

Mr Nigel Huddleston MP
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Dear Nigel,

Thanks again for your time on Wednesday. I appreciate the effort you and your officials have devoted to understanding the issues affecting the amusement machine industry and the wider hospitality and gambling sectors. More generally the support from Government is going to give many businesses a good chance of getting through this crisis in some form.

There are still, however, a number of issues on which we would appreciate your help.

1. **Support for the leisure industry supply chain.** I have mentioned this many times on our calls. There is a real danger that those businesses exclusively in the leisure industry, such as machine manufacturers or suppliers of machines to pubs, will not get through this crisis. Their income has reduced to zero too. They receive none of the support rightly afforded to the customer-facing end of the supply chain. That support could well be in vain if these businesses re-open again and they can't get the supplies to meet demand and then cease to exist as a result. Extension of the rates relief scheme in some form to the industry's supply chain, reduced or tapered, might just be the lifeline they need.
2. **Grants for leisure businesses over £51k RV cap.** There are a number of leisure businesses just over the £51k. They are facing exactly the same pressures as those below the cap and they are no better placed to survive this crisis. We appreciate that there needs to be a limit and would suggest therefore that a tapered relief could easily be brought in that would limit the cost to the Treasury.
3. **Scotland and Wales rates relief and grants.** We would very much appreciate your help in persuading Welsh and Scottish Governments to follow your lead and make it clear that betting offices, casinos and gambling clubs are part of the leisure sector. Our AGC operators are entitled to the relief but are being told in Scotland and Wales that they are like betting offices and are not eligible. Bingo halls do get it. Wales essentially adopted the English scheme but has never updated it as was the case in England three weeks ago. This is obviously an issue for all betting offices and casinos too. We fully appreciate that this is a devolved matter but your support would help in our lobbying of the devolved administrations.
4. **Local Authority and Gambling Commission Fees.** We would also welcome an indication from you to local authorities that they take a reasonable approach in relation to premises licence fees. Rather like Gambling Commission fees, local authorities are relying on the current legal understanding that prevents them from issuing rebate or extensions. If a legal change is possible for them and indeed for the Gambling Commission to vary their fees and provide even the smallest amount of additional help that would clearly benefit everyone in the sector. In the meantime however, a letter to local authorities similar to that issued by the Justice Minister regarding licensing, would encourage a more helpful approach to the setting of fees for licences next year for those businesses that survive the crisis.

You also asked for feedback on current Government support schemes. These are generally working well subject to the above.

Our only other concern has been the slowness with which banks have provided CBILS loans and their refusal in some cases for unreasonable reasons. In particular some banks have refused loans because companies operate in the gambling sector. This has been a feature of some banks' CSR policies for some time and has caused some BACTA members difficulty as facilities have been withdrawn. However in the case of CBILS it is not for banks to impose their own CSR policies upon loans intended to keep businesses operating through a national crisis and for which the government has guaranteed 80%. The Treasury should make that clear.

You also asked what plans the sector has for the recovery. I attach a paper that sets out the on-going support the sector will need to survive. It is particularly important for seasonal businesses that support

is not withdrawn too soon. Seasonal businesses will not see any meaningful income until Easter next year and will therefore need to be helped well into Summer 2021 as it looks like most of this season is going to be lost.

We also set out the measures businesses in the sector will adopt to ensure social distancing and good public hygiene. These measure should give confidence to Government, staff and customers that our venues are safe places to visit.

I would very much welcome your feedback on our proposals.

My thanks again for your support and I look forward to speaking with you again shortly.

Yours sincerely,



John White
Chief Executive of bacta