The Government should use business events as a catalyst for growth to raise the profile of key UK sectors, this would involve viewing them as a platform to showcase the UK.
- We wish to see dedicated representatives in each department with responsibility for the representation of that department at key business events across the four nations.
- The dedicated person in each department should be responsible for creating and delivering trade missions and using business events to articulate Government strategy.
- They would also be responsible for implementing a cross Government co-ordinated approach to identifying and supporting the business events which are of most value to the UK economy and growth aims. This would showcase our industrial strengths, bolster exports, stimulate inward investment and boost tourism.

### Increased engagement:

- A revamped ministerial support bid & growth initiative to be delivered via the business event policy team within each department ensuring increased attendance, representation and industry collaboration.
- Support is often required beyond ministerial letters and could include hosting delegations, involvement in presentations, use of government buildings as part of growing an existing or bidding for a new event.
- Additionally, we would ask Government for increased collaboration with industry to attract new events to the UK from other international destinations.
- Government support for a bidding process that a venue is undertaking and during the event itself can be critical in securing a successful bid and would be welcomed for targeted business events.
- Increased ministerial attendance, hosting and speaking at events which are of key interest to the Government to raise their profile.

### An example of the Government doing this recently is London Tech Week 2023.

- The Government took a strategic view of this event and had the Prime Minister, Chancellor, Mayor of London and three other Government Ministers in attendance.
- Throughout the week the Government announced UK Digital Strategy and they committed a combined £743.5 million across innovative projects to secure the UK’s place as a global science superpower.
- In addition to this, the Prime Minister spoke at a dinner to welcome attendees to London Tech Week.
- The event positioned the UK as a global tech hub, in line with the ambitions of Rishi Sunak and made the event extremely successful for the delegates and the industry.

**The Government should be targeting at least six similar events throughout each year.**

### 3. Incentivise growth

The business events industry has £11bn of economic impact and drives £70bn of trade from around the world into UK businesses, however this contribution is rarely recognised. Numerous Governments have failed to provide the industry with incentives to best support their trade objectives.

The Events Industry Alliance is requesting that the Government commits to providing incentives to boost the potential of the sector through support measures designed to create more opportunities for people to pursue careers in the events sector and plug the gaps that are standing in the way of creating the maximum benefit for the economy.

#### Tax reliefs

- The Government has invested considerably in the Film & Television industry, most recently providing £77m to grow the industry and generate more jobs. One of the measures included in this budget is the Create Growth Programme through which the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport supports businesses to commercialise their ideas and access resources, knowledge and private investments to scale up.
- A similar programme would be welcomed for the business events industry, identifying key policy areas for Government and finding the events that align with these – or events that could be brought into the UK – providing a tax credit for any business that would be involved with keeping and growing events in the UK or bringing new events to the UK. Measures such as these have substantial positive impacts on the economy, as in the case of Georgia’s film tax credit.

#### Regional hubs

- The Government should create and fund regional clusters through investing in events that regularly take place in the same location. For example, the Farnborough Air Show is important to local and national jobs, growth and pride of place, a tax credit for keeping an event in the same venue would be beneficial.
- The idea of ‘regional clusters’ could empower local areas across the country. This would require Government to recognise urban hubs and regions with existing strengths in particular industries, that align with the Government’s agenda and use these specialisms to attract relevant events there. The Government could co-ordinate with local authorities to maximise the economic benefit to the local area as a knock-on effect of the jobs generated but also to maximise the success of events that help drive the Government policy agenda forward.

#### Workforce

- The industry is experiencing a workforce shortage which is hindering its ability to reach its full potential. The EIA would welcome initiatives such as business events industry specific T-Levels and post-16 education pathways and a greater awareness of the career promise of the industry from early education to help incentivise more people to develop careers and join the workforce.
- A more flexible apprenticeship levy would be welcomed to better encourage life-long learning, giving businesses more freedom to determine how the money is used but also to enable a broader range of employees – including independent workers and self-employed individuals to fund their own skills training.
- The regional hubs could facilitate training to enter into the business events industry workforce by being providers themselves and collaborating with local education providers to identify opportunities best suited for each local area. In the long term this would create new events in the UK.

The above reforms in the areas of focused engagement from Government, delivering incentives for growth and reducing the trade frictions will supercharge the business events industry and enable us to ensure the UK becomes the ‘World’s Meeting Place’.