



Event Industry Alliance
119 High Street
Berkhamsted
HP4 2DJ

2nd October 2020

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AB

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
11 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AB

Dear Prime Minister, Dear Chancellor,

Proposal for Events Industry Hibernation Support Package

As representatives of the UK events industry we are writing to raise our serious concerns over the existential threat faced by our sector given the Government's decision to close events for at least another six months and the inability of many events companies to access the support measures announced by the Chancellor in the Winter Economy Plan. We write to propose an urgent support package for the sector.

We understand the challenging decisions government must take to control the spread of the virus whilst mitigating its economic and social impact. However, the Prime Minister's announcement last week means that the once vibrant and growing UK events industry has been closed by the Government, and this is certain to have catastrophic employment consequences across the UK.

Britain's events sector employs around 600,000 people, with the exhibitions sector alone supporting some 114,000 of those jobs. Although nearly 60% of events and exhibitions businesses benefitted from the Government's job retention scheme, its forthcoming cessation will leave the sector, its employees and the communities in which it operates in uniquely exposed, having been one of the only sectors not allowed to reopen during the summer.

The Events Industry Alliance (EIA) anticipates that 80% of the exhibitions sector workforce (consisting of events suppliers, organisers and venues), over 90,000 people, will be made redundant in the coming weeks due to continued event closures and the inability of their employers to access the new Job Support Scheme as they are not able to trade at all during the time and therefore will have no income to pay employees.

A recent survey highlighted the significant impact on companies' revenues due to the Government's closure of events. This showed that events suppliers expected their revenues in November to be only 8% of pre-COVID levels, with corresponding figures of 9% for events venues and 13% for event organisers.

Targeted Government support is urgently needed for the industry to survive. We therefore propose that the Government develops an 'Events Industry Hibernation Support Package' consisting of the following proportionate, time-limited measures to address its unique circumstances:

- An adapted wage subsidy scheme, with a temporary higher Government contribution to event companies' employment costs, reflecting that Government restrictions are preventing them from generating revenues;

- A regular review process with clear criteria and industry involvement to assess the ability of COVID-secure events to resume at a future date. This would enable both for companies in the sector to prepare for a resumption of events and for temporary Government support measures to be tapered off as the sector is reopened and starts to generate revenues, which it is confident of doing; and,
- An enhanced grant and loan scheme offered to companies in the sector whilst it remains closed by the Government.

The support package would be time-limited and would be entirely contingent on the sector not being able to trade. The support should be offered on an opt-in basis, with the most severely impacted companies applying for additional employment cost contributions and/or grants or loans.

The sector stands ready to provide the Government with any information it would need to develop and define the scope of these and any other measures.

We are not an unviable sector and simply require support to survive until the time is right to resume events, at which point we can return to our role of driving growth in the wider economy. Before COVID-19, the events industry was a vibrant, growing sector; contributing some £70bn of economic impact to the UK, with trade shows and consumer exhibitions some £11bn. The sector also supports a further 180,000 businesses, many of whom are SMEs, who rely on exhibitions and events to meet customers and generate sales across every market and industry sector.

The sector is also a vital contributor to the UK's economic competitiveness, and acts as the UK's shop window to the world, enabling companies from a wide range of sectors to meet prospective customers, generating sales and driving UK exports. International competitors such as France and Germany recognise the vital contribution their events industries make to their own economies and have taken steps to permit COVID-secure events to continue. These and other countries are also providing more targeted support to help their events sectors get through these tough times. This is a highly mobile sector and the UK faces fierce international competition.

We remain confident that UK exhibitions can take place safely when the time is right to resume them with the robust health and safety measures already successfully demonstrated in the recent pilot. We have welcomed the engagement we have had with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on the steps the sector will be able to take to control the environments we create as 'organised gatherings' through a risk assessed approach, including (but not limited to) sophisticated track and trace measures to ensure public safety is maintained, and we look forward to continuing that dialogue.

However, vital parts of the ecosystem needed to resume events in the UK will cease to exist in the coming weeks, with catastrophic employment consequences, if targeted Government action is not taken now.

We hope that you will look favourably on this proposal and we and our teams stand ready to work with your officials to develop this proposed package of sector support measures.

Yours sincerely,

Association of Event Organisers, Association of Event Venues, Event Supplier & Services Association & 334 Member Organisations (overleaf)

CC:

Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Events Industry Alliance Limited
119 High Street, Berkhamsted,
Hertfordshire, HP4 2DJ
Tel: 01442 873331
Registered in England 5645859