



The Nationwide Caterers Association
Lakeside, 180 Lifford Ln, Britannic Gardens,
King's Norton, Birmingham B30 3NU
0121 603 2524

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to thank you for the support offered to the hospitality industry and for the assurances that discussions with trade bodies will begin imminently.

We are a trade body that represents **6,500 independent food & drink businesses who feel forgotten by government at this time.** 85% of our members are **mobile caterers** and directly employ over 20,000 people. It is clear that the support measures announced for the hospitality industry yesterday do not apply to them as they do not usually qualify for business rates being mobile. Furthermore, the planning permission restrictions that have been lifted do not apply to mobile caterers either.

The independent mobile catering and bar sector is in a state of emergency and needs your help.

The vast majority of our customers are seasonal, around half of our customers only work in festivals and events and as such, it is likely to be next April before they start earning again. Almost all of these businesses will close or mothball. A significant number have huge sums of money tied up in festival deposits and it is not clear that the festival sector will survive this summer or even return next summer. Even if events postpone or manage to operate towards the end of summer, festival tickets sales have fallen off a cliff, so any profit that may have come from events / festivals will be drastically limited due to likely poor attendance.

Many of these businesses will not take on additional debt in the form of loans and therefore there is a significant need for grants to be made available to enable mobile catering businesses to cope with short term cash flow issues.



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In light of the huge challenges that face our sector, we are exploring alternative opportunities to enable our members to still trade at some level. The street food sector is reporting back that at least half of businesses would be able to operate as takeaways either as delivery 'black sites' using existing market spaces or on roadsides or car parks in communities from vans, but as takeaways or deliveries however, **trading restrictions must be lifted in order for mobile caterers to trade in this way.**

This could also provide a method for government to provide sustenance to people struggling such as OAP's, people in social care or on benefits. Mobile caterers could cook affordable healthy food for communities, enabling hot food provision or delivery to those most in need. The mobile catering industry is here to support the government's efforts to protect the British public through these unprecedented times, we will do our bit, but we can't do that if the sector shuts next week for good.

We currently operate an emergency catering service for Western Power in the event of power cuts or extreme weather - we are able to source caterers at extreme short notice who can then provide food to those affected communities. We can provide this service for those in need, emergency workers and the 1.5 million children who are potentially threatened with losing their free school meals.

We released a survey this week to our members in order to gauge the severity of the issues our sector is facing. So far, 75% of respondents do not know if they are eligible for business rates relief, members have had up to in excess of 15 events cancel, more than half have seen a 75-100% reduction in enquiries and bookings, 80% of members are not clear about access to government finance support, nearly 60% are looking at temporary closure and 65% feel that the current situation will lead them to close their businesses. Importantly 68% of current



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respondents feel that government grants could help to ensure their survival (we can provide updates as we gather more data).

We are asking that you provide clarity as soon as possible as to: a. how you intend to support our sector including access to grants, b. whether you can lift trading regulations regarding street trading licensing for mobile caterers and c. whether or not the emergency catering provision is something that you wish to adopt.

Our members are making decisions including closures and redundancies right now. We therefore please urge you to respond and act accordingly - there is no time to lose.

Yours Sincerely,

Alan Fox

Managing Director
The Nationwide Caterers Association