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Rachel Reeves MP  
Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

26<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Rachel,

Thank you for your letter of 24 March (appendix 2 below).

You made the serious allegation on Twitter (see below, Appendix 1) that Wetherspoon had "(at) first refus(ed) to lock down (its pubs) altogether."

As you must be aware, that is completely untrue - we closed our pubs as soon as it was ordered by the government.

It was also disappointing to see your inaccurate and misleading Twitter comments (Appendix 1) that Wetherspoon "refused to pay its 40,000 employees until it receives its Govt loan."

In fact, less than 48 hours after pubs shut, I said that staff would be paid this Friday (27 March) and would then move to the government furlough scheme - even though the scheme was not yet in existence and the only information we had was the Chancellor's press release.

You will note that many companies, usually through no fault of their own, did not have the resources to commit to the furlough scheme, hence at least half a million have been laid off in recent days.

Whereas Wetherspoon has committed to the furlough scheme, I wasn't in a position last Sunday to promise to pay 40,000 staff before the government paid us, because the company did not have the financial resources to make this promise - some debt-free or large multi-nationals did, of course.

I've spoken to eight of our banks in recent days, and indeed they have been very understanding and helpful, but anyone with frontline business experience will tell you that taking the banks for granted and pledging money you don't have is a one-way ticket to the bankruptcy court.

If you would like to join our daily finance meetings, as our amazing and dedicated team negotiate the rapids of the crisis, you are most welcome - it might be an educational process regarding the practical realities, and harsh choices, of running a business with no money through the tills.

You also misunderstand the furlough scheme and refer to a "Govt loan". In fact, there is no loan involved in the furlough scheme, as your officials will confirm.

Events have moved on this week and the government, helped by the heroic efforts of Kate Nicholls of UK Hospitality, Jonathan Downey and others, is moving mountains to get the furlough scheme up and running in an incredibly tight timeframe.

Indeed, in order to assist, Wetherspoon has drawn up its own suggested rules (appendix 3) as to how the scheme might operate, which will answer most of the questions in your letter.

It's understandable that some journalists and Twitter commentators could misinterpret the above information.

However, it's wrong for the chair of an important government committee to make these mistakes and to add hugely to the pressure on businesses firefighting on the front line.

It may be you have no experience of running a business at the sharp end, and you may therefore underestimate the practical realities we're dealing with.

Our aim, inter alia, is to preserve 43,000 jobs, to continue to pay £750 million of various taxes per annum (£15 million per week) and to try and ensure that the company can endure a potentially long closedown.

Everyone, including the government, is in a situation of unprecedented difficulty. Wetherspoon, no doubt like your committee, is making a conscientious effort to do the right thing at this time.

I would be happy to make these points directly to your committee at any time.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Martin

CHAIRMAN - JD WETHERSPOON PLC

(Dictated by Tim over the telephone & issued in his absence)



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