

16 November 2020

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State

### Central London's recovery post Covid-19

I am writing as the Chief Executive Officer of the Heart of London Business Alliance (HOLBA). By way of introduction, we act on behalf of businesses and property owners in the area surrounding Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Piccadilly & St James's. As well as being hosts to some of London's landmark attractions, we operate services that help keep the area clean, safe and welcoming – supporting all those who invest, work, visit and live in the locality area.

As you may be aware, the businesses operating in central London, particularly in our world-class cultural and hospitality sectors, have been particularly heavily hit by Covid-19, and London itself has been recovering more slowly than other UK cities such as Manchester, Edinburgh or Birmingham. With footfall down by over 50% following a dramatic decline in commuters, domestic visitors and international tourists, many central London businesses face an uncertain future.

London is resilient and we know that Covid-19 will not last forever. However, there is real and significant worry that even as restrictions get eased, the process of getting people back into central London will not be immediate, and there will need to be a concerted effort from businesses, local Government and national Government to persuade people to return to London.

One key strand of that will be a large-scale advertising campaign to market London as a world-class global destination in 2021, once restrictions are relaxed. We believe that the best way to do this is through the continued use of London & Partners, the international trade, investment and promotion agency for London. The value that London & Partners has added since it was set up in 2011 is incontrovertible: 142 million people have been inspired through visitlondon.com, over 66,000 jobs have been created or supported, over 2000 overseas companies have been helped to set up or expand into London, and this has cumulatively added over £2.2bn to London's economy.

Yet London spends considerably less on promotion than other competitor global cities – Paris and Berlin spends more than double, Singapore spends over ten times as much – and, for a city that accounts for 53% of international visits to the UK, getting overseas visitors back will have a transformative effect, not just locally, but nationally too. Therefore, as the country begins to look at measures to help the public finances, increasing our capability in this important area will provide a significant economic boost.

Increasing London's promotion capability will be one of the quickest ways to get London firing on all cylinders and helping the national economy, and I hope you will be able to reflect this in your ongoing work with local Government on the economic recovery from Covid-19. To that end I would be very keen to meet with you or your officials to discuss how we can help London in the critical period that lies ahead.

Yours sincerely,



**Ros Morgan**  
Chief Executive Officer

Heart of London Business Alliance

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