

Events Industry Alliance
119 High Street
Berkhamsted
HP4 2DJ
11th March 2021

Mr Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament St
Westminster
London
SW1A 2BQ

Mr Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria St
Westminster
London
SW1H 0ET

Dear Ministers,

Request for publication of information on the Events Research Programme

The Events Industry Alliance (EIA) represents the UK's event and exhibitions organisers, venues, and suppliers - a sector that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic was generating £11bn in economic activity and supporting 114,000 jobs. However, unlike many other parts of the UK economy, the exhibitions industry has been effectively shut since March 2020 due to national Covid-19 restrictions and faces additional unique challenges to resuming operations once restrictions are eased.

The exhibitions sector therefore welcomed the Prime Minister's statement on 22nd February 2021 and the associated Roadmap to Freedom document, however, we were surprised to hear about the creation of an Events Research Programme and further pilots, given the three successful pilot schemes delivered in September 2020.

Nevertheless, we understand that the Events Research Programme will be a crucial element in establishing an evidence-based, data-led framework that will enable our sector to resume large scale events on or after 21st June. In our numerous conversations with ministers and officials from your departments the EIA has expressed its willingness to work closely with the Government to ensure a successful delivery of this programme and this remains the case.

However, we are extremely dismayed that nearly three weeks after the Roadmap announcement the business events industry has not received any formal information from Government about the Events Research Programme.

The lack of any information on the Events Research Programme, and what areas it will examine, who is the Business Events representative on the group, what criteria it might place on events and when it will report, makes any planning by the sector impossible ahead of 21st June. Furthermore other sectors, with arguably less COVID secure measures in place (for example shopping centres and non-essential retail), are included within the roadmap without the additional requirement and uncertainty of the programme.

We therefore request the urgent publication of detailed information on the Events Research Programme along with the issuing of specific guidance as to when the events and exhibitions sector, one of the hardest hit by this pandemic, will be given clarity about the basis on which it will be allowed to reopen.

Specifically, we request that:

- Details are published outlining the factors that are being considered as part of the Event Research Programme;
- A date by which the outcomes of the Events Research Programme will be published is provided;
- The extent to which the Departments Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are collaborating on the development of the Events Research Programme; and;
- The extent to which your departments are consulting with industry on the Events Research Programme.

The UK exhibitions industry is a hugely viable sector and offers a unique platform for tens of thousands of UK businesses to meet customers, generate sales and create employment. However without the publication of this information our sector faces a further, and unnecessary threat to its commercial position.

Given that most major events and exhibitions require at least a three month lead time to take place, the Events Research Programme is an even more vital component of maintaining confidence in our sector than other sectors with similar research programmes. The lack of information is causing a crisis of confidence for many events and exhibitions that could conceivably take place after 21st June, with severe consequences for organisers, suppliers and venues across the UK. Publishing the outcomes of the Events Research Programme, either alongside or just prior to the reopening date, simply will not help this sector, as the decisions will have already been made by companies within the sector well in advance.

It is therefore vital that information, and a timeline, is published on the Events Research Programme without delay otherwise the sector will face a precipitous fall in confidence with a significant impact on the viability of many SMEs within our sector and further job losses.

We hope that you will look favourably on this request. The EIA, its constituent organisations and members stands ready to support the Government in the operation of the Events Research Programme, which we firmly believe will set a path to the sustained and safe reopening of our sector.

Yours Sincerely,



Chris Skeith
CEO
Association of Event Organisers



Rachel Parker
Director
Association of Event Venues



Andrew Harrison
Director
Event Supplier and Services
Association