



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Paul Scully MP
Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

2 February 2021

Dear Minister,

Re: Support for the weddings industry.

We are writing to you as a cross-party group of MPs concerned at the situation facing the weddings industry.

A few weeks ago, the UK Weddings Taskforce presented a stark picture to us, with many of their businesses on the brink of collapse. This is despite pent-up demand and record bookings for the year ahead, worth £25 billion.

There are 60,000 businesses and 400,000 workers relying on this sector and it is worth an average of £14.7 billion to the UK economy each year. Yet it requires urgent attention and bridging support to stay solvent, fulfil upcoming bookings, maintain jobs, and boost the economy when restrictions are lifted. The industry has been able to postpone the majority of its 2020 revenue, but without confidence about when weddings can restart, at a reasonable capacity, cancellations are increasing and the ability of wedding businesses to survive is diminishing by the day.

First, the sector needs more information about the year ahead, including whether, after Easter, venues will be allowed more than 50 guests. Confidence is the most important factor in calculating spend, preventing cancellations and securing new bookings. Government engagement would not cost the Treasury and would help both consumers and the sector.

Second, the sector needs an urgent cash injection to keep it going until reopening. The Weddings Taskforce has identified that cash grants of up to £10,000 would support up to 38,000 wedding businesses to survive until 1st April, and grants of between £10,000 and £40,000 would support a further 22,000 businesses. This would cover the entire sector. In addition, many businesses have been unable to access loans due to uncertainty about viability. The sector requires Government intervention to encourage banks to assess wedding businesses as viable for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans Scheme (CBILS).

Third, maintenance of venues and services for consumers continues to be a high cost for venues unable to operate. Support schemes need to be extended to help the weddings sector, including the temporary VAT reduction to 5% and business rates exemption. Reducing outgoings can help the sector survive.

If there is no immediate sector support from the government, the current likely outcome is that thousands of wedding businesses and their suppliers will fail. Deposits for hundreds of thousands of future weddings will be lost, with up to 400,000 jobs at risk and lost tax revenue from VAT and PAYE. CBILS and BBL will be written off. There will be fewer

marriages, with significant societal impacts, including mental health impacts on couples, business owners and their employees.

If the government provides immediate sector support and a plan for reopening, as outlined, confidence will return and refund pressures on businesses will fall. Couples requesting refunds will then receive refunds, whilst all deposits for future weddings will be secured. Tens of thousands of viable wedding businesses will survive and hundreds of thousands of jobs will be saved. If supported through this tricky period, the industry can service all 2020 and 2021 bookings waiting to go ahead once restrictions allow – and the government receives tax take on over £25 billion of turnover in 2021.

We encourage your continued engagement with the UK Weddings Taskforce to find urgent solutions for the industry. There is clearly a bright future ahead, but we can and must help the sector get there.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Parish MP
Rt. Hon. Arlene Foster MLA
Rt Hon. John Spellar MP
Caroline Lucas MP
Steve Baker MP
David Doogan MP
Sammy Wilson MP
Rt Hon. Jeremy Wright QC
Rt Hon. Esther McVey MP
Ben Bradshaw MP
Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP
Siobhan Baillie MP
Edward Timpson CBE MP
Jim Shannon MP
Rt Hon. Maria Miller MP
Andrew Bridgen MP
Richard Drax MP
Dr Dan Poulter MP
Shabana Mahmood MP
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