

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

09 November 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

As representatives for business in the UK, we are writing to welcome the work of the Global Travel Taskforce and to stress the importance of an effective and viable testing regime for the UK's economic recovery – a programme that is more important than ever amid the announcement of a second national lockdown.

The objectives of the Taskforce and intention for a testing regime allowing early release from isolation for international travellers is a vital step in supporting the UK's connectivity and the economic growth it supports, from tourism to business travel and trade. It also comes at a vital time as international travel has effectively been curtailed from the UK under the latest lockdown restrictions.

Speed of implementation is key, recognising that international arrivals testing regimes are already operating in major European economies including Italy, France and Germany. These past weeks we have already seen the announcement that Charles de Gaulle Airport has overtaken London Heathrow as the busiest airport in Europe and IATA has also warned the UK is at risk of losing its status as the 3rd largest aviation market globally – it is vital a testing regime is in place by the end of the current restrictions.

With the UK also fast approaching December 31st and the end of the transition period, it is more vital than ever that we look to preserve our competitiveness on a global scale.

In the Government's consideration of a testing regime, we understand it will be looking at the minimum period of quarantine necessary for release on receipt of a negative test result. Public Health is and should continue to be the priority for Government in its assessment and we would ask Government to consider all accredited research. We note for example that modelling by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine shows that a test at day 5 will capture a majority of infected travellers – 88%.

For economic recovery, the difference between intervals of a test & release for arrivals from day 1, day 3, day 5 or 7 will make a significant difference in appetite to travel. Research from Visit Britain for example shows that of the top 5 EU countries by visitors, 90% of travellers stayed in the UK less than 7 days. This picture is also stark for our biggest economic partner – the US – with 75% of visitors staying less than 7 nights when travelling to the UK. The need to act to preserve transatlantic trade is more vital than ever, with research showing £121bn in UK exports to the US is at risk, reflecting the typical significance of goods by volume being transported in the hold of passenger planes.

In sum; the work of the Travel Taskforce and implementation of a new testing regime represents a positive first step in supporting UK business and economic recovery. For a regime to be truly effective however, it must keep up on a global scale and not be reflective of studies at one moment

in time, but a rolling review which can capture new technological developments such as rapid testing. There is also a vital distinction in the impact for economic recovery with passenger appetite to travel in the event of a “isolate and test” model at 5 days or 7 days – we would ask Government to consider this in the course of its review.

Thank you once again for your work through this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Barnes, CEO, Association of International Retail

Craig Beaumont, Chief of External Affairs, FSB

Joss Croft, CEO, UKinbound

Duncan Edwards, CEO, BritishAmerican Business

Ben Fletcher, Executive Director Policy & Engagement, Make UK

Kurt Janson, Director, Tourism Alliance

Kate Nicholls, CEO, UKHospitality

Mark Tanzer, Chief Executive, ABTA

Jace Tyrrell, Chief Executive, New West End Company

Jasmine Whitbread, Chief Executive, London First