



Event Industry Alliance
119 High Street
Berkhamsted
HP4 2DJ

13th July 2020

The Right Honourable Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10, Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

The Business Events Sector, was shocked and disappointed to yet again be left out of the raft of sectors listed as reopening by Oliver Dowden last Thursday, despite having been promised a timeline for the reopening of sectors of the economy that remain closed. Every day that goes past without a go live date for this sector causes greater problems.

The sector has worked with officials across Government and contributed evidence to support the safe reopening of exhibitions, meetings, and conferences – with guidance already published via the MIA roadmap to reopening, and the ‘all secure standard’, awaiting approval with the cabinet office since the 13th June. This work has demonstrated the significant control this sector has over the environments they create, particularly when compared to some other sectors, which have already been allowed to reopen.

Please find attached two letters from the EIA to the Chancellor, the first detailing the economic case (the loss of 30,000 jobs and some £8bn of economic impact and the position of the sector to act as a catalyst for wider economic growth), the second the public health and safety case (the ability of the Business Events Sector to track and trace, and other measures in excess of sectors already open – since writing the MIA has launched a bespoke track and trace app for their members).

As we indicated, exhibitions, meetings and conferences are facing a confidence crisis and are cancelling daily without a ‘go date’. An example is the cancelling of the Southampton Boat Show,

- some £24m will be lost in the economy of Southampton, this includes pubs, bars, restaurants and hotels who rely on Business Events to make their business models viable
- 450 exhibitors, 80% SMEs from all over the country (many generate 70% of their annual turnover at the event) have lost their trading platform.
- Supply chain businesses are impacted, one major exhibitor has lost 15% of their annual turnover through lost sales and now will reduce their workforce by 20% and cut back on the 1,400 businesses in their own supply chain.

Exhibitions need an 8-12 week lead time to open (we cannot reopen in a matter of days like salons and gyms) and so a clear timetable is needed. Smaller meetings and conferences can start imminently and contribute to the economic recovery for the UK.

There are still jobs and businesses to be saved, but we must act immediately to salvage the Business Events industry; the organisers, venues, suppliers, freelancers and regional supply chains, and help to save our customers’ businesses who rely on business events as their trading platform.

This is increasingly also becoming an issue of international competitiveness, with the business events sector in a number of other jurisdictions, including France and Germany, being recognised for the unique role they play in economic regeneration and the safe environments they can secure. This has allowed a much clearer path to reopening in those markets, in a highly agile industry.

We cordially request an urgent meeting to discuss how we can support the reopening plans with a phased, but clear, approach that will ensure the safety of all.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Skeith,
CEO
Association of Event Organisers



Rachel Parker,
Director
Association of Event Venues



Andrew Harrison,
Director
Event Supplier and Services
Association



Jane Longhurst
Chief Executive
The Meetings Industry Association

CC: Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport, Heritage & Tourism
Nadhim Zahawi, Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy