

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

23 March 2020

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing on behalf of 36 members of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) to welcome both the Government's commitment to do all that is necessary to get through these unprecedented times; and the measures you announced earlier this week and last to support businesses affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

Welcome and vital that these measures are, I set out below further thoughts on how the Government can - and should - go further to support the retail and hospitality sector, as well as its suppliers, many of which are wine and spirit businesses and WSTA members.

The outbreak of coronavirus is an unprecedented challenge for the UK, including its £50bn wine and spirit industry, particularly since the closure of all hospitality venues.

Your recent freeze of alcohol duties was a boost to our industry, but so much has changed in days since the Budget and the trading environment now looks significantly different. The most immediate concern for wine and spirit businesses, and particularly those that supply exclusively to businesses in the on-trade, is cashflow.

The measures you have announced so far offer mainly loan finance and will take a number of days to come onstream. And while the payment flexibility you announced in the Budget was welcome, it will be a temporary fix.

However, given the serious, wide ranging and immediate impact of coronavirus for the retail and hospitality sectors, we believe that an immediate suspension of excise duty - for at least 6 months - is necessary. Its two key advantages are speed and an immediate cash injection for businesses on the brink. Such a suspension should – and could - be introduced before this week's deadline (25 March) for payment of duty.

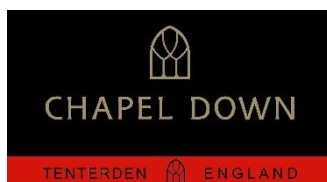
It is vital that cash is found to support the hospitality and retail sector – and quickly - which will provide effective support to frontline workers, and also for those working in businesses

operating upstream in the supply chain, such as wine and spirit distributors, importers and bottlers. I have serious concerns for the livelihoods of the many employees of - often SME - businesses across the wine and spirit industry, whose jobs rely on supplying consumer-facing hospitality and retail functions.

Your Sincerely,



**Miles Beale**  
Chief Executive



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