



04 August 2026

Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London, SW1A 2BQ

cc Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee
Martin Rhodes MP, Chair All Party Parliamentary Group for Events

Dear Secretary of State,

Congratulations on retaining your role. We hope the coming months bring the opportunity to build on your work to date, and we write in that spirit.

Business events, which include trade shows, exhibitions, conferences, congresses and meetings, are a £33.6 billion UK sector, delivering economic value, jobs, trade exports, inward investment, research and innovation to every part of the United Kingdom. Rarely does this sector write to government with a single voice. We do so now as its leading trade associations, joined by our largest venues, our biggest organisers and the suppliers who stage world leading events.

Time after time, successive governments have not afforded our sector the recognition it merits. Business events have been treated as a subset of the visitor economy, or as a lesser relation of cultural and sporting events. Those have immense value, but we are fundamentally different. Ours are the events where

deals are signed, exports are won, knowledge is shared, innovations are delivered, new technologies are brought to market and investment decisions are made. They are key moments in the commercial, professional and academic calendars of some of the largest organisations operating around the world, who invest significant sums to secure a presence, build relationships and reach customers, suppliers, investors and partners. They play a crucial supporting role across some of the UK's fastest-growing sectors, including those identified in the Industrial Strategy.

The global business events market is worth \$1.6 trillion and growing. The UK's position in it is not fixed. It can be expanded, or it can be eroded, and with the right approach from government we can attract and host more of these world-class business events and extract more value from every one of them.

But what is the right approach? The cross-party Culture, Media and Sport Committee has spent the past year interrogating that very question, consulting extensively with industry. We jointly gave evidence to that inquiry and were pleased to see the report published on 6th July, with a clear set of proposals for government to consider. Among its recommendations, it calls for ministers to:

1. Take a more structured approach to attending major events
2. Transfer responsibility for the sector to the Department for Business and Trade (now DBIST)
3. Commission a dedicated business events strategy, providing the coherent, joined up thinking that many of our competitors in the EU already benefit from.

The recommendations also include reversing the cuts made by VisitBritain to its business events team and the withdrawal of its Business Events Growth Programme. By VisitBritain's own figures, that programme delivered a 35:1 return

on investment and £60.6 million in direct economic return since 2018, from a total government investment of less than £1.8 million, attracting 167 business events to cities across the UK, from Aberdeen and Glasgow to Sheffield, Liverpool, Cambridge and Newport. It was disappointing that the sector was not consulted before the decision was taken.

We are now the only major economy without a fully funded national business events team, operating with a smaller team and budget than Ireland, France, Germany, Spain and some twenty other European competitors. That hands them the advantage in a growing market, and it puts at risk the government's own stated ambition of 50 million international visitors by 2030, given that visitors attending business events account for 17% of all visits.

The Committee's recommendation to move the sector to DBIST fully reflects the role that business events play. They are not major events, nor are they tourism. They drive innovation and trade, exports and inward investment, jobs and skills, supporting business and communities across the country. The Prime Minister has rightly made growth in every postcode a defining ambition of this government, and he should look no further than this sector. Take your pick of these cities: Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Oxford, Sheffield, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Newport, Cardiff, and of course traditionally, London. These are destinations with business events at their very heart, drawing exhibitors, buyers and delegates from across the country and around the world into those cities that would not otherwise see them, and putting money directly into hotels, restaurants, transport and the supply chains that serve them, as well as bringing knowledge, skills and innovation to local communities.

Supported properly, this sector can deliver significant growth. On behalf of the entire business events sector, we urge you and your ministers to implement the

Committee's recommendations in full, and to support and develop our world-leading event economy.

We stand ready to work in partnership with all departments to achieve it.

Yours faithfully and on behalf of;

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