

Written evidence submitted by the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association

Covid-19 impact on snooker

- What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?

The biggest impact is the postponement of all snooker events and closure of all snooker facilities included the offices of World Snooker (events commercial body) and WPBSA (governing body)

This means all income for the remainder of the financial year has been lost which impacts the governing bodies ability to provide activity for all areas of the sport globally. Significant losses will be posted on this year's accounts.

Professional players have lost all income so the governing body has offered financial support packages to assist them in these tough times. This is on top of the loss of income caused by no events.

Officials and third party self employed workers in the sector have lost all income. Snooker facilities have all closed so there is a risk that some clubs may not survive a long stop in trading.

- How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?

The Furlough job retention scheme has assisted some salaried staff in both the commercial body (World Snooker Tour) and governing body (WPBSA) retain their positions without loss of income.

However the nature of the self-employment of players, some officials and third party stakeholders such as announcers, security and table fitters have been deeply affected by income loss without fitting any scheme the government has offered.

Some clubs have received support but as majority of clubs are privately owned meaning support has been small grants, business rates relief, deferred VAT payments and furlough of staff.

- What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?

The long term impact will all depend on the duration of the lockdown.

If large gatherings are ruled out for significant periods of time there will be substantial impact on the ticket revenue that generates income for the

commercial body, this in turn will directly affect players income as self-employed sports people.

The way the sport of snooker is structured means the governing body receives less income if the commercial arm is not profitable. So long term impact could be loss of jobs, reduction in grass roots development projects for female/disabled inclusion and reducing player support benefits such as mental health support schemes.

The clubs will be impacted by a potential reluctance of people to gather in social spaces. This may apply particularly to people over 50.

- What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?

In the view of the WPBSA, snooker needs to be dealt with and consulted as a sport much the same as all others. Reportedly there has been lots of dialogue with football and other sport authorities and the government but minimal with snooker as a sport despite being a great British global export.

In terms of lessons we believe there should be further and quicker consideration of self employed people. Individual sports people are unique in the financial income and so needs a special considered model.

- How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?

DCMS will need to support the sector on providing specialist travelling status for declared healthy sports people to enable delivery of international events that will not involve sports people being quarantined for significant periods either side of events.

However as a sport organising an international calendar there will need to be more consideration of added restrictions by different countries that may now been implemented so scheduling will need to be based on locations open to freer movement.

Sport facilities will need to adapt and work with social distancing measures and clear guidance from DCMS for the sector will be needed in advance.

Support for sports on an even footing for the application for sport persons visas. Changes to the process should be introduced to ease the applications for sports persons restricted by national borders and potential restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.