



Meeting Notes - Events Industry Senior Leaders Panel

Tuesday, 23 June 2020 - via tele/video conference

In attendance

Name	Role / organisation
Nigel Huddleston MP	Minister for Sport, Tourism & Heritage, DCMS
Michael Hirst OBE	Chair, Events Industry Board / Business Visits and Events Partnership
Stephen Darke (Chair)	Interim Deputy Director, Heritage, Tourism and Cultural Diplomacy, DCMS
Ian Edwards	CEO, ICC Wales & Celtic Manor Resort, and the Welsh Government's nominated BTA Board member
Susan Jacques (<i>observer</i>)	Department for International Trade
Darren Johnson	CEO, Reed Exhibitions
Timothy Jenkins	(on behalf of Kerrin MacPhie), VisitBritain
Simon Kimble	Chair, Clarion Events
Francis Loughran (<i>observer</i>)	Assistant Director for Trade in Professional & Business Services, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Helen McCabe	Managing Director, BCD UK
Nigel Nathan	Managing Director, Olympia
Sheila Pardoe (<i>Secretariat</i>)	Tourism, DCMS
Simon Parker	Executive VP, Informa
Dale Parmenter	Managing Director, DRP Group
Julian Pullan	Vice Chair, Jack Morton
Jeremy Rees	CEO, ExCel Centre
Gareth Rogers	CEO, Farnborough International
James Selka	CEO, Manufacturing Technologies Association
Mark Shashoua	CEO, Hyve Group

Chris Skeith	CEO, Association of Event Organisers (AEO)
Rick Stainton	Group Executive Director, Smyle
Laura Stocken (<i>observer</i>)	Private Office, Minister for Sport, Tourism & Heritage
Paul Stoddart	Managing Director, CWT Meetings & Events
Ian Taylor (<i>observer</i>)	Managing Director, National Exhibition Centre
Mark Taylor	CEO, Queen Elizabeth Centre II
Paul Thandi	CEO, National Exhibition Centre
Dan Thurlow	Director of Exhibitions, Scottish Events Campus (SEC)
Michael Wryley-Birch	CEO, TRO Group

Apologies: Oonagh O'Reilly (ICC Belfast), Kerrin MacPhie (VisitBritain)

Introduction

- Stephen Darke opened the meeting and welcomed the Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage, Nigel Huddleston MP.
- The Minister thanked members for joining the call and for their ongoing engagement with the Tourism team, in particular around the development of sector-specific guidance.
- The Minister acknowledged 23 June would be a significant day for many hospitality and tourism businesses as it was publicly known the Prime Minister would make a speech about what could reopen from 4th July. He recognised that members on the call would be watching the announcement closely.
- He noted that several DCMS-led working groups had been developed to work with stakeholders on the guidance and thanked Michael Hirst for his efforts to represent the industry at the Visitor Economy Working Group [of which the Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage is chair]. The Minister also thanked Chris Skeith and the Association of Event Organisers for working hard and with the industry to develop guidance.
- The Minister said he knew the industry did not think it would be included in the 4th July reopening; he recognised that was disappointing for the industry. He said he was aware of the major concerns from the industry with the furlough scheme coming to an end in October.
- The Minister said he would continue to raise the event industry's concerns with departments and colleagues across government. The Minister thanked members again for their time and sharing advice on the call.

- Stephen thanked the Minister for his opening remarks. He asked Michael Hirst OBE, Chair of the Events Industry Board, to provide opening remarks.
- Michael thanked the Minister and Stephen for the meeting. Michael summarised points from his briefing paper, which was circulated before the meeting. Key points from Michael:
 - **The Business Visits and Events Partnership (BVEP) was continuing to lobby hard for greater recognition by Government of the events industry, including the need for guidance to be released immediately and for a reopening date to be announced;** he said without this, there would be catastrophic and irreversibly damaging consequences for the UK events industry.
 - That the **industry needs further economic support and the furlough scheme cannot drop off in June / end in October.**
 - The **industry should not be lumped in with “mass gatherings”** and that it **needed to be seen as organised, structured gatherings** which should be in the front of the queue for immediate reopening.
- Michael also **raised questions to the government**, which he said the industry needs answers to urgently. Topics included:
 - The government’s future intention of the 14-day quarantine policy;
 - Whether the government would consider a bold recovery plan for the industry.

The discussion

- Stephen asked members to provide advice on **what their businesses most urgently needed from the government.**
- Members offered advice: **the principal issue** was that **the lack of a reopening date from the government for the events industry was creating catastrophic consequences for the short and long-term future of the industry in the UK.**
 - **Members urged the government to announce a reopening date so the industry could do urgently needed planning (e.g. staff resourcing, future bookings, marketing etc).**
 - Members said that an ideal reopening date would be in Q3 or Q4 2020 but that this needed to be given imminently before thousands more jobs were lost.
 - They recognised they would need to adhere to the government’s social distancing measures at that time. They **made points to reassure the government that social distancing could easily be followed** (e.g. timed entry; enhanced cleaning, tracking and tracing all visitors to an exhibition centre or venue).
- Members made points on why the announcement of a reopening date was critical:
 - **The UK’s international competitiveness was falling behind other nations announcing reopening dates** (e.g. France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands,

Spain, Switzerland). When a country announces a future date for when events can take place (e.g. France where events can take place on 1 September) the industry can begin forward planning and event organisers are more likely to confirm postponed or tentative bookings in those destinations.

- **Failure to provide a date whilst other countries do would mean irreversible damage to the UK's short and long-term international competitiveness.**
- **Without a 'go-date' businesses cannot plan for future events, including those in Q4 or 2021.** This is mainly because consumer confidence is too low and cash flows too strained.
- **Waves of redundancies had already happened and industry estimated more than 30% more would be made** without a clear reopening date.
- Some members were **worried about the future of the events industry if corporations continued to pull business travel/attendance budgets;** members **asked the government to consider a research and development grant for the industry to further develop its 'hybrid event' offer** (e.g. events blending face-to-face and online attendance).
- Members asked the government to **reconsider the 14 day quarantine; in particular, to offer exemptions to countries where delegates tend to travel from** (e.g. the EU).
- Members reiterated (from previous meetings) that **the government needed to provide clear communications to the public to restore consumer confidence.** Members said that this was not just about the reopening date, but also for Ministers to reopen exhibition and event centres and show that the UK is open and safe for events.
- Members made the point that **the events industry is a 'super-marketing' platform for UK industries and trade shows could be seen as major non-essential retail;** members stressed that **without trade shows and exhibitions, the UK economy would not be able to recover as quickly.** **Members said that these shows create a trading platform for over 178,000 businesses.**
- Members said **the government needed to provide details on capacity/density limits;** members **urged the government to review the 2m distancing rule since many nations were implementing 1m distancing;** they stressed that **2m distancing would be very difficult to make financially viable when they did reopen.**
- Members said that, **in the absence of reopening indoor events for now, the government needed to focus on reopening outdoor events;** members **stressed that the UK outdoor events industry was internationally recognised and important for the UK economy.**

Closing remarks from the Minister for Sport, Tourism & Heritage

- Stephen invited the Minister to offer closing remarks.
- The Minister thanked members for their honest contributions. He said he heard clearly that the industry needs clarity around when it can reopen.
- The Minister summarised points raised by members.
- The Minister thanked members again for joining the call and providing advice. He encouraged members to continue to engage with the department. He said he was keen to meet again soon [*as planned, the Minister departed from the call*].

Any Other Business & Meeting Close

- Stephen invited members to raise points for Any Other Business.
- Michael Hirst said **Visitor Economy guidance would likely be published soon** [it was published on 27 June]. He stressed that **events are intrinsic to the success of the hospitality industry (e.g. filling hotels and restaurants); he urged the government to announce a reopening date for the events industry immediately and to publish the sector's guidance so that forward planning could begin.**
- Stephen thanked members for their time and contributions and encouraged continued dialogue.
- The meeting closed. The next meeting date will be announced soon.