

ELLIOT COLBURN MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

26 January 2021

Our Ref: EC9287

Dear Rishi,

RE: Night Time Economy

Thank you so much for your time yesterday, and for the opportunity to speak to you directly on behalf of people and businesses in my Carshalton and Wallington constituency.

Further to our conversations yesterday, you will recall that I wrote to you and to the Prime Minister on the 27 November in support of the night time economy more generally, but specifically to support three suggestions from Jeremy Joseph – the owner of the G-A-Y brand of venues – which we felt would provide vital additional support to this important sector of the economy.

This was subsequent to the debate I led in Parliament on the 9 November where I highlighted the impact that COVID continues to have on clubs, festivals, gigs, and the wider live events industry. I am also very concerned that a longer-term specific consequence of this pandemic may well be the permanent loss of LGBT+ friendly spaces in London, as venues struggle to weather the storm and survive.

Whilst circumstances have changed since my letter of the 27 November, particularly given the introduction of Tier 4 restrictions across the country, the situation faced by the night time economy is no less severe. If anything, it has grown more so.

I am writing to you to request urgent additional sector specific support to ensure the future of the many tens of thousands of businesses that make up the night time economy. Without such additional support, I join with colleagues in our shared fear that the sector will all but collapse with a consequential devastating economic, employment, cultural and social impact.

You have made unprecedented interventions to support the economy, and these have been warmly welcomed by the wider hospitality sector. However, I have heard from so many representatives of the night time economy who feel that they have fallen through the cracks in what is already available.

As you will be aware, the night time economy are those businesses that operate between 6pm and 6am, and includes our world-leading nightclubs, music venues, bars, pubs, and entertainment venues that offer so much to our cultural heritage. The contribution to UK Plc is staggering, with over £66 billion a year being contributed and supporting over 1.3 million jobs; there is also a vast supply chain and a huge number of freelancers, sole traders and skilled workers – all of whom depend on its continued success.

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However, so many of these venues have been closed since March last year with no meaningful opportunity to open and trade. Where venues have been able to open in a limited fashion, the considerable restrictions imposed upon them – particularly in terms of capacity, opening hours, and wet sales – have meant that income streams have been substantially reduced.

I have heard from so many constituents who work as freelancers and sole traders within the wider night time economy, all of whom have been excluded from the financial support that has been made available to other sectors and other workers. Owners of venues have told me of the crippling debt that they face, with the grim spectre of bankruptcy only weeks away and with it the loss of their business, their livelihoods, and even their homes.

The situation is dire, and those constituents who are affected, through no fault of their own, are pleading with me to make representations to you for additional financial support.

As a member of the APPG Night Time Economy, and on behalf of all those affected in Carshalton and Wallington, I would ask you to consider:

1. sector-specific grant schemes relating to the size and operating costs of each individual business;
2. extending the furlough scheme, Business Rates Relief, and reduced VAT rate;
3. Government-backed solutions to the commercial rent crisis to alleviate the burden of backdated rental payments;
4. a clear '*roadmap to recovery*' for the sector, including a clear timeline and a proactive consumer confidence campaign to stimulate and re-engage the market.

I know that you recognise the importance of the night time economy to the wider UK economy, and I do very much hope that you will give consideration to these proposals.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,



Elliot Colburn

Conservative Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington