

THOUSANDS OF BUSINESSES ISSUE CALL FOR ACTION TO AVERT LONDON TOURISM CRISIS

- More than 10,700 London tourist attractions, restaurants, hoteliers, travel bodies and event organisers urge Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, to aid the recovery of the capital's tourism industry or face the economic consequences
- The 'SOS London' campaign launched today at the London Eye with a plea for the Government to **S**ave Tourism, **O**rganise Campaigns, **S**upport The Industry
- Tourism is vital to the London economy and the sector is the second biggest employer after financial services

Monday 13 July: After months of closure and already halfway through its peak season, the London tourism sector has today joined forces to urge the UK Government to act now or face an economic crisis in the capital.

The 10,776 London attractions, restaurants, hotels, industry bodies and event organisers have written to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, to urgently kickstart the capital's tourism sector and aid its recovery through investment and a clear strategic plan to welcome back tourists.

Led by Merlin Entertainments and with the support of trade associations including UKHospitality, Tourism Alliance, ETOA and UKinbound the '*SOS London Tourism Collective*' believes action is vital to ensure London tourism is at the forefront of the post-lockdown recovery and guaranteeing long term success for destinations, attractions and businesses across the capital.

A key priority which the '*SOS London*' campaign would like to see the Government address is a committed and rapid investment in both domestic and international marketing campaigns, positioning London as a safe and welcoming tourism destination. An extension to the business rates holiday by another year is also called for – otherwise seasonal businesses in the hospitality industry could get hit with an end of year bill when cash reserves are at their lowest.

Sunny Jouhal, General Manager of the lastminute.com London Eye, said: "The measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week are hugely appreciated, but we now need to look further ahead to tackle future challenges. Tourism in the capital is in crisis due to three months of London effectively being closed, even with the ability for some businesses to reopen, the industry is already half-way through its peak season making it impossible for many across the sector to recover.

"We're launching SOS London with a wide selection of industry partners to take collective action and ensure the London tourism sector survives. London is practically empty and there is no concrete plan for recovery in place. If the UK Government does not act now, we will see one of the biggest missed opportunities on Britain's road to recovery and prosperity."

Tourism is vital to the London economy and the sector is the second biggest employer after financial services. Last year, there were 40.9 million overseas visitors to the UK, who spent £28.4 billion with more than half of those visitors (55%) coming to London.

The 'SOS London' campaign which launched with a stark message at The London Eye has issued the following manifesto statements:

Save Tourism: We need immediate government intervention to save London's tourism sector with a strategic capital-city-specific roadmap to recovery; developed with industry leaders to create local, domestic and international action plans.

Organise Campaigns: Significant financial resource must be made available for domestic and international campaigns, with the spend and scale of those that were delivered post-terror attacks. When safe and appropriate, there must be a clear message to all Londoners, visitors and potential visitors conveying the openness and safety of London's public transport system enhanced by incentive campaigns.

Support The Industry: London tourism businesses need an extension to the business rates holiday for one year; an increase of the Business Rate Relief threshold from £51,000 to £150,000 and at least 9 months' rent relief support.

Florence Eshalomi, Labour MP for Vauxhall, said: "While the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement is welcome, I'm very concerned that it does not go far enough.

"Having spoken to a diverse range of business owners in my Vauxhall constituency, the fact remains that cafes, restaurants, hotels and attractions are struggling to keep their business afloat. If the government does not take immediate action, the long-term prosperity of the area will be under threat and we risk losing fantastic businesses people know and love. The London tourism industry is fundamental to the economic recovery of the capital".

ENDS

For press enquiries, contact:

Andrew Boocock, Stripe Communications

Email: andrew.boocock@stripecommunications.com

Contact: +44 07855795403

Niamh Jenkinson, Stripe Communications

Email: Niamh.jenkinson@stripecommunications.com

Contact: +44 07591960256

Notes to Editors:

About 'SOS London Tourism Collective'

London tourism is in crisis due to three months of London effectively being closed, and further challenges ahead. Merlin Entertainments is launching a SOS for London tourism with a wide selection

of industry partners, such as; UKHospitality, Tourism Alliance, ETOA, UKinbound, Marriott Hotels and Casual Dining Group that in total represent more than 170,000 businesses, to take collective action to ensure the crucial long-term recovery of the London tourism sector. The 'SOS London Tourism Collective' believes London Tourism need a proper plan to protect jobs and businesses.

Total businesses represented by the signatures = 172,229

Apx 10,779 of those are London based or have a strong London interest (a Tour Operator for example).

CONFIRMED PARTNERS

1. Merlin Entertainments - Nick Varney, CEO
2. UK Hospitality – Kate Nicholls, CEO - representing 350 businesses in London and a further 350 nationwide
3. Lastminute.com – Marco Corradino, Group CEO
4. Marriot Hotels – Ronny Maier Area Vice President
5. Rosewood Hotel London - Michael Bonsor, Managing Director
6. Millennium Hotels and Resorts - Clive Harrington, Senior Vice President Operations
7. London Bridge Hotel - Julio Marques. General Manager
8. Athenaeum Hotel & Residences on Piccadilly – Joanne Taylor-Stagg, General Manager
9. Park Plaza Hotels & Resorts PPHE - Greg Hegarty, Deputy CEO and COO
10. Tourism Alliance, Kurt Janson – Director - representing 60 Tourism Trade Associations, membership bodies and Destination Management Organisations 50:50 split London:National
11. ETOA European Tourism Association – Tom Jenkins ,CEO - representing over 1,100 businesses most with London interests
12. UKInbound – Joss Croft, CEO - representing 200 London and 400 UK businesses
13. BALPPA British Association of Leisure Parks Piers and Attraction - Paul Kelly, CEO - representing 50 London and 420 UK businesses
14. FSB, Federation of Small Businesses - Rowena Howie, London Policy Chair - representing 8,000 London and 160,000 UK businesses
15. CTA - Coach Tourism Association John Wales, Chair - representing 300 companies, 10% are London based.
16. English UK - James Herbertson, Chair - representing 71 London members
17. BETA – British Educational Travel Association, Emma English, Executive Director - representing 120 businesses most with London interests
18. Sea Life London Aquarium – General Manager, Catherine Pritchard
19. Thames Clippers, Geoff Symonds, COO
20. The lastminute.com London Eye – Sunny Jouhal, General Manager
21. Big Bus Tours – David Stafford, Executive Vice President UK and Ireland
22. South Bank Business Improvement District – Govert Deketh, Chair - representing 200 businesses
23. Croydon BID (500 businesses) – Matthew Sims, CEO & Co-Founder of #RaiseTheBar campaign
24. Cocktail Pub Company – Andrew Taylor, Managing Director & Co-Founder of #RaiseTheBar campaign
25. Madame Tussauds London – Tim Waters, Managing Director
26. Golden Tours – Mikeshe Palan, Managing Director

27. The London Dungeon - Catherine Pritchard, General Manager
28. Casual Dining Group, Bella Italia, Café Rouge and Las Iguanas, James Spragg, CEO
29. Wood's Silver Fleet – Tom Woods, Managing Director,
30. South Bank Employers' Group – Nic Durston, Chief Executive - representing 20 businesses
31. Shrek's Adventure London - Catherine Pritchard, General Manager,
32. Made tourism marketing, Jonathan Mountford, Managing Director - representing 25 London theatres, 3 leading visitor attractions and 2 museums & The London Tourism COVID-19 Cooperative representing 33 of London most iconic visitor attractions, theatres, convert venues, restaurants, bars, museums, galleries and late night venues
33. Neds Noodle Bars – James Breslaw, Director
34. Fabric London – Luke Laws, General Manager
35. Hippodrome Casino – Simon Thomas, CEO
36. Florence Nightingale Museum London – David Green, Director
37. Santuario Restaurants – Maria Sundrica, Proprietor
38. Groupe Bleeding Heart - Robert Wilson, Proprietor
39. Como Star - John D'ell Ross, Managing Director
40. MW Eat Ltd - Ranjit Mathrani, Chairman
41. The Mermaid London (Conference and Events Centre) - Richard Littman, Director
42. St John Group Food: St. JOHN SMITHFIELD, St. JOHN BREAD & WINE St. JOHN BAKERY, St. JOHN WINES, - Trevor Gulliver, CEO and Founder
43. Duck and Rice Soho - Richard Littman, Director
44. Shuk, Borough Market – Richard Littman, Director
45. St. JOHN BRIDGE THEATRE, Trevor Gulliver, CEO and Founder

About Merlin Entertainments Ltd

Merlin Entertainments Ltd is a global leader in location-based, family entertainment. As Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin now operates over 130 attractions, 20 hotels and 6 holiday villages in 25 countries and across 4 continents. Merlin's purpose is to deliver memorable experiences to its 67 million guests around the world, through its iconic brands and multiple attraction formats, and the commitment and passion of its c.28,000 employees (peak season).

See www.merlinentertainments.biz for more information and follow on Twitter @MerlinEntsNews