



Transport Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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Robert Courts MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House,
33 Horseferry Rd,
Westminster,
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Ref: Government support for UK travel businesses

9 December 2020

Dear Robert,

I have recently received representations from tour operators and travel agents who were previously well-run profitable businesses, but are now sadly on the verge of collapse as a result of the pandemic. These businesses face some of the same obstacles as those in the aviation sector. However, given that many tend to be small to medium sized businesses their needs are often different and they feel their voices have not been adequately heard during the crisis. Some of their main concerns include:

- **The Government's travel advice and restrictions have severely limited the ability of UK travel agents and tour operators to trade.** Travel businesses have faced significant restrictions on their trade over the last nine months due to the Government's advice on foreign travel and its quarantine restrictions. Travel agents and tour operators had little opportunity to recover this summer and some do not expect their revenues to significantly improve until Easter 2021.
- **Airlines and insurance companies' refusal to offer refunds and compensation.** In some cases, travel agents and tour operators have been left as the "underwriters of last resort" because some airlines and insurance companies have refused to refund or compensate passengers during this crisis.
- **Difficulties accessing Government support.** I have been informed that travel agents and tour operators' ability to access financial assistance from Government has been limited and, in some instances, restricted, such as access to the Local Restrictions Support Grants.

I would be grateful if you could set out how exactly the Government is addressing these concerns in order to ensure the continued viability of our tour operators and travel businesses, including any specific policy or regulatory changes you are considering to support the industry. For example, I would welcome your views on whether a temporary suspension of the Package Travel Regulations could help



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alleviate the pressures on tour operators and travel agents when insurers have refused to pay compensation. I would appreciate a reply by **Tuesday 12 January**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Merriman'.

Huw Merriman MP
Chair of the Transport Committee