



Countryside Alliance Evidence Submission to Treasury Select Committee

**Economic impact of coronavirus**

The Countryside Alliance is a membership-based organisation that works for everyone who loves the countryside and the rural way of life. We reflect the views and interests of 100,000 members and supporters who come from all walks of life and every part of the United Kingdom.

Rural businesses are not exempt from the devastating impact Covid-19 has had and will continue to have across the country. The business support that the Government has made available is welcome. However, rural businesses in their nature and indeed in some of their activities do differ considerably to those in cities and towns, and therefore risk being missed out in Government support packages, such packages should be rural proofed as best they can in the challenging circumstances.

Many rural businesses are in the hospitality and leisure sectors. The relief for these businesses is welcome. However, in some instances there are businesses that may not be identified as part of the leisure sector, and therefore would not be eligible for the support the Government has outlined. For example, racing stables in the horse racing industry have been told they are not eligible for the support the Government has made available. The situation is equally unclear for livery yards and kennels which like racing stables have been hit hard by the current crisis. The Government needs to carry out an immediate assessment of those businesses classified as part of the leisure sector and it must work with stakeholders to ensure no businesses are left out.

The Government must clarify what businesses qualify for support. For example, it is suggested racing stables, despite being valued by the Valuation Office Agency as a leisure business, are not eligible. To complicate the situation there is a discrepancy between how each respective Local Authority view certain businesses depending on their activities related to sport, and whether that activity is defined as a leisure activity. This means that some businesses will be eligible for support and some will not be because of where that business is situated. There must be no discrepancy in how Local Authorities treats and views leisure businesses related to sport. Rural businesses need clarity on how they are viewed and treated, and support needs to be made available to them. In all cases, these businesses have been significantly impacted due to Covid-19.

Kennels, racing stables, private animal sanctuaries, animal rehabilitation centres and private zoos, to name a few examples, all care for animals and it is imperative that staff are continued to be employed to ensure these animal's welfare. These businesses have had their income significantly reduced because of Covid-19. Again there must be clarity for what support these businesses have access to, be it loans, grants or business rates relief. The Government must ensure that small businesses that still have to employ staff in such difficult circumstances are supported. We would welcome further discussion on what the Government can offer to support these businesses.

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