

7th May, 2020

Dear

I am writing as a matter of urgency concerning the current state of the wedding industry, due to the COVID 19 outbreak and the lockdown's consequent effect on my business.

The wedding industry is worth £10bn to the UK economy and, like many sectors, is buckling under current conditions. With around 252,000 weddings taking place per year, the impact is extraordinary. Hard working family businesses and a myriad of indirect suppliers to the industry, many in this constituency, are in grave danger of going under.

Redundancies, many in rural areas, and the emotional effect of the cancellation and postponement of a huge number of events, will have an intolerable effect on the wellbeing of hundreds of thousands but also an enormous impact on the long term finances of the UK.

Along with the Association of British Wedding Businesses (ABWB), I would like to ask for the following issues to be urgently considered:

1. Wedding / Event Insurance

Currently insurance companies are resisting payouts for both couples, the costs of rescheduling dates, and for business through business interruption insurance. This has grown significantly worse following the CMA announcement last week, protecting the rights of consumers for full refunds.

Under the current circumstance of COVID 19, the CMA making the venues fully responsible for the consequences of the virus, with no help from the insurers, is not acceptable or right. We ask firstly that you help to persuade the insurers to help our industry, and second that the CMA water down their very narrow interpretation of the consumer rights.

2. Emerging from Lockdown

We believe that the wedding industry has some unique characteristics which require special dispensation with regard to emerging from the lockdown. These are:

1. Weddings are the most important day of a couple's life, and celebrating them has a direct effect on the wellbeing of all attendees and therefore the nation.
2. Weddings are invite only which means that guest lists are already in place and track and trace is significantly easier and GDPR compliant than for gatherings where there is no information about who is attending.
3. Venues are used to ensuring that each day goes without a hitch and that also applies to our attitude towards health and safety. As an industry, we have developed a sophisticated plan to ensure that weddings can still take place with the necessary precautions taken to limit the

spread of COVID 19.

We therefore very much hope that Weddings might be prioritised as a sector by the Government. As an industry we are ready to fulfill weddings of a viable size as soon as possible, and we would hope with numbers increasing from August onwards.

Not only are weddings the most important day of many people's lives, they also make an enormous contribution to the wellbeing of society and to the rural economy. And, it is worth pointing out once more, that as 'exclusive' guest-list driven events, such gatherings are unique in being able to record and manage the attendee list.

3. Treasury support

If we are unable to re-open our venues until after July, as an industry, we will need further financial support to avoid businesses from going under, and the mass redundancies that will likely ensue. Without continued financial support the cost to the Treasury will be substantially increased, due to unemployment costs, and the reduced tax take.

We are proactively seeking solutions and strategies to avoid this situation but would ask for help in representing our case to the Government in the event that we are unable to host weddings from July.

If you have time, please do take a look at the webinar on this issue with Harriett Baldwin MP, [\[https://hostology.co.uk/webinar-series/\]](https://hostology.co.uk/webinar-series/) to familiarize yourself further with the situation.

As you will see Harriett is sympathetic and it would be wonderful if you can raise this further with both the CMA, the FCA, and those in the government who are planning the phased exit from lockdown.

We have worked tirelessly to establish our business and our continued collective enforced closure would be devastating not only to us but also to the many suppliers in our constituency. All of our livelihoods depend on these critical decisions being made over the next few weeks and we will be very grateful for your support.

Very best wishes