

**Written evidence submitted by Austin Mckinlay, Managing Director,  
Universal Image Systems Ltd**

**Main points made in submission**

- a) Business rate relief is not available to the exhibition sector despite being confirmed as available by the Chancellor in the house of commons on 17<sup>th</sup> March
- b) The exhibition sector is devastated by Covid 19 and will be until post-vaccine
- c) Business rate relief should be available to companies who have furloughed their staff. Companies that remain trading (staff not furloughed) , for example supermarkets , should have rate relief withdrawn or reduced

**Introduction of myself and my company**

I am the managing director and founder (25 years as a limited company) of a company who produce graphics and displays for the exhibition sector. Reason for submitting evidence is because businesses like mine are being asked to pay business rates and we have no income to do so as our market has disappeared with Covid 19. My other reason is that I feel (and many other) that there are businesses in the retail sector who are trading successfully (supermarkets, food stores, pharmacies, diy) who are being given business rate relief and shouldn't be . This is a waste of public money which should be stopped or reduced

**Recommendations for action by the government**

I want the government to Confirm business rate relief to the exhibition sector and a withdrawal of rate relief to the retail sector businesses that have remained open during the covid 19 crisis

**Evidence**

Regarding supermarkets please see phot of Sunday time article on 26<sup>th</sup> April

Dear Treasury Committee

28.4.20

## Economic impact of coronavirus

I would like you to read my email to Mel Stride below. Specifically I feel my email seeks to answer your questions below copied from your site. My email seeks to point out the Business Rate Relief Scheme needs revision and should include companies involved in the exhibition sector

Andrew Griffiths MP asked the Chancellor in the house of commons on 17<sup>th</sup> March about whether support for the hospitality and leisure sector would be applied to the exhibition sector. In the video below at 1hr and 27mins he replied yes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UG4do83CFUk>

However at the moment this help is denied to my business and many of my customers. We need your help. We are falling down a gap

## **Support to businesses and Financial services**

- How effective has the Government support been so far in terms of coverage and speed?
- What gaps are there for businesses within the schemes?

Dear Mr Stride

28.4.20

My business is on its knees. Our market place of international and national exhibitions and events has gone and probably for 18 months – post vaccine.

All my staff (8) are furloughed and in the next few months when the furlough scheme is lifted I will have to make them redundant as we will have no work.

I am being asked by Colchester Borough Council to pay business rates but I have no income. A lady within the council called Sam has been as helpful as she can be, but her hands are tied by the bad decision made by the Treasury and their lack of desire to correct the mistake of the Chancellor – see attached letter from Treasury justifying decision. Thanks also to my MP Will Cozens for trying to seek change.

In one years' time I expect CBC will increase business rates to recover the money lost this year for the rate relief given to businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure section. Some of this relief is just in my opinion.

But what is really not fair, is that supermarkets & food stores have free rates for 1 year and business is booming. Business rate relief should be targeted at businesses who have furloughed their staff and not be being given to businesses who are open and trading.

I am so angry about this.

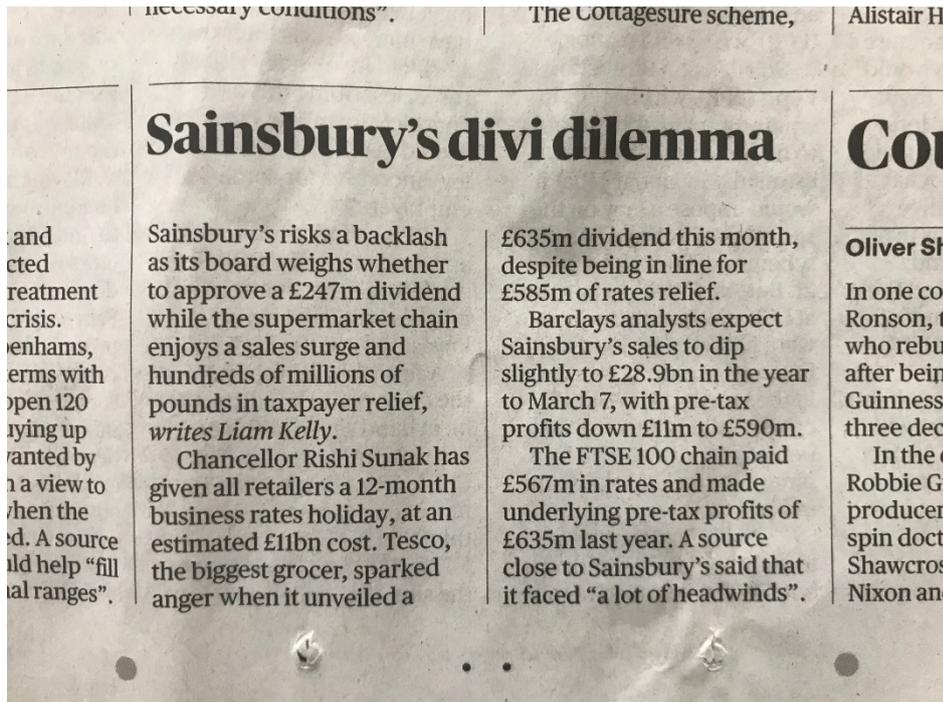
Please help me and the many other manufacturing businesses who are suffering. Businesses like mine have contributed massively to the financial welfare of our local towns and government.

We need support and I want my council to fight for my business and not fight against me in court in 2 months' time when we are unable to pay business rates because we have no income.

**And so I ask Adrian Pritchard** , the Chief Executive of CBC to bang the door down of the government and change this decision or to refuse to collect business rates from companies like mine. Adrian you need to take a stand and stand up for your businesses who have contributed so much (26 years in my case) to this area and frankly made the business of running this successful town so much easier for you.

This email is being widely circulated to all media outlets as I need someone to hear us and help us if you wont Mr Stride. But I hope to hear from you despite the fact I wrote to you last wednesday and have not had an answer yet

evidence form Sunday times 26<sup>th</sup> April



April 2020