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The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
London
SW11 0ET

Date: 5th June 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Re-Opening of UK Spa and Wellness Businesses

As General Manager of the UK Spa Association, the Trade Association for all UK spa and wellness businesses, I am writing to you today to thank you for the support you've already provided, but equally raise with you the need for the government to provide clear instructions and advanced warning on when spa and wellness businesses can re-open (including those within hospitality and leisure businesses such as hotels and gyms), and specifically what treatments they will be allowed to offer, as well as what grades of PPE must be worn if at all required.

Our industry is already on its knees and cannot plan ahead without foresight of when and how they will be allowed to reopen. We must have a published date and fit for purpose guidelines for re-opening our spas as a matter of urgency.

After the last Beauty, Aesthetics and Wellbeing APPG session the Chairs wrote to the Minister of State, The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, urging that key spa and wellness industry associations are included to ensure adequate consultation in discussions on the development of reopening guidance for the wider hair, beauty, spa and wellness industry. Disappointingly, the UK Spa Association has not been included thus far. Notably, a response has been received by the APPG and we will be making contact with the safer workplace team referenced by the Minister to request to be included in the draft guidance.

We recognise and have evidence that there is an appetite for spa consumers to book, and we are seeing increased web traffic and enquiry levels, though without a date we can't open our booking portals or plan how and when we will return to our businesses.

This week Spabreaks.com reported 3000 visitors to their site over Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd June, and are seeing traffic levels starting to pick up for the first time since late March. Yesterday sessions continued to trend upwards reaching 3,407 - which is the highest it has been since March 27th. Following the relaxing of certain restrictions this Monday, they have seen an increase in sessions on the site (10% more sessions WoW). Whilst this is hugely encouraging, we know that spas are waiting for a date from the government to re-open, so they can't yet facilitate taking the bookings.

In addition to this, one of the dashboards they have set up is showing an increase in query volume of which users are searching for related terms in Google. This uses data from Google rather than the spabreaks.com site so represents an industry wide trend. What this shows is that the easing of the lockdown restrictions correlates with an increase in user demand. This indicates that if the Government announce further easing of restrictions, such as the reopening of spas, then with the demand already there, crucially, revenue would follow and the whole sector can start to recover financially.

I am also delighted to share just a few preliminary results of the Consumer Spa Survey conducted jointly by the UK Spa Association and The Good Spa Guide to help the industry understand more about the concerns of spa goers prior to reopening. The response was excellent with over 4,800 participants completing it.

This survey was created to gain an understanding of the confidence and concerns of spa goers about returning to spas in the current environment. It is hoped the results will help spas to plan their processes, practices and operations to instil confidence in the consumer.

In summary, the overall picture is positive and encouraging. The highlights are:

- 89% are happy to visit a spa either now or in a month or two
- 80% will spend the same as they did before and 10% will spend more.
- In response to the question 'What are you looking forward to most when you visit a spa?' (multiple answers possible)
 - 65% are looking forward to 'Just relaxing in a spa'
 - 44% are looking forward to a body massage
 - 23% are looking forward to going for a swim
 - 20% are looking forward to a facial
 - 9% are looking forward to a beauty treatment
 - In the comment field many people mentioned 'catching up with friends' as an important aspect of returning to a spa

This does further highlight the need for us to have clear guidelines for the reopening of our facilities including pools in addition to guidance for treatments and PPE to allow us to manage consumer expectation and demand.

I am deeply concerned to note that consultation periods for redundancy are now progressing as many employers are understandably concerned that they need to make more cuts and take drastic

measures to protect their businesses as we continue with so much uncertainty. The government needs to act swiftly to restore confidence within this sector with a firm, published reopening date to demonstrate the appetite for bookings and satisfy occupancy levels upon reopening, before we lose many more skilled people from our work force and risk the closure of some key spa and wellness businesses.

Once we have the certainty of a re-opening date, we can start to prepare our industry to re-open and begin to take bookings again, hopefully minimising further impact to our sector and to our workforce.

In closing, we ask the government to urgently publish a re-opening date for spas, salons and wellness businesses with clear and fit for purpose guidelines as soon as possible, so that business owners can plan to re-open and operate safely.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Grzesk', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Helena Grzesk

General Manager, UK Spa Association

Cc Carolyn Harris MP and Judith Cummins MP

Co-Chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Party Group on, Beauty, Aesthetics and Wellbeing