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**An open letter to the Prime Minister from Blackpool’s tourism economy\***

As businesses operating in Blackpool’s visitor economy, we wish to draw your urgent attention to the crisis facing our local tourism industry.

Within days of Tier 3 restrictions being introduced in Lancashire on October 17, the immediate impact on Blackpool has been catastrophic.

The timing of the announcement could not have been worse, falling on the eve of Blackpool’s two most critical weeks of the year; a period that can account for up to 20 per cent of total annual income for some of our businesses.

The fact that we were given just eight hours’ notice of some of those restrictions coming into effect created a perfect storm of chaos and mass confusion amongst people who were unsure as to where they could travel, and what they could and could not do, leading to a collapse in consumer confidence.

Within hours, most of us were looking at cancellations on an unimaginable scale.

As a direct consequence, hotels and guest houses that should have been full during this October half-term period lie virtually empty. Many have lost all of their bookings for the rest of this year and beyond, and fear the loss of their homes and their livelihoods.

The large attractions that employ substantial numbers of local people are operating with dramatically-reduced numbers of visitors and with expenditure far outweighing income.

The supply chains that rely on a thriving tourist economy have seen their income all but disappear.

A promenade that is normally a vibrant place with people enjoying the last hurrah of the traditional tourism season is deserted.

The consequences for a place where the tourism economy is the economic lifeblood, worth in excess of £1.6bn, supporting more than 25,000 jobs and by far the town’s single biggest employer, are potentially devastating.

Without further and immediate intervention, there is the very real prospect that large numbers of businesses, many of them independently-owned hotels and guest houses, will not survive beyond the year-end.

The myriad of attractions that underpin Blackpool and which have invested so heavily in reinventing our tourism offer these past few years find themselves in uncharted territory.

The irony is that these are the self-same businesses that throughout this pandemic have endeavoured to do the right thing to support the public health imperative and help prevent the spread of the virus by creating an environment where the economy could safely reopen.

So many of us are working tirelessly during this pandemic to put in place and maintain measures to create a COVID-safe experience for visitors, residents and our staff. Our accommodation businesses readily opened their doors to help protect the homeless during those early stages.

We understand and appreciate that a negotiated pan-Lancashire financial settlement has been made, but the reality is that it is nowhere near enough to support those businesses that have been forced to close, in addition to those who are expected to continue to trade against a backdrop of cancellations and nil consumer confidence.

When Blackpool’s share of that settlement is set against the scale of the problem that needs to be addressed, it is entirely disproportionate.

As business people we absolutely recognise the fundamental importance of beating coronavirus so we can all start to return to some vestige of normal life at some point. That goes without saying.

But we also recognise that there is a tipping point for resorts such as Blackpool – and unless there is Government intervention, the likelihood is that we will have no foundations on which to build when the process of recovery begins.

Our hope is that you will understand that a one size fits all solution does not work in every case – and certainly not in ours.

We have a unique product here, one that is loved and cherished by so many generations of British people. It is a product that defines Blackpool.

All that we ask is that you and your Ministers work with us, our MPs and our local authority over the coming days and weeks to provide a comprehensive package of aid that will ensure that our businesses, large and small, will still be around to welcome the next generation in the years to come.

***\*This letter is endorsed by individual businesses and organisations that represent a combined total of more than 1,000 businesses in Blackpool. A full list is provided overleaf.***

**ENDORSED BY:**

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