

The West End's asks of Government to support recovery

- 1. Transport** – *encourage people to use trains, tubes and buses.* People need confidence to travel on our public transport to return to work and to visit the West End. Extensive cleaning, mask wearing, social distancing and staggered times of travel all make the transport system safe to use. The Government and transport operators should actively promote greater use of safe public transport.
- 2. Consumer confidence** – *encourage more people back into the West End.* The West End needs more visitors to minimise business closures and job losses. The Government is sending unhelpful mixed messages. The Prime Minister says go back to the office, but the Chief Medical Officer says work from home. The Health Secretary, citing above-average COVID-19 infection rates for shop workers as a reason for compulsory mask wearing in shops, sends the false message that shops were unsafe places. Official messaging should actively promote confidence and encourage people to return to offices and high streets.
- 3. International visitors** – *attract more high spending international visitors.* Around half of the £12 billion retail sales in London's two International Centres is to overseas visitors. The pandemic has halted this spending, and it is unlikely to return until early 2021. Deteriorating diplomatic relations with China, the world's biggest tourist spenders, adds to concerns about this hugely important market. The airbridges announced to date allow entry from countries that account for less than 10% of international visitor retail spending. We need to prepare now for the strongest possible return of international visitors. Government should remove unnecessary quarantine restrictions, extend tax free shopping to visitors from the EU, worth up to £1.4 billion in additional annual sales, match Schengen visitor visa improvements for high-spending Middle Eastern visitors and lift Sunday trading restrictions in International Centres.
- 4. Business support** – *extend businesses support for companies still unable to operate effectively.* Reopening with no visitors creates additional business costs with little income. The Government needs to support these vital economic elements in the short term with continuing targeted businesses support. High street businesses that have not yet seen visitors return need the current business rate holiday extended beyond April 2021.
- 5. Planning, licencing and regulation** – *greater flexibility to enable recovery and growth.* In the short-term businesses need the flexibility to operate within social distancing regulations, including the use of indoor and outdoor space and lifting of Sunday trading restrictions. In the longer-term, high street use-classes need greater flexibility to enable evolution in response to structural changes, accelerated and exacerbated by COVID-19. We support the measures introduced in the Business and Planning Bill and seek greater use-class flexibility as part of the forthcoming planning policy paper.

The West End's asks of the Mayor to support recovery

Restore confidence for visitors, workers, businesses by:

- Asking TfL to explore as a matter of urgency other temporary ways in which it can enable much larger numbers of people to travel into central London safely.
- Making a clear announcement on the date of opening of the Elizabeth Line to give confidence to West End businesses and investors as they make their longer-term business decisions.
- Working closely with Westminster City Council to ensure that we get the best possible outcome to the Oxford Street District Transformation project