



HBAA Executive Office,
Portland House,
1 Coventry Road,
Market Harborough,
LE16 9BX

18 March 2021

Nigel Huddleston, MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Sport, Heritage and Tourism
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Cc Theresa Villiers MP, APPG for Events

Dear Minister

I am writing as a representative of HBAA, a UK trade association with over 250 member companies in the meetings, events and accommodation sector. Prior to the pandemic, our members annually transacted over £1.1 billion of business on behalf of their corporate and public sector clients.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge your commendable support of the events industry through the pandemic, and in particular, your recognition of the events industry supply chain, which includes our 80 agency members. We have invited you to give a welcome address to our members at our Annual Forum in July and hope you will be in a position to attend.

Hospitality Restart Grants

Over the past year, our agency members have had to fight very hard for recognition as viable businesses that have been drastically, and in some cases fatally, impacted by the measures introduced by government to combat Covid-19.

We have all supported these measures and following the announcement of the recovery roadmap we are starting to see increasing optimism in the marketplace for a return to live events from Q3/Q4.

However, many businesses in our sector will by that time have seen no income for around 17 months and have been dependent on the furlough scheme and the grants available. They have faced all same issues as the pub, restaurant and other hospitality businesses and, allowing for the lead time required for events, they will be waiting many weeks longer than those organisations for income when business resumes.



We appreciate the moves that government has made to provide ongoing financial support across the board, but for our members, it is imperative that the supply chain – agencies which secure and manage meetings and events, and the venues which host business events - are recognised for the 'Restart Grants' being made available to hospitality, accommodation and leisure businesses as announced by the Chancellor in the Spring Budget, so that they too are able to plan and relaunch trading in the coming months.

Local authorities: discretionary business grant funding

Many of our agency members do not pay business rates and are concerned that this may preclude them from eligibility for these 'Restart Grants'. This then leaves them in the precarious position of relying on whether their local authority will recognise them as deserving of the discretionary business grant funding, to which the Chancellor has now added a further £425 million.

Evidence from our members and the wider industry shows that, when it comes to the events supply chain, there is a marked inconsistency in the way local authorities throughout England are allocating these funds. Our research found that 20 per cent of our agency members had not been able to access any grants and less than half have received support from existing schemes.

We know that you have previously championed the events sector as being a priority for discretionary funding and we are asking that you repeat this message and urge the authorities to act swiftly to support us further.

Targeted financial support: devolved administrations versus Gov.UK

When considering that discretionary funding is failing to reach our members, we must raise the approach taken by the devolved nations. We have received evidence this week from an agency which has received no financial aid for their operation in England and yet in Scotland, their company has been awarded a grant of £150,000 through the Scottish Government's 'Pivotal Event Businesses Fund'.

Another agency with offices in Wales has received £68,000 in grants from the Welsh Parliament.

It is so difficult to see that funds being given by our own government to the devolved administrations are being used to readily support events agencies in Scotland and Wales, whilst in England they are not recognised in the same way.

This point of disparity between the nations' approaches to our sector has been raised by both BVEP and Tourism Alliance, and we would now like to add weight to this as it is increasing the level of frustration across our beleaguered industry.



Minister, we are very grateful for your ongoing support and that of your DCMS colleagues who we appreciate are working hard to help our collaborative industry voice be heard at Cabinet level.

Just today, we are delighted to see DCMS confirm that venue site visits for business meetings and events will now be permitted in England from 29 March, a point we have been campaigning for as being critical to our sector's 're-openings' as aligned to Steps 3 and 4 of the 'Roadmap out of lockdown'.

We raise the three points covered in this letter as key areas of concern and challenge faced by viable businesses in our industry. We welcome your view on what more our members can do to aid their own recovery and feel their contribution to the £84 billion events industry is respected and recognised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juliet Price", written in a cursive style.

Juliet Price
Consultant Executive Director
HBAA