17/06/2021

Dear (MS)

**Re: OUR PLEA TO SAVE THE UK ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING INDUSTRY (UK ELT)**

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Welsh Government for recognising the struggles that English language teaching (ELT) schools have been through during the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the inclusion of our sector in the government's list of sectors eligible for business rates relief and tourism and hospitality related grants which have been a lifeline for British Council accredited English language centres in Wales to survive during the earlier stages of the pandemic. However, we need further support to survive and with this letter call on your for support.

I am therefore writing to you to express my deep concern for the continued devastating situation that faces English language teaching (ELT) schools due to the combined effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the new immigration system post-Brexit and the ongoing travel restrictions for students arriving in the UK.

In normal times the ELT industry is self-sufficient and needs little help from government. It is a vital part of our export industry, with students from over 150 countries coming to the UK every year to study English. Many will then go on to study at one of our universities, some will even start a business venture here or go on to include their connection with the UK in their future working life. The depth and breadth of hard and soft benefits of the UK’s export of English language education cannot be underestimated for the UK’s economy and international relations, both here and overseas.

The UK is home to hundreds of these schools, in a sector worth £1.4bn to our economy, supporting 35,000 jobs. For every £1 spent on an English programme, a further £2 is injected into the local economy. However, the industry, which operates year-round but is heavily dependent on summer seasonal business, will be one of the last in the UK to recover.

In Wales alone, 1,300 jobs are supported by ELT students of which 330 are in ELT centres. The gross value added to our region by ELT was £52m in 2018, of which £12m is the direct effect of students’ spending on their courses. The rest comes from spending on suppliers, by ELT employees, and by the leisure and tourism spending of students and their visitors during their stay in Wales and the UK.

In 2020, English language teaching schools lost over 80% of their business. Despite the success of the UK Covid-19 vaccine programme, the emergence of new variants and ongoing travel restrictions mean the industry now faces another devastating year, especially with the loss of a second summer season. We therefore we need your help to raise awareness of plight of ELT and support us in our battle for survival.

**URGENT CALL FOR DIGITAL COVID CERTIFICATES**

One of our main competitor countries, the Republic of Ireland, announced 10 days ago that from 19 July 2021, subject to the prevailing public health situation, Ireland will operate the EU Digital COVID Certificate (DCC) for travel originating within the EU/EEA. This means, if a passenger: is vaccinated against COVID-19; has recovered from COVID-19; or has a negative test result, then passengers arriving in Ireland with a DCC will not have to undergo quarantine.

As the UK is no longer part of the EU, the UK is excluded from this scheme which could be a lifesaver for our sector to welcome international visitors safely this summer without quarantine. This is a direct result of Brexit impacting our sector and the wider tourism industry. We therefore urge the UK government to review international travel restrictions and implement a Digital Covid Certificate scheme or similar.

We at least urge the Welsh Government to consider introducing 5th day’s test & release scheme.

**FUTURE SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE INBOUND TOURISM SECTOR**

While international travel restrictions in the UK and worldwide continues, the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) will soon end as the local economy recovers in the UK. Our national trading association, English UK predicts that just under 30% of its members anticipated regaining 40% of their pre-Covid-19 business this year, and just under three-quarters thought the market would reach 60-80% of pre-Covid levels in 2022. Covid-19 is not the only issue: there is widespread concern about the end of free movement and ID card travel (from October 2021) for EU, EEA and Swiss nationals, our biggest source market for the UK. To survive and succeed, UK ELT needs action and support in three areas: targeted business support, tailored visas, and clear immigration on the resumption of inbound travel.

We urge you to lobby the government to extend the JRS for our staff until Spring 2022. ELT is dependent on seasonal student tourism. The sector faces a standstill until Spring 2022 as there is no hope of meaningful recovery this summer.

**SAVE ELT SCHOOLS NOW**

The industry is ready and equipped to play an active part in the development of global Britain and the reopening of the economy in urban, rural and coastal locations but is totally reliant on its international market. Without support, many of these viable, valuable businesses - often of many years' standing in their local communities - will close for good. This will affect everyone who works with them and depends on them - school employees, host families in the community, transport companies, local hospitality and visitor attractions. If our British Council accredited schools in the UK were to close permanently, students would move to other English-speaking countries that have been better able to support this sector throughout the pandemic.

Teaching and learning of English in the UK at British Council accredited centres has been exceptionally successful in the 70 years since post-war Britain, in the age of internationalisation, and seriously risk being lost overnight.

We therefore implore you to do all you can to ensure the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry is supported so that it can survive, thrive and provide our “[Education is GREAT](https://www.greatbritaincampaign.com/)” export for Wales.

Yours sincerely