



Event Industry Alliance
119 High Street
Berkhamsted
HP4 2DJ

29th June 2020

The Right Honourable Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
11 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AB

Dear Chancellor,

We write on behalf of our members across the exhibition industry as; the Association of Event Organisers (AEO), Association of Event Venues (AEV) and the Event Supplier and Services Association (ESSA), in relation to the on-going catastrophic business impact our industry is facing with 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 55,000 direct 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 outside of the UK.

The relaxing of lock down measures was welcomed by many sectors last week, however, activities in exhibition and conference centres were 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. We estimate 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.**

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 that 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. Our members are keen to understand the science behind allowing certain sectors to open (particularly pubs, 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.

We have been asked by BEIS to conduct a survey amongst our members on the likely impact on employment as the furlough scheme comes to an end:

- 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 30,000 direct jobs lost, if a 'go date' isn't given in the coming days.
- 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.

Our members would welcome a meeting with you and your officials to provide more information and to elaborate on their challenges at this critical time, at your convenience.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Skeith,
CEO,
Association of Event Organisers



Rachel Parker,
Director,
Association of Event Venues



Andrew Harrison,
Director,
Event Supplier and Services
Association

CC: 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