



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Alex Chisholm
Permanent Secretary
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business,
Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@beis.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk

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Dear Alex,

Covid-19 - Support fund for businesses in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March.

I have decided to issue you with a Ministerial Direction for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund, which the Chancellor has announced to help protect businesses in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors from the impacts of Covid-19.

I acknowledge that the absence of available evidence means that you are unable to provide me with the necessary assurances that this proposal represents value for money to the standards expected by *Managing Public Money (MPM)* and must therefore seek my direction to proceed.

However, as you highlight in your letter, there are clearly compelling reasons to justify the introduction of this fund, which fall outside the confines of MPM. These are extraordinary economic circumstances and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors are particularly exposed to the disruption being caused by Covid-19. As your letter notes, this grants fund will go some way to helping to alleviate financial anxiety that businesses face through this economic turmoil. Without such prompt action, businesses and jobs will be at acute risk.

I am therefore formally directing you as Accounting Officer to work closely with HMT and MHCLG to take forward this fund with immediate effect, managing the identified risks as best you can.

Kind regards,


THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy