



31 July 2020

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer  
By email

Dear Chancellor

**Re: Casinos reopening**

I write to you to convey our utter dismay at how the Government has handled the reopening of casinos in England. The last minute announcement by the Prime Minister on 31 July to delay the reopening of all casinos from 1 August for at least two weeks is highly illogical, inconsistent and deeply damaging to those businesses and the thousands of staff they employ.

It appears that the Government's strategy for dealing with covid is in disarray. We were told that the strategy was to move to regional and local lockdowns, yet the Government's announcement today forces all casinos to remain closed. Why, for example, should casinos in Bristol, where there are low recorded cases of covid, remain closed when the spikes in covid are in other parts of the country? It is also the case that the new restrictions are supposed to be focused on households not mixing - not on closing businesses ("Households may go to hospitality, for instance bars and pubs").

Further it is bizarre and quite wrong that the Prime Minister should comment in his press conference that businesses such as casinos are "higher risk" when we know that casinos met all Public Health England (PHE) Covid safety requirements in July and were given the green light to reopen on 1 August. Casinos have invested heavily to ensure their premises are covid-secure, with measures such as perspex screens, sanitisation equipment and sophisticated track and trace systems, as well as introducing other changes and strict social distancing measures. Given that ministers say they are following the medical and scientific advice, isn't it time they did just that and reopened casinos?

This latest fiasco represents a huge blow to the casino industry which will now have remained closed for nearly 5 months. Casinos are a fundamental part of our leisure, hospitality, entertainment and tourism industry. They employ over 14,000 people and indirectly support another 4,000 jobs across the UK, and last year casinos paid over £5.7m million in tax per week.

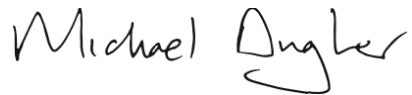
As we previously warned, if casinos were not permitted to reopen soon, then our members cannot rule out significant redundancies as they cannot continue with the huge financial costs of remaining in a holding pattern waiting to be opened. Casinos across the UK have invested millions of pounds to prepare for reopening on 1 August including recalling staff off furlough, training, food and beverages and equipping the casinos with cash supplies which now all needs to be undone at further huge expense. Casinos are burning through cash at a rate of over £5 million per week, this is simply unsustainable. Added to which casinos are also costing the Exchequer around £5 million per week while they are closed.

The support from HM Treasury, such as the Job Retention Scheme, has really helped but now our members will be forced to pay National Insurance on top of salaries in August while they remain closed. As furlough payments are phased out, there will be no flexibility for casinos to adapt to the new working and leisure environment when they are eventually allowed to reopen.

Casinos want to get back in business and once again contributing to the economy. The DCMS have supported our efforts to get casinos reopened, yet have been excluded from this shambolic decision. Having made the necessary preparations for reopening, we call on the Government to permit casinos to reopen.

I am copying this letter to the Rt. Hon. Oliver Dowden MP, Secretary of State DCMS, Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State DHSC, Rt. Hon. Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State BEIS and Nigel Huddleston MP, Minister for Sport.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Dugher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'D'.

**Michael Dugher**  
Chief Executive