



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

14 January 2021

Our Ref: EC9286

Dear Kwasi,

RE: Support for Pubs and Breweries

First of all, may I offer my congratulations to you on your new role as Secretary of State – I know you are going to be a huge success leading BEIS, and I look forward to continuing to work positively with you on behalf of businesses in Carshalton and Wallington.

I write on behalf of pubs and breweries in my constituency, and in particular on behalf of the British Beer and Pub Association with whom I have been working closely in recent months to address concerns in the sector about appropriate levels of support.

This letter is further to correspondence sent on 1 December to the Chancellor, subsequent to meetings with the Chief Executive of Stonegate Pubs, and following the response I received from Minister Solloway; copies enclosed for reference.

Landlords and brewers in my constituency are clear: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been nothing short of catastrophic. Pubs have either been closed or operating at a fraction of normal levels of trade for approaching 10 months. Beer sales in pubs (worth £14 billion per year) fell by over 50 per cent in 2020.

As we enter a further period of prolonged closure of the pub sector across the UK, I have been contacted by publicans, the pub businesses that support them, and the brewers that are reliant on them who have all said that they urgently need the Government to establish a survival and recovery plan.

The light at the end of the tunnel that a roadmap to recovery would provide is essential. Without such a roadmap then I fear that the pub and brewing sector – not to mention the 900,000 jobs it supports and £23bn in economic value it provides – will be at very real risk.

Many pubs will simply not re-open and crucial local jobs will disappear for good. This will be a tragedy for the health and wellbeing of those communities that pubs support throughout the UK.

It is vitally important that pubs and the jobs they support throughout the country are allowed to reopen in line with other similar parts of the economy as soon as the Government has hit its laudable target of vaccinating the most vulnerable. There can simply be no justification for reopening non-essential retail, or indeed other hospitality outlets, ahead of pubs.

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It would be wholly wrong to continue to reinforce the idea that pubs are somehow more responsible for transmission of the virus than other similar outlets. We must not lose sight of the consumer confidence issues that will be faced by pubs, and the role the Government can play in reassuring people that pubs are safe places to socialise once the vaccine has taken effect.

It is also important that we look again at the restrictions placed upon pubs before they are allowed to reopen. They must be allowed to reopen as fully as possible when the time comes. That means for example removing the requirement of a substantial meal if alcohol is being consumed, and of course doing away with the ineffective (in some cases counterproductive) policy of curfews.

As well as getting pubs reopened, and therefore giving the brewers that supply them an important route to market, I would urge you in the strongest terms to consider – in conjunction with Treasury colleagues – what wider support package can be put together to enable them to trade as strongly as possible.

As it stands, business rates reliefs, VAT cuts and the furlough scheme all come to an end at the precise moment we hope to be able to reopen the economy fully. Consideration should be given to extending these schemes, as well as cutting beer duty, to give pubs and brewers the kick start they need in 2021 after such a terrible 2020.

I look forward to hearing from you so that I can report back to my constituents.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elliot Colburn', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elliot Colburn

Conservative Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington

[Enc.]