



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/10908/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
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Dear Jack

Thank you for your letter of 4 August seeking my views on a petition from Matthew Sutton about the significant financial effect of the pandemic on the travel and tourism industry.

I note the petition refers to the various travel restrictions that impacted these businesses stating they were the worst effected and least supported sector. They also call on the Welsh Government to devise a plan for helping the industry survive the pandemic. The petition refers to certain restrictions still being in place which, of course, is no longer the case following our move to alert level zero on 7 August.

Firstly, the Welsh Government recognises the difficulties and challenges which the travel and tourism industry faced, and continue to face in some instances. This is why we have made unprecedented levels of funding available to support businesses through the pandemic, including through the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) and the non-domestic rates (NDR) linked grants and discretionary grants which were delivered by local authorities. To date we have provided more than £2.5bn in financial support, safeguarding more than 160,000 jobs. This is in addition to a full 12 month rates holiday package for those in the hardest hit sectors. The measures we have taken are in addition to those provided by the UK Government, such as the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, Job Retention Scheme and Bounce Back Loans.

I can confirm that the coach industry was eligible to apply for ERF and did so, including under the Sector Specific Fund. A 'Coach Operators Fund', along the lines as that set up in Scotland, has not been necessary in Wales due to the number of financial support packages made available here.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In addition, early in the pandemic eligible businesses could apply to the Covid-19 Wales Business Loan Scheme delivered by the Development Bank of Wales (DBW) which provided loans of between £5k and £250k at favourable interest rates. The DBW continues to have loan and equity funding available for Welsh businesses and an additional £270m has been allocated to the Flexible Investment Fund. This means more than £500m is available through the fund up to 2030 to support the long-term success and sustainable growth of our firms, in turn creating and protecting thousands of Welsh jobs.

The last ERF package of support is designed to meet operating costs between 1st July 2021 and 31st August 2021 and therefore support businesses beyond the move to alert level zero on 7 August. It will be the final package of emergency support for those that are able to trade, unless Wales re-introduces closures or very significant trading restrictions. We will, however, closely monitor the impact on businesses, while noting further international travel related restrictions continue to be eased.

Looking to the future the Welsh Government is looking to establish a Business Development and Recovery Fund to help businesses recover, develop and grow. Further details will be announced on the Business Wales website in the coming weeks

I think this demonstrates the significant level of support afforded to the sector. I know from our stakeholders meetings that travel and coach operators in Wales have managed to secure support through these funding support mechanisms. Feedback from a recent stakeholder meeting from one coach operator was: *“Welsh Government have out-stripped other nations and support and guidance have been very good”*. We also have other positive feedback from the sector.

Regular engagement with the sector throughout the pandemic was important and Visit Wales met the Welsh coach holiday operators, Confederation of Passenger Transport – Cymru, Coach and Bus Association Cymru, Road Haulage Association and Coach Tourism Association to discuss and address issues facing this particular sector. Recovery plans beyond the emergency financial support and safe re-opening are being shaped through this group.

We are now focusing on a reconstruction mission – that is taking forward the Recovery Plan for the sector ([“Let’s Shape the Future”](#)) published in March, and many of the interventions covered in this Plan are already being delivered or are in progress. We are aligning the plan with the new Programme for Government commitments, and have the further aim of the Recovery Plan acting as a bridge back to our Government’s priorities for the visitor economy, and one of the aims of which is to develop tourism all-year round in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AS/MS
Gweinidog yr Economi
Minister for Economy