



Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP
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18 March 2021

Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP
Chair, APPG for events
House of Commons
London
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Our Ref: MC2021/04080/FL

Dear Theresa,

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 February to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, on behalf of the APPG for events, regarding the reopening of the events and exhibitions sector. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the department.

We are aware that the business events and exhibition sector and its supply chain has been severely impacted by government measures to control the spread of COVID-19. We also recognise that the current restrictions are having a further significant impact on the ability to trade.

On 22 February, the government published a [roadmap](#) which sets out how restrictions will be gradually removed in England. The roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country.

The government's COVID-19 Secure guidance for the [visitor economy](#) - which covers business events - will be kept up to date over the coming months, in line with the reopening process for the sector. The government's broader national restrictions guidance is [here](#). In addition, [this guidance](#) details how and when businesses will reopen in each step of the roadmap.

We seek to reopen business events and conferences in step 3, subject to a capacity cap. Attendees at outdoor business events will be capped at 50% capacity, up to 4,000 people. Attendees at indoor business events will be capped at 50% capacity, up to 1,000 people.

Step 3 will take place no earlier than 17 May, and at least five weeks after step 2, following a further review of the data and the four tests.

As part of our efforts to get these types of events back in full operation, we will launch the Events Research Programme to explore when and how large events can return with reduced social distancing requirements. Page 40 of the [roadmap](#) contains further information on this.

The government has continued to support businesses and individuals during this period of national restrictions - including through the extension of various government-backed loans, grants and the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will remain open until 30 September 2021. Employees will continue to receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked.

The fourth Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant - which will cover the February to April period - will be worth 80% of three months' average trading profits, paid out in a single instalment and capped at £7,500 in total. People who filed a tax return in 2019-20 are now able to claim the SEISS grant. A fifth and final SEISS grant will be available over the summer.



The government has introduced a range of grant schemes which I encourage businesses to explore. In the March Budget, the Chancellor announced new 'Restart Grants' of up to £6,000 per premises for non-essential retail businesses and up to £18,000 per premises for hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses in England. The government is also providing all local authorities in England with an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding, on top of the £1.6 billion already allocated.

Since Autumn 2020, businesses which are legally required to close due to the restrictions have been able to receive up to £3,000 per month Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme

Many eligible businesses in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors which are not required to close but which have suffered from reduced demand due to local restrictions will receive grants through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) scheme, with funding of up to £2,100 per 28 days. Local authorities are best placed to determine local needs for supporting recovery, and whilst the government has set suggested criteria for this funding, local authorities will be allowed to determine exactly which businesses to support.

On 5 January, the government announced [one-off top up grants](#) for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the spring. This is in addition to the monthly Local Restrictions Support Grants (Closed).

In January, the government increased the funding for the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme by £500 million, taking the total to £1.6 billion across England. This discretionary funding has enabled local authorities to support their local economies and help businesses impacted.

Local authorities can determine how much funding to provide to businesses through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme, and exactly which businesses to target. The guidance for ARG funding encourages local authorities to develop discretionary grant schemes to help those businesses which - while not legally forced to close - are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of COVID-19. This could include - for example - businesses which supply the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors, or businesses in the events sector.

It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for the ARG based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

From 6 April 2021, the Recovery Loan Scheme will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on eligible loans between £25,000 and £10 million to give them confidence in continuing to provide finance to UK businesses. The scheme will be open to all businesses, including those who have already received support under the existing COVID-19 guaranteed loan schemes.

Businesses and individuals should check Gov.uk to explore the full range of support measures available to them.

We are alert to significant challenges facing businesses and workers in the business events industry. We continue to engage with stakeholders, including through the Tourism Industry Council and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel, to monitor the situation.

Thank you again for your letter.



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