

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

August 2021

Dear Government

Thank you for contacting me about support for the travel industry.

I fully appreciate your concerns and the seriousness of the situation for the whole UK travel industry, which I recognise has faced significant challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am pleased that all accommodation and hospitality in England has reopened fully and, following our transition to Step 4 of the roadmap, restrictions have been lifted in time for the summer holidays. I imagine that when indoor accommodation and hospitality reopened in Step 3, many livelihoods were restored and since then travel businesses have been focusing on their recovery.

On international travel, I am pleased that, following the publication of the Global Travel Taskforce's report which contained recommendations on how international travel can resume safely, the Government announced that international leisure travel has resumed. To protect public health and our vaccination programme, strict border controls have been put place and as such people returning from 'amber' or 'red' list countries for leisure currently have to self-isolate on their return and follow other requirements in the Government guidance. I am pleased that, since 19 July, the Transport Secretary has confirmed that fully vaccinated passengers no longer have to self-isolate on their return from 'amber' list countries, therefore in essence making it the same requirements for travellers to 'green' list countries.

In addition, since 2 August passengers fully vaccinated with vaccines authorised by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Europe and the USA will be able to travel to England from amber countries without having to quarantine on arrival. These measures also give the go ahead to the restart of international cruise sailings.

I am delighted that these new changes have immediately boosted the travel industry and given travel businesses certainty to plan ahead for the summer.

I am pleased the Chancellor has extended and expanded business support schemes to help businesses during this difficult time. For example, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended until the end of September 2021 to protect jobs over the coming months as we begin our recovery.

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In addition, the Chancellor announced further financial support in the Budget, including reduced VAT rates for hospitality and tourism businesses and a one-off Restart Grant for eligible businesses of up to £18,000.

If applicable, I would also encourage businesses in the travel industry who are facing cashflow or other financial difficulties to explore the Government-backed loans and guarantees that have been made available. While the original Covid-19 Government-backed loan schemes have closed for applications, the Recovery Loan Scheme launched on 6 April and is available to support eligible businesses as they reopen with loans of between £25,000 and £10 million, 80 per cent guaranteed by the Government.

I have been reassured by colleagues that the UK Government has been engaging with both the package travel sector and consumer advocacy bodies to assess the impact of cancellations made due to the coronavirus outbreak.

While I do understand the reasons why travel companies are calling for bespoke help, I hope the £25 billion support which has been made available for all travel industry businesses who have struggled has been of some assistance.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Abe