

Monitoring report: 13 March 2020

Overview

- Chancellor Rishi Sunak delivered the government's Budget announcements including a significant spending package to mitigate against the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a reform of the Government's business rates policies. Heart of London has written to the Chancellor in response to the Budget, suggesting further business rates relief.
- The Mayor of London welcomed the government's economic package to support businesses and individuals in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, but noted that those working in the gig economy are likely to require further support.
- The BBC interviewed local buskers raising objections to the proposed restrictions on street performance in Westminster.
- London Theatre Direct published advice to theatre-goers advising that it remains safe to attend shows and performances in the West End following the COVID-19 outbreak.

Monitoring

Overview	Detail
<p>Chancellor Rishi Sunak delivered the new government's first Budget.</p> <p>(11 March Press release)</p> <p>(13 March letter from Heart of London to the Chancellor)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amid the current COVID-19 pandemic, it was announced that Small businesses will be refunded for sick pay payments for two weeks and be able to access "business interruption" loans of up to £1.2m as part of a wider £12 billion fund to mitigate against the impact of the virus on businesses and individuals. • Business rates will not have to be paid by firms in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors with a rateable value below £51,000 for the coming year. • A long-term review into the overall future of business rates will also be undertaken by the government. • Funding to support the rollout of new rapid charging hubs for electric cars was also announced, to ensure drivers are never more than 30 miles away from being able to charge their vehicle. • Over £1bn from the Transforming Cities Fund was also allocated to invest in urban transport. • A new plastic packaging tax will also be introduced from April 2022, charging manufacturers and importers £200 per tonne on packaging made of less than 30 percent recycled plastic. • Heart of London has written to the Chancellor in response, suggesting a three months moratorium on business rates for the bricks and mortar leisure, hospitality and retail sectors.

<p>The Mayor of London has welcomed the economic measures put forward in the government’s Budget announcement.</p> <p>(11 March Press release)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has welcomed the announcements outlining the government’s economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. • The Mayor stated that the support package from Bank of England “shows the Government is taking the economic consequences of coronavirus seriously”. • Khan, however, warned that the UK economy is poorly placed to manage after “a decade of austerity”. It was also stated that the lowest paid Londoners may require further support, particularly those working in the gig economy.
<p>Buskers have raised objections to the proposed restrictions on street performance in Westminster.</p> <p>(12 March Article)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A BBC news report focused on two musicians who fear that plans to introduce busking licenses in response to noise complaints could stop them performing in Westminster. • The musicians cited the likes of Ed Sheeran and Passenger who began their musical careers busking as examples of the virtues of street performance. • It was also claimed that the imposing of registration and a limited number of performance sites would diminish cultural life in the West End. • Whilst it was recognised that some street performers do draw justified complaints, it was claimed that 90% of buskers did not cause any issues and would be unfairly impacted by the proposed restrictions.
<p>London Theatre Direct has sought to reassure the public that it is still safe to attend the theatre in the West End.</p> <p>(12 March Article)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Theatre Direct has advised that, in line with advice from the NHS, it is still perfectly safe to attend shows in the West End. • Whilst it was advised that members of the public remain vigilant in adhering to NHS guidelines on how to avoid catching or spreading the coronavirus, it emphasised that shows and events were not being cancelled as a result of the virus. • The article also highlighted that The Society of London Theatres and UK Theatre were in constant contact with the government to ensure that appropriate advice and actions are enacted when required.

Consultations

Deadline	Consultation	Location
30 March 2020	Westminster City Council website survey	Link

5 April 2020	Westminster City Council Cultural Strategy 2020-24 Heart of London will be responding. Follow the link or contact corporateaffairs@heartoflondonbid.co.uk for more information.	Link
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Events forward planner

Date	Organisation	Event	Tickets
16 March 2020	Westminster City Council	Open forum public meeting These regular public meetings provide an opportunity to discuss your issues about life in Westminster. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet members will also be present to answer your questions.	Free
19 March 2020	Westminster City Council	Get your business ready for change Our renowned EU and business experts will give advice on how best to prepare for the changes resulting from Brexit, planning to make sure your business is resilient and can adapt as needed.	Free
24 March 2020	WCC	Air Quality Action Day We welcome anyone who is interested to come along and help educate more drivers about engine idling. Joining an action day is a great way to make a difference to air quality on your community.	Free
18 April 2020	New London Architecture	West End & Soho photography tour Join architectural photographer Grant Smith on a bespoke photography tour of the West End and Soho.	£14

Meetings planner

Date	Meeting	Location
16 March 2020	WCC Planning Environment, Highways & Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee	Link
17 March 2020	WCC Planning Applications Sub-Committee (I)	Link
	WCC Housing, Finance and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee	Link

	GLA Oversight Committee	Link
18 March 2020	GLA Police and Crime Committee	Link
	GLA Planning Committee	Link
	GLA Budget and Performance Committee	Link
19 March 2020	WCC Licensing Sub-Committee (I)	Link
	GLA Economy Committee	Link