

25 May 2021

Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Dear Ms Reeves,

**Re: Congratulations and Manifesto for Reopening**

I am writing to you as the Chief Executive at Heart of London Business Alliance (HOLBA), to offer my congratulations on your recent appointment as Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer.

By way of introduction, HOLBA acts on behalf of over 600 businesses and property owners in the Heart of London – the area surrounding Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Piccadilly & St James's. We welcome your outline of an ambitious plan for jobs and the economy in your first parliamentary speech as Shadow Chancellor. We also echo your call to make sure that town centres are thriving and prosperous, and for a levelling of the playing field between online retail and the high street.

We share your desire to see the UK economy flourish once again and deliver on jobs for all, and we believe that Central London has an important role to play in driving this recovery. Contributing 7% of England and Wales' total employment and generating 19% of England's total business rates revenue, it is a vital engine of jobs and growth for the UK. **A strong London recovery will drive a strong national recovery for jobs, growth and wealth distribution.**

It is with this in mind that I am sharing with you our plan for London's return: our [Reopening Manifesto](#). The plan gives voice to HOLBA's businesses and property owners in London's West End, each of whom has a key stake in the commercial and cultural wellbeing of the area, with an economic contribution of £4.6bn GVA including an immeasurable cultural contribution to London and the whole country.

The past year has been immensely challenging, so it was fantastic to see businesses in London and the West End begin to open their doors again. Our businesses have worked hard ahead of reopening to ensure a Covid-secure environment for their customers so they can play their part in helping London bounce back. However, with the most recent figures showing footfall in the West End still down 65% on 2019, there is much more to do.

The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on Central London, as its great strength as an interconnected global hub has, in the pandemic, also proven to be one of its greatest liabilities. As an interdependent ecosystem with many businesses reliant on each other to draw people in, it is critical that London's footfall returns soon. HOLBA has no doubt that central London will come back to life, but there are ways to accelerate London's recovery which we would be keen to discuss with you.

To give London's businesses the best chance of survival, they need ongoing support. This is why HOLBA is calling for a **bespoke recovery plan for London to kickstart its economy** once more, promoting the UK capital as a great and safe place to visit with incentives for office workers to return, and ensuring public transport is clean, safe and accessible. HOLBA have formulated a plan of action, which you can read in further detail in the attached Reopening Manifesto or through this [link](#). In particular, London needs:

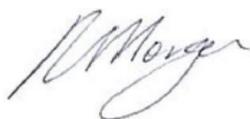
- transport to be an enabler, not a barrier - driven by a safe, affordable and accessible transport offering;

- the return of domestic tourists - supported by incentives such as culture-specific vouchers and discounts;
- the return of the workforce - underlined by Government encouragement following Covid relaxations;
- the return of international business and tourism when safe – spurred by a marketing plan for London and streamlined visas for high-value overseas visitors;
- specific help for the cultural sector’s reopening, via a government-backed contingency insurance scheme to protect against further unscheduled closures and ensure live events have the backing they need to open in uncertain times;
- a scheme to help landlords and tenants reach workable, reasonable solutions around commercial rent arrears incurred during the pandemic;
- investment in London’s jewels - including in live events, public realm, vacant space, and reforms to tax-free shopping and Sunday trading hours.

Our plan is rooted in the needs and insights of our members, and extensive consultation across Central London’s community, providing the manifesto with a mandate for implementation. We have worked closely with London First, whose recommendations in their new report [Renew London](#) are in lockstep with our own. These include a large scale campaign to bring people back to Central London; a long-term sustainable funding solution for TfL; and a business-led re-skilling programme to support people whose jobs have been displaced by the pandemic. The report sets out a costed plan which could create £8-12 bn in additional intake for the Treasury, helping support important public spending programmes.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure that the Government implements the policies that will best drive prosperity for London and the UK. I hope you find our Manifesto helpful and we **would be delighted to meet to discuss this further**. Congratulations again on your appointment and I hope to speak with you soon.

Yours sincerely,



**Ros Morgan**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Heart of London Business Alliance

Att’d: HOLBA Manifesto for Reopening