

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
1 Horseguards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

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Last week, Conservative Devon MPs met online to discuss the current situation in the county and how we can best work to support residents and businesses.

It was clear from our discussions that ensuring the economic strength of our region both now and post-Coronavirus is essential, and we are grateful for the measures already implemented by you and your team.

However, as local MPs, we also wanted to raise the three main concerns raised by local businesses and individuals with you directly.

### **Business Grant Distribution**

We are facing some anomalies with the system as it currently stands; fishermen and businesses such as self-employed anglers are not covered by the current schemes; in some instances, second home owners have been receiving business grants; many of the county's small businesses rely on dividend payments and where this is the sole source of income for a business owner, the current system is not providing them any financial assistance.

We would ask for urgent consideration of how these anomalies can be addressed to benefit the highest number of businesses and employees in Devon as possible. We are aware of schemes in other parts of the country to support industries such as fishing and would ask that similar schemes to be put into place in England.

### **Furlough rules and impact on seasonal workers**

Several industries in the county rely on seasonal workers, often employing the same people each year from March - October, for example, farming, fishing and tourism. The impact of Covid-19 means that not only are these employees unable to work their usual season, the current furlough rules mean as they were not on payroll on 28

February 2020, their employers cannot cover the costs of their normal wages through the Job Retention Scheme. With visitors to the county over the Easter weekend down by 85% you can see the scale of the impact on those employed in the tourism industry in particular.

We would ask that those employed on a seasonal basis by the same employers year on year might be included within the Job Retention Scheme. We believe their repeat employment would be possible to prove via PAYE and provision within the furlough scheme provided as a result.

### **Clarification regarding charity employees and essential volunteering**

We welcome the financial support available for charities. However, we have been hearing that some large local charities, especially those working with animals such as zoos, are finding it difficult to reconcile the ability to furlough their staff with maintaining vital services using volunteers. Given the skilled work required to look after endangered species, being furloughed from one charity and volunteering for another is not always possible.

We are asking if a way round these issues can be found to ensure that no charity, especially those also providing a key tourist offer to the county, is put in financial difficulty or forced to make difficult decisions regarding the welfare of the animals in their care.

Thank you for all the work you are doing to ensure the country's economy is as strong as possible both during this Coronavirus outbreak and when and when we see the end of Covid-19.

Yours sincerely,

**Sir Gary Streeter MP**