

**Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP**

Prime Minister

**Rt. Hon Rishi Sunak MP**

Chancellor of the Exchequer



19<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

**RE: Give a #BusinessBooster to save our high streets, towns and city centres from extinction**

We are writing to you on behalf of over 100 destinations across the UK and 100,000 retail, hospitality and leisure businesses to urge Government to provide a #BusinessBooster and urgent assurances that financial support will be provided to these sectors.

It is imperative that the Government acts quickly by offering financial assistance and other necessary interventions to those experiencing disruption following rising cases of the Omicron variant and the impact of "Plan B" measures. With consumer confidence expected to drop below its current level of -15 amid growing speculation of an impending lockdown, the time for action is now.

There is clearly growing concern of a lockdown following the announcement of Plan B restrictions on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 which must be reviewed on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2021, two days prior to New Year's Eve. Businesses need certainty with many holding on to the glimmer of hope that New Year may bring.

The critical Christmas trading period is in tatters leaving businesses, particularly those within the hospitality, retail and leisure sector teetering on the brink of financial ruin and set to lose £4bn in sales. While we appreciate risks to health due to the Omicron variant, we cannot and should not forget the businesses who have had all but been shut down and want to continue trading safely.

Hospitality is the UK's third largest sector, employing 3.2million people [10% of the UK workforce] and produces £130 billion of economic activity. These sectors are vital to our economic recovery and the current measures in place do not reflect the current concerns faced by businesses across our great nation. We urge you to act in order to save our high streets from extinction:

We are calling on Government to

- **BUSINESS RATES RELIEF:** provide businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with 100% Business Rate Relief for up to and including 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 [no cap]. After which we call on the Government to support the recovery by providing businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a 50% Business Rate Relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 [no cap].

The current package of 25% Business Rate Relief was designed for an open economy, post Covid. The rise of the Omicron variant, increased restrictions and their impact on hospitality, leisure and retail require a response from Government that mirrors lockdown support.

- **VAT EXTENSION:** extend the current VAT reduction for the hospitality sector of 12.5% through to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 to allow the sector to respond and support the re-emergence of the UK economy.

The current rate of 12.5% allows businesses to achieve cost savings and most importantly of all for the economy and consumer confidence, not to pass the increased cost on allowing for the economy to recover once more in Spring 2022.

- **PROVIDE GRANTS:** introduce grants up to £15,000 by rateable value to businesses within the hospitality, retail and leisure sector to enable them to survive in light of a festive trading period in tatters, a bleak outlook for the new Year and the impending rent quarter date of 25th December 2021.

The quoted £250 million in unspent grants is not consistent in level and would place disproportionate pressure on business simply because of their location. Vast swathes of businesses would simply not receive a penny.

In addition to the measures recommended, we are seriously concerned that the freelance and self-employed community which upends the hospitality, retail and leisure sectors have so far during the pandemic been largely overlooked. We therefore propose the introduction of a Discretionary Grant Fund of up to £7,500 per claim that will ensure this community is appropriately supported.

We represent one of the largest networks of businesses across the United Kingdom. Business improvement Districts alongside our partners including UKHospitality, British Beer and Pub Association and Night Time Industries Association are clear that action must come forward now to prevent a catastrophic chain reaction to the future of our economy.

We would urge you, your Government, MPs from all sides of the aisle to consider carefully the impact and potential loss to the economy if no action is taken to prevent the crisis we now all face economically.

We understand that business groups are being invited to share insights to Government, and proposed this is extended to the Business Improvement District industry. This will provide you with the opportunity to learn of the challenges town and city centres are currently facing, and work collaboratively together on suitable solutions during this challenging time.

In doing so, we hope this will provide greater clarity and the need to consider how the Government might support these sectors further.

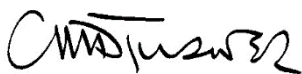
We appreciate the pressures facing Government economically but failing to act not only see thousands of businesses go to the wall but the real prospect that billions of previously allocated Government funds going to waste simply because we did not act to save our economy.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



**Matthew Sims**  
Chief Executive  
Croydon BID and Co-Founder of #RaiseTheBar



Christopher Turner  
CEO, British BIDs



Ojay MacDonald  
CEO, ATCM



Bill Addy  
CEO, Liverpool BID  
Chair, BID Foundation

Amy Lane  
Night Czar, Greater London Authority

Michael Kill  
CEO, Night Time Industries Association

Emma McClarkin  
CEO, British Beer & Pub Association

Andrew Taylor  
Managing Director, Bart & Taylor

Jace Tyrrell  
CEO, New West End Company  
Chair, Association International Retail

Business Improvement Districts and town centre management partners:

Croydon BID  
New West End Company  
City Co Manchester  
Manchester BID  
Sheffield BID  
Norwich BID  
Liverpool BID  
GO! Southampton BID  
Destination Bristol  
Bristol City Centre BID  
Bournemouth Coastal BID  
Love Hastings  
Chester BID  
Manor Royal BID  
Winchester BID  
Sunderland BID  
Salisbury BID  
Heart of London  
Bath BID  
We Are Waterloo BID  
Angel BID  
Preston BID  
Edmonton Green Limited  
Colmore BID  
Positively Putney BID

Hull BID  
Uxbridge BID  
Jewellery Quarter BID  
My Milton Keynes BID  
Bilston BID  
Purley BID  
New Addington BID  
Reading Central BID  
Reading Abbey Quarter BID  
Kippa BID  
Your Eastbourne BID  
Yorkshire Coast BID  
Stoke on Trent City Centre BID  
Brixton BID  
Stockton BID  
Camden Town Unlimited  
Bromley BID  
Orpington 1<sup>st</sup>  
Booksellers Association of UK and Ireland  
Kingston First  
Marble Arch London BID  
Paddington Now BID  
Bognor Regis BID  
Love Hoddesdon BID  
Southport BID  
Canterbury BID  
Worcester BID  
North Notts BID