

Dear [Your MP]

I write to you as an [owner/director/employee] of a business operating within the exhibition industry that resides within your constituency and currently employs [00] people. Our sector continues to suffer from the on-going catastrophic business impact of COVID-19, which will affect our ability to help reignite the UK economy across every industry sector.

To give some idea of the scale of the exhibition industry in the UK:

- it creates and hosts almost 1,100 trade and consumer exhibitions annually
- it generates £11bn (of the £70bn overall events sector contribution) to the UK economy
- it supports 114,000 jobs (of the 600,000 directly employed in the overall events sector)
- it creates a trading platform for 178,000 businesses
- UK organisers contribute a further £2.1bn of turnover from their international activities by organising more than 1,000 events outside of the UK.

The relaxing of lock down measures was welcomed by many sectors last week, however, activities in exhibition and conference centres was specifically excluded with no 'go date' given. Unlike other sectors (which need 1-2 weeks to start back up), a lead time of 8-12 weeks is needed to work with our buyers and sellers to re-start exhibitions, which has caused a confidence crisis amongst our customers, who are questioning whether exhibitions will happen this autumn. Our industry estimates approximately 70% of exhibitions were postponed to quarter 3 and quarter 4 in 2020, and should these not happen, this represents some £8bn of lost economic impact for the UK economy.

Collectively as a sector we have been contributing via DCMS to the (yet to be published) sector specific guidance through the Visitor Economy Taskforce. The guidance includes numerous control measures far in excess of those in place with other sectors, which have been allowed to re-open. We are in the 'people business', safety and customer confidence is key and we are able to control the environments we create as 'organised gatherings', through a risk assessed approach, including (but not limited to) track and trace measures. As businesses we are keen to understand the science behind allowing certain sectors to open (particularly pubs, zoo's, markets and retail - essential and non-essential), where there are less control measures in place.

Exhibitions are the beating heart of every industry, which need to be re-ignited to help in both the economic recovery post COVID-19, but also post Brexit. Exhibitions create the trading platforms, which permeates activity throughout every industry they serve and their subsequent supply chains across the UK. The uncertainty of not having a 'go date' is causing the rescheduled events to be cancelled, removing these much-needed trading and marketing platforms for them.

Via information provided by our trade body and recently requested by the BEIS the likely impact on employment as the furlough scheme comes to an end and other financial support packages still remain outside of our sectors reach:

- The industry has already shed 20% of its direct workforce
- Redundancies are already underway with a conservative estimate this will rise to 50%, that is almost 60,000 direct jobs lost just in the exhibition space, if a 'go date' isn't given in the coming days and further financial support packages immediately put in place.

- We estimate 60% of our supply chain businesses will not reopen in October as furlough comes to an end.

The exhibition sector, through the provision of the Nightingale Hospitals, has played an active role in supporting the Government at a time of crisis, and very much looks forward to playing an active role in recovery, however, we need a 'go date' as a matter of utmost urgency in order to rebuild our industry.

We would welcome a meeting with you to provide more information and to elaborate on our sectors challenges at this critical time.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,