



Surrey
Chambers of
Commerce

RESTART: *A PHASED REOPENING OF THE ECONOMY*

POLICY FROM BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE & SURREY CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

PART OF THE BCC RESTART, REBUILD, RENEW CAMPAIGN



RESTART: *A PHASED
REOPENING OF THE
ECONOMY.*



REBUILD: *BUILDING
RESILIENCE FOR FIRMS
AND HOUSEHOLDS
(LAUNCHING SEPTEMBER 2020)*



RENEW: *RETURNING TO
PROSPERITY AND GROWTH
(LAUNCHING Q1 2021)*



RESTART: A PHASED REOPENING OF THE ECONOMY

Public health must be at the heart of plans to reopen the economy, with decisions driven by the latest medical and scientific evidence on how to keep people safe as we learn to live and work under the ongoing threat of coronavirus. We understand that the relationship between public health, personal well-being and livelihoods is complex. Our network draws on the experience of Chambers across the globe. Some of our business communities have direct experience of the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. Others have past exposure to major natural disasters from which they have had to recover.

Re-opening the economy in phases must account for the links between firms and the services they need to operate. Transport, schools, childcare and many more. As the scope of permitted activities increases, so will the complexity of the rules. Contact tracing and quarantines, though essential pre-requisites to any restart programme, may add further uncertainty into business resource planning.

Firms will act in the best interests of their people and their customers. But to do this, they will need absolute clarity on their responsibilities and liabilities for this period and an understanding of plans for the reopening of schools and safe use of public transport. Any divergence in guidance between nations or regions of the United Kingdom will confuse businesses and their employees, disadvantage some, and must be minimised. Businesses need reassurance from government about the safety of public spaces and public transport. None will want to put their employees, customers or suppliers at risk. Asking firms themselves to judge what is 'safe' will not result in a speedy or successful restart of the economy.

To meet social distancing requirements, some commercial and industrial spaces will operate below capacity and customers may not return immediately for fear of contracting the virus or due to reduced income. Businesses welcome the government's cash support for wages and jobs, and the refreshed loan schemes.

But to safeguard livelihoods, these schemes must extend and adapt through this period. Steps must be taken to incentivise consumer behaviour. And monetary and fiscal policy must remain supportive for the foreseeable future.

Safely re-open public spaces and restore services (including schools and public transport)

- Interim measures to ensure appropriate social distancing and personal protections in all public spaces and on public transport
- Consider the economic impact of each option for phased reopening of schools
- Communicate capacity constraints on public transport as early as possible to allow firms to plan and adapt working patterns
- Run a public information campaign to ensure public understand safety steps being taken in businesses and elsewhere to build confidence among employees and consumers
- Ensure police forces UK-wide apply enforcement powers in line with latest guidance

Safely re-open workplaces and commercial spaces

- Ensure quick and comprehensive regime of testing and contact tracing to minimise risk of second wave of infections and give employees and customers confidence to emerge from lockdown
- Publish official guidance for all UK businesses on bringing staff back to work and reopening premises, including:
 - Which types of firms can re-open, when, why and under what conditions?
 - When different groups of employees can return to the workplace
 - Availability and prioritisation of testing
 - Employer liability in event of coronavirus-related illness or death
 - Insurance cover for firms which restart
 - When deferred tax payments, such as VAT, will be due
- Coordinate with devolved administrations to ensure consistent guidance across the regions and nations of the United Kingdom
- Extend regulatory forbearance during the 'transition to a new normal', and maintain simplified versions of compliance and procurement rules
- Clarity of PPE requirements in different settings and proactive efforts to ensure adequate supply where necessary
- Coordination across regions and nations to ensure consistent guidance

Minimise job losses and business failures

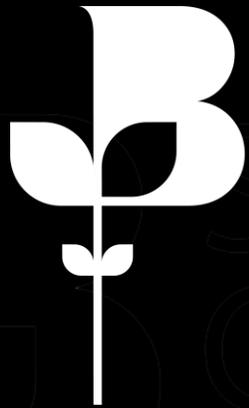
- Extend and adapt loan, grant, business rates holiday and job retention schemes aligned to the phasing of the restart – e.g. ensure support available for longer for firms that remain shut or have restricted capacity to deliver their products or services.
- Support and incentivise investment in adaptations to workplaces, including support for increasing productivity of remote working
- Initiate a UK Business Recovery Fund for support providers ensuring 'on the ground' support to help businesses navigate uncertainty and change
- Maintain capacity and flexibility in the FE sector to enable people to continue training, and quickly upskill and reskill for new roles
- Maintain supportive monetary policy framework from the Bank of England, including historically low interest rates

Rebuild supply chains and customer bases

- State-backed trade credit reinsurance scheme to protect supply chains and help firms trade effectively both at home and abroad. Expansion of UKEF capabilities to help maintain access to working capital, insurance and reduce payment risk
- Postponed VAT accounting for all imports beginning now, not after the end of the Brexit transition

Enable an effective reopening of the UK economy

- A two-year moratorium on all policy measures that increase business costs (excluding evidence-based changes to National Living Wage)
- Two-year extension to the £1 million annual investment allowance
- A tax credit to support the activity firms need to undertake to restart
- Follow through and accelerate planned infrastructure projects – including in Superfast Broadband and 5G



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The Ultimate Business Network

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