



Event Industry Alliance
119 High Street
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 2DJ

4th March 2020

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

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

We write on behalf of the Association of Event Organisers (AEO), Association of Event Venues (AEV), and the Event Supplier and Services Association (ESSA), in relation to the immediate business impacts our industry is facing with COVID-19. Specifically, we write to seek your support in helping us retain confidence with our customers who are challenging and questioning their participation in events.

In the UK almost 1100 trade and consumer events take place annually, contributing £11bn to the UK economy via the participation of 9.1 million visitors and 178,000 exhibitors (20% being International). In addition, just 23 AEO members organise over 1,000 overseas events from UK HQ's which brings some £2.1bn of turnover into the UK economy, which puts them in the Top 10 Service Exporters.

All members are completely committed to public safety, support the government's efforts to contain and control the virus and are diligently implementing business continuity plans incorporating advice from all sources, including the WHO, FCO, DHSC and others.

However, members are facing a critical challenge as their customers (both visitors and exhibitors) are fearful of the virus and potential Government policies which may seek to close or control the number of people at events. Daily they are encountering businesses who are implementing travel bans (so therefore cannot participate in the event), and customers who are cancelling (or delaying decisions on) their participation fearful the event will not run. They welcome the significant work undertaken by the UK government to provide reassurance, including the creation of the Coronavirus Action Plan. Yet they are facing an urgent and critical issue with business confidence which is jeopardising their events which may take years to re-establish themselves (if indeed they can).

These challenges come at a particularly busy time of year for the events industry, with a disproportionate number of events taking place in the Spring. Around 40% of the events take place in this critical period attracting around 400,000 visitors, and over 70,000 exhibitors. Decisions on those events are being made now and are being impacted by current perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 and so the issue is highly time-critical.

The industry would significantly benefit from a proactive public message from the UK Government which can be used to provide confidence and encourage businesses to engage in our member's events, and that unless and until the situation worsens people should remain confident in attending organised events and there is no greater risks associated with attending events than any other significant gathering of people such as public transport, reflecting private messaging the industry has received from the Chief Medical Officer.

Our members would welcome a meeting with you and your officials to provide more information and elaborate on their challenges at this critical time, and would be available at your convenience. In addition, we are working on providing more research as to the impacts (and likely impacts), of COVID-19.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Most Respectfully,



Chris Skeith,
CEO,
Association of Event Organisers



Rachel Parker,
Director,
Association of Event Venues



Andrew Harrison,
Director,
Event Supplier and Services Association



Darren Johnson,
CEO,
Reed Exhibitions UK



Dan Thurlow,
Director of Exhibition Sales,
SEC



Martin Cairns,
Commercial Director,
Reeds Carpeting Contractors

CC: Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport, Heritage & Tourism
Elizabeth Truss, Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade