

SOS LONDON COLLECTIVE

Monday 13th July 2020

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Reopening is just the start: London's tourism industry issues an SOS

We welcomed the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statements recognising the impact of the Covid 19 crisis on the hospitality and tourism sectors in his address to Parliament last week. The VAT cut, for which our sector has long campaigned, coupled with the new Job Retention Bonus provide boosts to a sector in which a significant number of businesses remain closed but that normally employs 3.2m across the country, at least 700,000 being in London.

As a group of organisations whose activities both generate and rely on a healthy tourism economy in London and beyond, we are writing to you to urge you to take further immediate and decisive action to support tourism sector businesses as they rebuild and drive significant demand to London, affecting a positive revival of a lynchpin of the UK's economy.

Our capital is the heartbeat of Britain's tourism sector and the gateway to tourism across the rest of the country. London is an incredible city, blessed with abundant parks and outdoor spaces; attractions; culture; iconic locations; performing arts; retail and hospitality. It is a city that usually welcomes over 30m domestic and international overnight visitors each year, with 55% of all international visitors to the UK exploring London first-hand. However, the future of tourism in our global capital is in crisis and the fate of London's tourism sector lies in your hands.

London's tourism sector has been closed for more than three months and, even though some businesses have reopened, half of our peak season has already been lost, making it impossible for many across the sector to recover:

- Vital cash reserves have been expended to ensure visitor safety and hygiene.
- Government support schemes offered limited support: 90% of London hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses were not eligible for Business Rate Relief grants, having rateable values over the £51,000 threshold.
- The counter effect of public transport capacity being reduced has deterred local tourists to journey beyond their locality and will deter domestic and international visitors from booking a visit.

- The national tourism agencies for Britain and England have forecast a 48% drop in domestic tourism spend and 63% in international spend. The 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme, whilst welcome, is only likely to drive local demand and does not address the lack of domestic and international visitors in London on which businesses depend.
- Reduced capacity on national rail services poses limits on the economic benefits of domestic tourism until at least the autumn.
- Social-distancing restrictions are limiting entrance numbers and footfall capacity, and as a result impacting revenue opportunities.
- London welcomes 20m international tourists each year; twice the number of domestic visitors, with a considerably higher spend over longer stays. Despite easing of quarantine restrictions, it is late in the season and most international visitors will have already booked another location.

The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will become ever more evident with further business failures. There is an acute need for long-term support, clear strategic planning, and corresponding financial marketing resource to drive visitors and save tourism in London.

We know that London is a resilient, vibrant, and incredible city, which has bounced back from previous shocks. However, despite measures announced by your Government last week, it would be naïve to assume there will not be a severe impact on businesses, jobs and the economy; given that London tourism accounts for £15bn visitor spend. Our sector supports not only frontline jobs, but also a significant supply chain including retailers, manufacturers, food producers and distributors, event practitioners and organisers, performers, artists, cleaners, carpenters, chefs. These people are the fabric of London.

How can the Government help further?

- **Save Tourism:** We need immediate Government intervention to save London's tourism sector with a strategic capital-city-specific roadmap to recovery; developed with industry leaders to create local, domestic, and international action plans.
- **Organise Campaigns:** Fund large scale and substantial domestic and international marketing campaigns, with the spend and scale of those seen globally post-terror attacks, such as in New York post 9/11. When safe and appropriate, there must be a clear message to all Londoners, visitors and potential visitors conveying the openness and safety of London's public transport system, enhanced by incentive campaigns.
- **Support the Industry:** London tourism businesses need an extension to the business rates holiday for one year; an increase of the Business Rate Relief threshold from £51,000 to £150,000 and at least 9 months' rent relief support.

Without these measures, London's tourism sector may sink to a place from which it cannot

return, representing one of the biggest missed opportunities on Britain's road to recovery and prosperity. We call on you not to allow London's tourism sector to be mothballed, acting now will help to secure our future and retain our place on the global stage.

#SOSLondonTourism

Yours sincerely,
The SOS London Collective

ON BEHALF OF:

1. Merlin Entertainments - Nick Varney, CEO
2. UK Hospitality – Kate Nicholls, CEO - representing 350 businesses in London and a further 350 nationwide
3. Lastminute.com – Marco Corradino, Group CEO
4. Marriot Hotels – Ronny Maier Area Vice President
5. Rosewood Hotel London - Michael Bonsor, Managing Director
6. Millennium Hotels and Resorts - Clive Harrington, Senior Vice President Operations
7. London Bridge Hotel - Julio Marques. General Manager
8. Athenaeum Hotel & Residences on Piccadilly – Joanne Taylor-Stagg, General Manager
9. Park Plaza Hotels & Resorts PPHE - Greg Hegarty, Deputy CEO and COO
10. Tourism Alliance - Kurt Janson, Director - representing 60 Tourism Trade Associations, membership bodies and Destination Management Organisations 50:50 split London:National
11. ETOA European Tourism Association – Tom Jenkins, CEO - representing over 1,100 businesses most with London interests
12. UKInbound – Joss Croft, CEO - representing 200 London and 400 UK businesses
13. BALPPA British Association of Leisure Parks Piers and Attraction - Paul Kelly, CEO - representing 50 London and 420 UK businesses
14. FSB, Federation of Small Businesses - Rowena Howie, London Policy Chair - representing 8,000 London and 160,000 UK businesses
15. CTA - Coach Tourism Association John Wales, Chair - representing 300 companies, 10% are London based.

16. English UK - James Herbertson, Chair - representing 71 London members
17. BETA – British Educational Travel Association, Emma English, Executive Director - representing 120 businesses most with London interests
18. Sea Life London Aquarium – General Manager, Catherine Pritchard
19. Thames Clippers, Geoff Symonds, COO
20. The lastminute.com London Eye – Sunny Jouhal, General Manager
21. Big Bus Tours – David Stafford, Executive Vice President UK and Ireland
22. South Bank Business Improvement District – Govert Deketh, Chair - representing 200 businesses
23. Croydon BID (500 businesses) – Matthew Sims, CEO & Co-Founder of #RaiseTheBar campaign
24. Cocktail Pub Company – Andrew Taylor, Managing Director & Co-Founder of #RaiseTheBar campaign
25. Madame Tussauds London – Tim Waters, Managing Director
26. Golden Tours – Mikesh Palan, Managing Director
27. The London Dungeon - Catherine Pritchard, General Manager
28. Casual Dining Group, Bella Italia, Café Rouge and Las Iguanas, James Spragg, CEO
29. Wood’s Silver Fleet – Tom Woods, Managing Director,
30. South Bank Employers’ Group – Nic Durston, Chief Executive - representing 20 businesses
31. Shrek’s Adventure London - Catherine Pritchard, General Manager,
32. Made tourism marketing, Jonathan Mountford, Managing Director - representing 25 London theatres, 3 leading visitor attractions and 2 museums & The London Tourism COVID-19 Cooperative representing 33 of London most iconic visitor attractions, theatres, convert venues, restaurants, bars, museums, galleries and late night venues
33. Neds Noodle Bars – James Breslaw, Director
34. Fabric London – Luke Laws, General Manager
35. Hippodrome Casino – Simon Thomas, CEO
36. Florence Nightingale Museum London – David Green, Director
37. Santuario Restaurants – Maria Sundrica, Proprietor

38. Groupe Bleeding Heart - Robert Wilson, Proprietor,
39. Como Star - John D'ell Ross, Managing Director
40. MW Eat Ltd - Ranjit Mathrani, Chairman
41. The Mermaid London (Conference and Events Centre) - Richard Littman, Director
42. St John Group Food: St. JOHN SMITHFIELD, St. JOHN BREAD & WINE St. JOHN BAKERY,
St. JOHN WINES, - Trevor Gulliver, CEO and Founder
43. Duck and Rice Soho - Richard Littman, Director
44. Shuk, Borough Market – Richard Littman, Director
45. St. JOHN BRIDGE THEATRE, Trevor Gulliver, CEO and Founder