

## **UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

### **Travel and tourism roundtable**

22 March 2022

Online

(Participants were offered an in-person meeting in Belfast but either chose to attend online or we moved the meeting online due to a lack of in-person attendees)

#### *Participants*

Ben Connah, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Martin Hogg, Citizen Coaching and Counselling

Kurt Janson, Tourism Alliance

Joss Croft, UKinbound

Joanne Stuart, Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance

Suzy Davies, Wales Tourism Alliance

Mark Tanzer, ABTA – The Travel Association

Henk van Klaveren, Airport Operators Association

Marc Crothall, Scottish Tourism Alliance/Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group

**Ben Connah:** [00:02:25] Good morning, everybody. Thank you very much for joining us today. My name is Ben Connah, and I'm the Secretary to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. This is an independent Inquiry that will be chaired by Baroness Heather Hallett, who is a retired Court of Appeal judge; it has been set up to look at the UK's response to the pandemic, and to make findings and recommendations in as timely a way as we can, to learn lessons for the future.

Thanks to all of you that are able to join today. I know it's a very, very busy time within your sector, and we're very grateful that you're making the time. But also recognise that everyone here today will have a personal as well as a professional response to the pandemic. And today's meeting may be difficult for some of you for all sorts of reasons. I am joined today by Martin Hogg, who is sitting to my left from Citizen Coaching and Counselling. Martin and his team are joining us for all of these events and are available for anybody who needs support, either during the meeting or afterwards. We've provided their contact details on the first page of the agenda that was sent to you. Martin, do you want to just say a few words?

**Martin Hogg:** [00:04:01] Thank you, Ben. Yes, this is a private and confidential service. And none of what you share with me or any member of my team is actually fed back to the Inquiry at all. We recognise that sometimes people need to take a time-out, at which point you can message me through the chat function, or you can call on the number that's included in your briefing pack and whether that's now or in a couple of days' time, we will be here with that confidential service.

**Ben Connah:** [00:04:32] Thanks very much, Martin. So you're joining us here in Belfast today, although of course, you are all joining us remotely. The reason we're in Belfast is that in addition to the various roundtable events that we're holding with different sectors or organisations that have been affected by the pandemic, we're also touring the UK to hear directly from bereaved families about their experiences. So this morning, we've got the roundtable and this afternoon, we'll be hosting a meeting for bereaved families.

This is the fifth of 13 sessions that we'll be running over the next couple of weeks as part of our consultation. And as you will know, these meetings are entirely focused on our draft Terms of Reference, which were published a week ago last Thursday by the Government and we launched our consultation the following day.

The Terms of Reference set out what the Inquiry will investigate. They are the rules and the scope that the Inquiry will follow during its life. And I need to be clear that these sessions are not about giving evidence to the Inquiry. That will come later, once the Terms of Reference are finalised and the Inquiry formally begins its work. For now though, we're seeking views across the country and from different sectors on those Terms of Reference. And we have grouped organisations according to different themes or sectors of particular impact.

We've already run sessions on equalities, on social care, and on post-16 education for example; today, of course, we've got travel and tourism. And going forwards, we've got other sessions on things like local government, and business more generally. We scheduled the equalities roundtable as our first because of the really cross-cutting nature of equalities and disparities right across the pandemic. So that was one that we did last week in Cardiff, and now we're working our way around the different sectors that are most obviously impacted by the pandemic, including yours.

The public are also able to give us views on our website; we have launched a consultation portal that encourages any member of the public or group to give their views. And if I may ask a favour at the beginning of this meeting, it would be that you share the link with any of your members or other representative groups to boost the numbers of responses that we get from the sectors that are most affected.

Individuals can respond so too can groups, so if at the end of this, you don't feel that you've been able to make every point that you'd have liked, or perhaps things occur to you later, please feel free to go online and respond on behalf of your organisation as well.

We've got about an hour and a half today; we may not need all of that time. But we've allowed a fair amount of time and we've got a decent number of people on this call. At the end of the session, I'll try to summarise the key points, but rest assured that you won't simply be reliant on my memory. We are recording this session and a transcript will be produced and will be properly analysed to make sure that all of the views that come out over the course of the session are fed into Baroness Hallett's, thinking, and then she will make recommendations to the Prime Minister about what form the final Terms of Reference should take.

So we're recording the meeting and that transcript will be made available on our website at the end of the consultation event. It will be used to inform the Chair's outcomes, but of course, it will

name you and it will be clear on the contributions that you made. So can I just ask that if there are any reasons why you need confidentiality or would like not to be named in the transcript, can you let us know at the end of this meeting by emailing the Inquiry team, please.

The bulk of today will be a discussion on the four questions that we posed in our consultation document that was published just over a week ago. And we'll work through those one at a time. I'll try to keep us to time because it's really important that we get your views on each of the four questions that we've posed. And it's really important, of course, that we hear from everybody that's on the call.

We will keep the chat function open on the call. So within Zoom, you can make any comments you wish. I'm afraid that given the constraints on time and my own headspace, I won't be able to respond to points directly that are made in the chat. But we will keep a record of that chat and make sure that that's fed into the consultation analysis as well. But really, this is intended to be a discussion, a conversation about the Terms of Reference and so we'll be focusing on people's oral contributions during the meeting.

Everybody who is attending today, apart from myself and Martin, are doing so online; you will have become familiar over the last few years with how to run an online meeting so I'll keep this brief. But please remember to keep yourself on mute if you're not speaking. And when you'd like to come in, make a point, make an observation, ask a question, please do so, but it'd be really helpful if you could raise your hand when you do so. And then come off mute when I come to you.

When you first speak, it would help all of us, and especially me and Martin, who aren't as familiar with your sector as you will be, if you could say who you are, and also which organisation you're from. That will also help our transcribers, of course. And like I say, I will try to keep order as best I can and keep things to time. You will occasionally see me looking down to my right, I think you can probably see on the screen that I've got a computer in front of me, that's so I can see whose hand has gone up and in what order, and hopefully make sure that I ensure a fair distribution of airtime amongst attendees.

That I suppose concludes the intro to this meeting. I'm keen that we get into the meat of the conversation. But can I just check whether anyone's got any questions or observations of their own to begin with? I can see someone's hand up.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:11:38] Hi, Suzy Davies, from Wales Tourism Alliance. I just wanted to check whether the meeting today was confined to our sector, or whether you're inviting comments about some of the other aspects in the Terms of Reference.

**Ben Connah:** [00:11:50] Well, so the meeting today has been set up to focus on travel and tourism. But if you have got particular comments that can be shared in an open forum, then please do. If they're more general, though, I think I'd ask you to make a personal contribution through the online form, if that's okay.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:12:13] Great. Thanks.

**Ben Connah:** [00:12:15] Thanks very much. Indeed. I think Joanne, did you have your hand up?

**Joanne Stuart:** [00:12:23] I did. Yeah. But I don't have any questions about what you said, it's more the next bit.

**Ben Connah:** [00:12:29] Okay. Well, in that case, I think you've got your bid in early, Joanne; I will move us on in that case to the first question within consultation, which is sort of the biggie. And if we spend a bit more time on this than the rest, then I think no one will begrudge that. Do the Inquiry's draft Terms of Reference cover all the areas that you think should be addressed in the Inquiry? Joanne, you pre-emptively got in, so I'll come first to you if I may?

**Joanne Stuart:** [00:13:06] Thank you very much. I'm Joanne Stuart and I'm from the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. So we represent tourism and travel in Northern Ireland. And that's all aspects of tourism; obviously, the leisure sectors and cultural institutions, but we also cover transport, the likes of coaches, air, ferry, etc., marketing organisation, so everything that makes up the tourism economy in Northern Ireland.

So I suppose I'm speaking more from a regional perspective. And – and just looking at the sort of the first area with regards to the Terms of Reference, would be something around you have got an intergovernmental decision-making, but there's something around divergence across the UK. And – really more of that, because it's had a big impact across the regions, and leading on to how things are communicated across the UK, again, a lot of confusion when the Prime Minister was making, you know, announcements that only actually represented England.

So there's something there around what we can learn from how that is communicated and the clarity of messaging. So messaging itself, not really mentioned, and I think that was something that was very specific and how things were messaged.

Just another thing is because we are – Northern Ireland is on the island of Ireland. And obviously, Covid didn't respect borders. There was, again, just how the UK Government was liaising with other Governments, particularly the Irish Government, and understanding that sometimes you can't do it all just within your own jurisdiction. So there's just something there about what we can learn if we were in the same situation.

And finally, for me is the engagement with industry. Obviously, there's a lot in the reference about health. And that obviously is the mainstay of this. But obviously, industry was very much impacted. And that really – how that engagement to ensure that we were really doing the right things as an industry and that partnership with Government, I think that's an important thing to look at. Thank you.

**Ben Connah:** [00:15:40] Thank you very much indeed, Joanne; that's really helpful. The interest in that differential impact across the four nations has come up several times already, especially in the health roundtable that we had last week where, of course, that's completely devolved. So yeah, really helpful to view it in this context, as well. Thanks very much. Henk, you were next.

**Henk van Klaveren** [00:16:03] Thank you. So Henk van Klaveren. I'm from the Airport Operators Association. So we represent UK airports from the very largest at Heathrow all the way down to small grass field aviation. For this Inquiry, the roundtable's purpose, it's the passenger airports that are probably the most important in that element. As a sort of main gateway in and out of the UK. I think I wanted to echo Joanne's point, really, I think there's really important aspects of the

way that travel measures and the impact of health measures on travel across the four nations were discussed and ultimately promulgated. I think –

**Ben Connah:** [00:16:52] Henk, if I may just interrupt. I'm really sorry. I think somebody might not be on mute. Could I just ask that everyone checks that they're on mute, please? Because we've got a bit of an echo that I think Henk's picking up as well. Thank you. Sorry Henk.

**Henk van Klaveren** [00:17:07] No problem. So I think that the island of Ireland is a very good example where there were different measures across borders. And there's an intergovernmental relationship there. But equally, I think, the cross-border relationship between Wales, England and Scotland in Great Britain were also important. I think that, particularly, there were meetings around some of the same health data, informing very different policy outcomes when it came to travel measures, particularly early 2020, where the Scottish Government took a much more strict approach to travel measures, compared to England.

And then of course, that belies the fact that actually people travel across that border. And people will travel across that border to go travel from an airport in the north of England, to Newcastle, Manchester. And so what impact that then had on the health situation in Scotland, if actually, there were ways around the measures – so why were there different measures I think is an important question to discuss and sort of the interaction with that.

I think similarly, there's a sort of – aviation travel is by its very nature, a particularly internationally focused sector. And you know, we have a huge area on our doorstep in continental Europe, where they took a very different approach to travel measures. Now, there were political realities that were different. There are political realities that were very recent happening throughout the pandemic around the nature of the UK's interaction with the EU. Nonetheless, there I think, for the public, there was difficulty understanding the very big divergence between the UK approach and the European approach; that goes for both at the start.

So I think that, you know, various parliamentary committees have looked at the fact that quarantine measures were not introduced in the UK until much later in the pandemic, sort of around the summertime of 2020 when European countries did that quite quickly. And then when they were scaling down their quarantine measures, we introduced it, and then so there was another question around, why do we now have it when other areas didn't?

And given that travel is international there is a question around how did the UK Government interact with their international partners around this and how did information from international situations inform UK decision-making? But also, then how did that then translate internally, because the UK border is a reserved responsibility, whereas the health measures were a devolved responsibility. And so there are – sort of the impact of how that interacted into the UK situation itself.

And I think there as well, most recently, we've seen the most recent travel measures disappear, but also the UK government having taken decisions that affect the border for example, the passenger locator form has disappeared, but that therefore created consequences on the ground for the devolved administrations that without that infrastructure provided by the UK Government, they were limited in their decision-making around what they would or would not want to do.

Now, we may have views about the suitability of that, and that's probably for an evidence session rather than a Terms of Reference session. But it's an illustration around the fact that the UK Government set a framework, but within that the devolved administrations sometimes had room for manoeuvre, and sometimes didn't. And therefore, it's interesting to review it as the Inquiry progresses.

**Ben Connah:** [00:20:35] Henk, thank you very much indeed, really clear and helpful. Marc, can I come to you?

**Marc Crothall:** [00:20:42] Thank you, Ben. Good morning, everybody. My name is Marc Crothall, I'm the Chief Executive of the Scottish Tourism Alliance. We're the overarching industry body for the sector, with roughly around 75% of all businesses connected to us [inaudible] – as a member group, but we opened ourselves up to everybody in the sector throughout the pandemic period, and still do.

I'm also one of the lead industry voices on the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group that was established very much at the outset of Covid. It was a mechanism that was put into play by the Scottish Government during foot and mouth. So tried and tested and aims to be able to capture, I guess, and engage with the sector, and then try and accelerate the appropriate responses.

It's always good when you go third, or even second to Joanne, because a lot of what Joanne has said – and again, Henk, I think I would just like to restate as well, the significance of divergence in some of the approaches that were taken by the various Governments and Scottish Government did, again, take a slightly different approach to some of the funding support that was announced through the UK Government being very dependent on that sort of consequential and feed coming through.

Communication, absolutely critical. And again, the timings we found in Scotland, where you had announcements by the Prime Minister that weren't particularly clear enough, or could perhaps have been interpreted or were interpreted by Scottish residents as being applicable to them. And obviously, the timing of the First Minister's announcement following suit, seem to be a bit of cat and mouse at times as to how that played out.

And I think also the message clarity, absolutely key. We were fortunate in terms of industry engagement, it was very good from the outset. Josh Croft, who's on the call today, sits on our Industry Council, and we convened on a weekly basis with ministers as well to sort of feed in the implications. But all the same, what it did do is it flushed out a huge number of other constituents that fall into our sector, that I don't think had been recognised as being there, and there are still a good number of those falling through the gap. And that was as a direct result of, I guess, their lack of recognition, or the fact that they haven't managed to coalesce around a particular organisation.

And still, you know, there are those who are in a risky situation. The significance of seasonality of the sector and the timings of those communications, as well, in terms of the knock-on implication of not just international travel, but internal domestic travel, I don't think were fully appreciated; if

you locked down a central belt or a central city, the knock-on implications into the wider rural areas where we were aligned on that base, obviously, was not fully understood as well.

But over and above that, I mean, I think the other key factor, I know it's captured, perhaps under vulnerable people, but I think the mental health of the industry, the employees within the sector, I think that took a long time to be acknowledged, and again, has it been acknowledged to the extent that it needs to be acknowledged from the outset. So but again, very much, as I say, endorsing and echoing what Joanne has said a four nations approach was something we've always been told was being taken. And again, too often, I think we've found that there's been divergence along the way. And that hasn't helped as a collective industry, which is an international sector and an international industry to recover in the timeframe that we would want and a lot of questions asked around, how is it in other parts of the globe they've managed to do this, and yet we've done that? So I'll stop there. But thanks very much.

**Ben Connah:** [00:24:36] Thanks very much indeed, Marc. Your point about domestic travel, I suppose is one that we might come back to. I'm not sure that it's really had the airtime that it might have done and I'd be interested in views on whether you think the Terms of Reference adequately cover it. First of all, let me go to Kurt.

**Kurt Janson:** [00:24:57] Thank you. Actually, that's one of the comments I was going to make: in terms of travel and tourism, there's kind of three separate strands that I can see. One is the international travel in and outbound of the UK that Henk, very sagely put it. Then there's the travel between the home nations as a separate theme and the coordination of policy between each of the four nations to coordinate people travelling between them.

And then there's a third part of internal travel within England, because we had the situations of the different zones and travel between one and the other; it caused considerable impact on local communities and confusion between people. Put in context, there's about £100 billion spent on the domestic tourism in the UK. And it's also one of the greatest shifters of wealth between urban and rural and seaside areas - a lot of rural seaside economies are very dependent on travel from urban areas, and the impact of having different zones, especially within England, very much impacted upon that. And so there's three different themes as I can see in terms of travel: the international, between home nations, and the internal kind of within England. There's also kind of a large theme as I can see it.

In terms of the Government's approach to tourism, I think there was a lack of understanding of the tourism industry and a conflagration between travel and tourism and hospitality, where the Government tended to think that hospitality equated to tourism. And we ended up with a whole series of policies that really didn't make any sense and continue to not make any sense.

One of the other things to highlight is that travel and tourism was the first industry to be hit by Covid. It was the industry that was most affected by Covid and it is the industry that is going to take the longest to recover. The predictions from Visit Britain, which is the national tourist body, is that domestic tourism will only get back to 2019 levels by 2024. And international tourism will only return to pre-pandemic levels by 2025.

So there is a huge amount of pain still going through the industry. And because 3.4 million people work in travel and tourism industry in the UK, it's kind of 10% of the workforce, there are ongoing issues that need to be kind of addressed it. It's not that Covid is actually over for the travel and tourism industry, it is still an ongoing issue that we need to deal with at the moment, and we've been putting into a DCMS select committee at the moment on things that need to be done to stimulate demand and get the industry kind of back on its feet again.

So those are the kind of themes that I would see would be of value to pursue.

**Ben Connah:** [00:28:56] Fantastic, thanks very much indeed Kurt. Can I just check one point for my own clarification and knowledge? You talked about the three levels: international, travel between the four nations, and then domestic travel. You talked about between zones. Are you meaning the tiers that we had in 2020?

**Kurt Janson** [00:29:15] Yes, sorry.

**Ben Connah:** [00:29:16] Brilliant, fine. I was worried that I'd missed some other way of carving up the country during the pandemic.

**Kurt Janson** [00:29:23] No, no, sorry, I meant the tiers. You know, we just had the situation where if you were in tier three, and you were something like a hospitality business, you were closed and given grants. But if you are, say, a coach operator within that zone, you were not closed and had to remain open, but you couldn't go anywhere because you couldn't travel outside the zone. And still got no support from Government. So it's that lack of policy coordination that I think would be good to explore.

**Ben Connah:** [00:29:52] With you. Excellent. Thanks very much indeed. Josh.

**Joss Croft:** [00:29:57] Thank you very much. Joss Croft from UKinbound. So really, just to build upon what both Mark and indeed Joanne were saying around divergence, of course, it's divergence within the differences between the four nations. So the levels of support, for example, that the Scottish Government was able to offer up to the supply chain, versus what the UK Government was able to offer up and did offer up or rather didn't, within England. But then also within England itself, allowing the local authorities the discretion to award levels of support that wasn't uniform across the country and felt very much according to the wants and desires of each particular local authority, left a lot of people out in the cold.

And yes, of course, divergence in terms of the restrictions, the impact on UK visitors, Henk's point around divergence more widely in terms of real lack of global leadership in terms of coordination across nations. But I'm just going to focus just very briefly upon the poor little customer who might have been able to travel during the short windows that we were open, but having a different approach to the restrictions in Scotland, Wales and in England, simply put off visitors.

Why would you travel to the UK if you wanted to go to Scotland when there were differences between the two? People do not recognise those borders, and want to have a UK/UK and Ireland experience. So I think from a customer's perspective that probably needs to be recognised.

The other bit really is Kurt's point around timelines, the Inquiry seems to be looking very much retrospectively. But it is exactly as a direct result of Government policies in terms of support,



which was not competitive, or in terms of our borders that were not competitive. Where we had restrictions on day two, no other country in Europe had that day two restriction. They might have had pre-departure but no day two, and, of course, what that has meant is that our recovery is substantially behind that of our competitors: they were supported more by Government, and the restrictions perhaps weren't quite so fierce.

As a direct result, they're further ahead, they've got greater market share, which means their recovery will inevitably be quicker than ours. So I think it is tied in in terms of timing, not just looking retrospectively, but how on earth is the UK going to regain ground with its fifth largest export sector? Or actually second largest, as I think Kurt pointed out to me today, the service sector, how on earth are we going to get that recovery back to where it should be moving forward, as much as retrospectively? Thank you.

**Ben Connah:** [00:32:33] Josh, thanks very much, indeed, really clear. And your point about recovery has come up in previous completely different sessions. And will doubtless come up in things like education and the like. So we will absolutely take that back. Thank you very much indeed. Joanne.

**Joanne Stuart:** [00:32:55] Yes, and thanks very much. It was just obviously, looking at the Terms of Reference, the economic response is a short paragraph there on the second page, and just a couple of things really, that I think need to be included in that is the targeting of support, I think, as has been well articulated by Kurt and others, travel and tourism, you know, basically, we didn't have options to go online, to do click and collect, to do take away. So you know, once we were closed, we were closed. And certainly tourism, was closed for 12 months or 24 months, basically. So the support that came out, which obviously was very welcome, was very much a sort of a blanket approach. Now, obviously, it's an appreciation of speed and how people have to react. But there wasn't the recognition of which sectors really were impacted much more than others. Other sectors were able to do well through the pandemic just by way of the sector that they were in.

So I think there's something about targeting of support, but also that links into data. And I think what became clear throughout the pandemic was the lack of data that was available to help to make the decisions and the distribution of financial support. Now, that may be more so for example, in Northern Ireland, but certainly that is something that became very apparent and therefore announcements were made quickly about financial support, delivery and implementation, there was usually quite large delays in time between an announcement and actual delivery on the ground, and a lot of that came down to actual data that was available. So there's something around that that I think needs to be looked at as part of the economic and Terms of Reference there.

**Ben Connah:** [00:35:00] Thank you very much indeed, Joanne. Kurt.

**Kurt Janson** [00:35:04] Yeah, I just want to support Joanne on saying that there is a real lack of information around the place. One of the factors that has been quite disappointing has been that there has been a lack of tourism statistics, either domestic statistics or international statistics, for the last two years. So in fact, the tourism industry, which is kind of a huge wealth generator for

the country employs 10% of the population. And yet, we had no domestic tourism or international tourism statistics for last two years. So, government policy has been flying blind on this and on the impacts. Even yesterday, DCMS did a review of the economic performance of sectors under its responsibility, and hasn't been able to include tourism in that because there are no tourism statistics available.

**Ben Connah:** [00:36:10] Thank you very much indeed, Kurt. Suzy's got her real hand up. Forgive me, Suzy, I don't always have you on my screen. But I caught it then.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:36:20] I'm sorry, I can't find the 'raise your hand' thing on my screen? I'm sorry. Yeah, I thought perhaps I could add a few things in for Wales as well, particularly as we all know, Wales is not having its own inquiry. And we'll be relying on this [inaudible] to get our points through. I've been listening to everybody else's contributions and would concur with all that. So the things I'd like to add, I suppose is in the Terms of Reference and wondering whether we could actually specifically include holidaying, rather than this sort of general 'travel' because people travel for different reasons.

And something I think we all experienced during the two years we just had is that when people were locked down for significant periods of time, they were desperate to get out and go wherever, for as long as they could, without necessarily doing their research first.

So one of the things I'd like us to try and capture in whether it's the Terms of Reference or in specific evidence sessions, is people's attitude to the holiday experience they actually had, whether it met their expectations, because I'm sure others will know this as well is – because your Costa del Sol market was turning up in Welsh holiday cottages, it wasn't necessarily fitting with their expectations and not necessarily good for the reputation of tourism then because of that. So there's a reputational question I'd like built into this somewhere.

We also had the issue because we're a long border. The question of communication was an important one, not always successfully done, that's been raised. But that again, created real tensions between holidaymakers coming in from England, you know, ten miles over the border into Wales, meeting completely different restrictions.

In some parts of Wales, particular communities that I would say, I don't know if this happened in Scotland as well, but got a little more heated, perhaps; there was – in certain communities, there were definitely elements of indirect xenophobia. And because of course, the majority market for Wales is England. And not all the holidaymakers are very polite, I think we've probably all experienced that as well.

The profile of our industry in Wales is micro and small businesses. So I think that needs to be taken into account when you're getting evidence in due course from big players. And that itself goes back to something – I can't remember who said it now – about targeting, because I have to say that the Welsh Government was very good at engaging with the industry in the round, during the height of the Covid period. That's kind of disappeared again now. But the support was targeted primarily to hospitality. So things like attractions, and small accommodation fell through the gaps, which I think is a point that's already been made.

We're still suffering, if that's the right word a sense of 'Wales is full', when it's not; actually we're still way behind our maximum capacity. But I don't know if that's for this Inquiry, but that's actually lit the fire under some of the policy decisions post-Covid that are directly to do with Covid. Things like tourism tax and the effect on second homes, which perhaps would have been further down the line had we not had Covid.

I particularly wanted to raise the question of the legislative approach. I think this happened more or less everywhere. Sometimes – I don't know maybe I'm wrong on this one for other parts of the UK, but certainly within Wales, because of the use of something called the 'made affirmative procedure' to introduce all the regulations, the timeliness of the Senedd being able to sign off those regulations wasn't always very evident; in fact, regulations would sometimes expire before the Senedd had the opportunity to look at them. So in terms of constitutional procedure, maybe that could be built into the legislation side.

What else did I want to say that hasn't already been said? Oh, yes, attendance at place of work. Now, obviously, as somebody mentioned earlier, you can't really do a lot of tourism remotely. And I wonder if there's going to be any examination of – I think this might have been raised actually, not just the mental health of people who are in work, but the effects on those who couldn't be in work. And then the knock-on effect to staff who had to be in work, if that makes any sense. So the actual staffing question is a big one, because obviously, we're short of staff as well now. I think everything else I wanted to say has been said, just to make life a bit easier for us.

**Ben Connah:** [00:40:58] Suzy, thank you. I'm really grateful. And you've made me think, again, about the poor Cornish fishing villages that had to put up with me turning up for my summer holiday for the past two years, when they wouldn't have been expecting me. But yes, it's really well made.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:41:12] I'm sure you were lovely.

**Ben Connah:** [00:41:14] I tried to be.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:41:16] You didn't ask for Uber Eats and 'Where's my Deliveroo?' when you're in the middle of nowhere.

**Ben Connah:** [00:41:20] Thanks very much indeed. I'm really keen to move us on but both Marc/Marks have got their hands up. Marc Crothall was first and then we'll hear from Mark Tanzer who I might ask to say the last word on question one.

**Marc Crothall:** [00:41:34] Thanks, Ben. Just building on Suzy's points. I think the impact on the outdoor rural communities, we saw it certainly in Scotland, mass exodus from city centres into parts of the country where the infrastructure just wasn't capable of responding to the volumes of people that went there. And also, you got into the behaviour of these. And again, blockades and barriers put up saying, 'Go home, we don't want you.' I think the cross-border piece, we had some unfortunate incidents at Gretna Green saying, 'Go home English, you're not welcome,' which didn't help at all.

So and coupled with that is also the other thing around the travel infrastructure. Obviously, Scotland, we have a wide range of islands as well. And obviously, the ability to be able to keep

those communities connected with the infrastructure in situ was very constrained both from a supply chain perspective, but also just in any way going back to recovery of when we did have a window to travel, the capacities etc., that were permitted due to the guidance that was set were very, very constrained. And then the last point was just I think somebody mentioned earlier, the timing of announcements to when guidance became rubber stamped and legal in terms of the industry being able to then respond and adapt was not exactly timely. And it could have been better. So something that could be looked at as well. Thank you.

**Ben Connah:** [00:42:53] Thanks very much, Marc. And finally, Mark Tanzer from ABTA.

**Mark Tanzer:** [00:42:57] Morning, everyone. So, ABTA's members account for a large part of the outbound part of the travel sector that Kurt referred to. I really just wanted to emphasise again, the international collaboration aspect of this or the lack of it, particularly as you look towards preparations for future pandemics. I think the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry gives an opportunity to start doing things differently. There wasn't, you know, sharing of data, right through to common approaches to definitions around children vaccination, who's vaccinated, who's not, and even now with vaccine certificates. And recognising that different countries will have the autonomy over their own health strategies, and I do think that the Inquiry needs to look at areas where international data sharing, process sharing, and standards were not there. And that really is a huge impediment to people's confidence to travel and the cost involved in testing – countries put in place tests that aren't required and so forth.

So I think if the Terms of Reference make reference to a reasonable regard to relevant international comparisons, I just think if that could be strengthened into something more like, potential for collaboration, because that was very much missing from our perspective in outbound travel. Thank you.

**Ben Connah:** [00:44:27] Marc. Thank you, really clear and helpful. Thanks very much indeed. So I'm going to move us on if I may. And as I said, I make no apology for the fact that the first question is the meatiest and therefore we were inevitably going to spend more time on that. I'll ask for rather quicker responses, if I may, to the second question, which is around which issues or topics do you think the Inquiry should look at first in general and in the context of your own sector. Feel free if you've got views to put your hands up. If you don't, I'm very happy to move on to other questions. This one hasn't always been one of our top scoring questions, it has to be said. Joanne – always quick with the trigger.

**Joanne Stuart:** [00:45:19] I know. It is very difficult because obviously, you look at all of this, and it's all very important. And I do think that this year round, you know that that approach across the UK regions and that divergence, I think, is really important, because that sort of sets the tone. And when that started to diverge, that really caused major issues. And so I think that is something that should be looked at. So that would be sort of my thought on that.

**Ben Connah:** [00:45:57] Thank you very much Joanne, I had a feeling that someone was going to say divergence given that most people have come to that. So I'm not surprised to hear that; that's very helpful. Kurt.

**Kurt Janson:** [00:46:08] My view is that what it should focus on the first instance, is kind of what should and needs to be done now going forward. As I said at the outset, we are still kind of in a Covid crisis in the tourism industry. So anything that looks at what can be done to support businesses, to support the recovery of the industry, to give immediate help to businesses, and people and communities now would be most appreciated. And then we can maybe go back and look at processes for future situations and future coordination. But there is an immediate need for support for the industry. And if we can focus on that, that would be great.

**Ben Connah:** [00:46:58] Great, thanks very much, Kurt. Suzy, you found your hand.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:47:03] Yes, I did. Thank you. So it's a related response really, which is about business survival, why those that survived did and why they didn't. And maybe some level of research done into how many of the business failures were new, or relatively new and therefore unable to meet various process requirements? And then secondly, recovery of whatnot, was a staffing within the entire industry, really, I suppose those are related. That's a going forward question, isn't it? But that in itself is also related to the reputation of the industry. Why would people want to or not want to work in it?

**Ben Connah:** [00:47:40] Yeah, quite. Thank you very much, indeed. And Marc?

**Marc Crothall:** [00:47:44] Yeah, thanks. I would echo what Kurt said, I think this Inquiry is obviously going to come at a cost. So, you know, we need to be able to make sure that the cost delivers some outcomes and sort of actions that can support a sector, that is now feeling the double whammy of the implications of what's happening in Ukraine on top of other potential policy decisions that the issues around workforce as Suzy's just referred to. So accelerating some form of outcome that helps the sector recover to where it needs to be or where it was. We've all fallen from really high times in 2019 and contributing significant sums to the Treasury as well.

So we are there as a sector that can recover quickly, with the right support, and in response to start paying back some of the burden of debt that's been incurred as well. And the fiscal challenges for business remain very current. And I go back to Joss's point around the UK, all of us collectively staying competitive, we have to be able to invest in the assets and be accessible, and in the workforce and restore that confidence quickly. So we can be the competitive country, the destination that we weren't before, and obviously help rebuild the economies. Because the one thing that Covid has done, I think has demonstrated to one and all when tourism stops, the wider impact is felt far and wide across a range of different households and employment areas.

So that to me is how can we get an immediate response of positive stuff rather than too much reflection on the past around process which can and needs to come in the event that this may happen again, God forbid, especially given the amount of money that is likely to be spent on bringing the Inquiry to conclusion. Thank you.

**Ben Connah:** [00:49:47] Thanks very much indeed, Marc. And I know that Baroness Hallett, the Chair, is acutely aware of the need for timely recommendations that have a real impact because you're right, this is quite an undertaking and she's as keen as anyone to make sure that that it is as helpful as possible as quickly as possible. Thank you.

I will come to Joanne and then Suszy, but can I just check whether anyone else wants to make any points on this question? If not, I will ask Joanne, and then Suzy, to close us out on this one, please.

**Joanne Stuart:** [00:50:22] Thanks. Just a quick one, maybe more from an individual perspective, but it's something about the unintended consequences of the pandemic, particularly the impact from a health and educational perspective. And so, obviously, we heard a lot around, people unable to get cancer treatments and the consequences of that, but particularly around mental health, particularly for people, older people, those with special needs. This is something I think we probably all have seen with older parents - just that mental impact, I think, is something that is a crisis, that is with us, that has to be dealt with. Also education and the amount of time that children were out of educational settings, and the future impact of that, which obviously, will impact on the economy as well. So I think there's something around that that needs to be looked out.

**Ben Connah:** [00:51:19] Yes, thanks very much indeed Joanne. Suzy, did I see your hand?

**Suzy Davies:** [00:51:26] Yeah, but I realised I can ask it in the next session. Sorry.

**Ben Connah:** [00:51:32] In that case, I will move us on if I may to question three, which refers to what I'm learning is a kind of age-old question in public inquiries. And it tries to get to the tension between the amount of depth into which a public inquiry can delve and the amount of detail that it can look at, and the length of time it takes. So Baroness Hallett is keen to understand whether you think the Inquiry should set a proposed end date for its public hearings, so as to make sure that there are timely findings and recommendations.

Of course, the trade-off here is around the fact that we haven't yet begun gathering evidence, we haven't yet begun taking statements and really filling out what goes beneath these Terms of Reference. And so there is a risk of setting an end date at this stage. But it would be really good to get the views of your sector if we can on the pros and cons of that. And I'll start with Suzy.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:52:43] Thank you. Yeah, I wonder if any consideration has been given to a two-stage report with a fairly swift report on the economic consequences and recommendations for recovery. I'm thinking about things like the VAT situation and the reduction in business rates, both of which are extremely helpful, but they're likely to fade out before we get any, you know, full report from this Inquiry. So that's a possibility.

But otherwise, it can't go on too long. But you do need the public's confidence that, you know, a very thorough job has been done. So I don't know how long these things take. But some judicial things have gone for 12 years. We don't want that. Is a year too short? I don't know. But certainly that economic one, and how to fix things quickly bit can come out as a separate report, maybe.

**Ben Connah:** [00:53:36] Thanks very much. Indeed, so the very final line of the Terms of Reference says that the Inquiry will produce its reports, including interim reports, and recommendations in a timely manner. So I think, you know, envisaged there in what the Government has provided to Baroness Hallett is an interim report or reports. Of course, what it doesn't say, is what the subjects of that report ought to be. So that's really very helpful indeed.

And you're absolutely right about public confidence. It's, you know, finding a way to walk that line between making sure that we go into sufficient depth to maintain public confidence, but also not taking so long that we lose the public's confidence. Yeah, this is why we're asking the question. Anybody else on this one? Kurt.

**Kurt Janson** [00:54:28] Yeah, I just wanted to back Suzy's approach; I think it would be enormously beneficial to our sector to have an interim report that focused on what can be done here and now to recover the industry. Before we get a more in-depth report about some of the kind of broader socio-economic impacts on the UK which will take a lot of time to go through. But we would really appreciate something more immediate that helps businesses and people who are in the situation that they're in right now.

**Ben Connah:** [00:55:18] Great. Thanks. Perfectly clear. Marc.

**Marc Crothall:** [00:55:23] Yeah, I suppose just to add to Kurt and Suzy's points, and which I agree with, as well. I know this is a Covid Inquiry, but you can't underestimate the impacts that are being felt right now due to other matters that are taking place in Ukraine and elsewhere. So it's compounding the challenge for the business. So a reasonably swift [inaudible] into an interim report with hopefully some positive actions that can be taken to also help compensate and other impacts that, as you say, are coming our way, fast and furious.

**Ben Connah:** [00:56:00] Thanks very much indeed. Marc. Any other views on this third question? No one's told me whether we should set an end date for hearings? And I must confess, you're not the first group of people who haven't pinned their colours to the mast on this. Joanne, are you going to?

**Joanne Stuart:** [00:56:22] Yes, I think you have to, and I suppose in Northern Ireland, we've had our fair share of very sensitive inquiries – public inquiries and judicial inquiries – that have gone on for years and years and years and years and years. It doesn't really get anybody anywhere. So whether that is – you know, it could be five years, but I think as long as you're able to do those interim reports then there is this longer time that is allowed for those that suffered, had bereavements, etc. I think you do have to give some time, but it has to have an end date, because it will just continue. And as I say, everybody is just kept in limbo. And really, it's very hard to move forward. So I would definitely be one for setting an end date.

**Ben Connah:** [00:57:24] Very clear, and decisive. Thank you very much indeed. Suzy.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:57:27] Well, I was going to say in terms of accountability. I mean, how realistic is it to aim before the end of this Parliament? I mean, obviously, it's the specific government in four nations as well, who've made the decisions, and they're the ones that should answer for them. So I don't know if that's helpful or not really. They won't like it near an election time any of them, will they?

**Ben Connah:** [00:57:49] No, but we're an independent inquiry.

**Suzy Davies:** [00:57:51] Exactly.

**Ben Connah:** [00:57:52] Thank you, Marc.

**Marc Crothall:** [00:57:56] Well, I guess there's milestone dates. I mean, it's two years tomorrow, Scotland went into its first lockdown. So, you know, the longer it goes on – things can drift. And so – and the impact – it could be too late. I think going back to Kurt's point around the sort of fragility that still exists within the sector, there's a good amount of it. And going back to the point around competitiveness, we have to be back being competitive on a global stage as best as we possibly can. So – but whether there's anniversary dates that you aligned to outbreak announcements, which people would probably associate more so with, then that would be a suggested timeline, but I'm not wanting to pin up dates to a mast. Let's put it that way. So we'll let Joanne do that; she's closer to you than I am at the moment in a physical sense.

**Ben Connah:** [00:58:48] True enough, thank you very much. Indeed, yeah, we're acutely aware that the timing of our consultation exercise aligns with many of the anniversaries that mean a lot to people at this time. Kurt.

**Kurt Janson** [00:59:03] I'd just say I would go for the shorter and sharper approach. We, as a global economy, we're not out of Covid. And it's not beyond the realms of possibility that a new strain comes along that is resistant to vaccines and we kind of have to fall back into the process that we've gone through over the last two years. So it would be a shame if the Inquiry got overtaken by events rather than be able to come out with findings and implement changes before maybe another wave hit. So the longer it goes on, the more chance there is of the Inquiry being overtaken by events.

**Ben Connah:** [00:59:56] Yes, thanks very much, Kurt. Really helpful to hear that, but as you I imagine we're acutely aware of that and keen to crack on ourselves. Thank you very much all.

I'm going to move us on to our fourth and final question. So we are really keen – including, of course, the Chair – to make sure that the Inquiry is designed and run in a way that puts the voices of those who have suffered hardship, whether that's through bereavement or through some other harm, as a result of the pandemic, at the centre of our work. And so we're really keen to get views on how we can make sure that those voices are heard by the Inquiry, whether through formal evidence or through other means.

And in particular, because I think it's fair to say that, in the usual general run of the mill dialogue on these issues, the plight of holiday homeowners or coach operators isn't necessarily the first thing to trip off the tongue. So getting views on how we can harness the voices of those people in your sectors who have been particularly harmed would be really helpful to us. Marc.

**Marc Crothall:** [01:01:22] There lies a real challenge for you, I think, from somebody, and I'm sure my colleagues were the same, receiving upwards of 450, 500 emails a day and phone calls from the outset from every individual that operates in the sector that we know of, and otherwise was extremely difficult to manage. There's a lot of repetition of the same issue. And that's not taking anything away from them anybody who chose to feed in but I guess, the way we brought together coordinated evidence to submit to Scottish Government ministers for funding allocation was through a weekly convening of our council made up of 30-odd sectoral groups with a capture of issues, logs, etc, and fed into the emergency response group.



So I guess there's already some chapter and verse, which is fairly detailed, that does exist certainly within our networks that can be shared, because it was openly transparent. But the theory is, I suppose, if you want to go in a timely fashion, then you invite and open up the door as wide as you can – to everyone, because everybody has been affected. The Inquiry itself could be completely swamped. And, you know, there is probably some headline evidence that has come from sectoral groups, trade bodies, etc., that is in existence already for consideration and review by the committee.

**Ben Connah:** [01:02:56] Thanks, Marc. That's a theme that we've heard coming up in other roundtable meetings as well, that we shouldn't be trying to reinvent the wheel here. Others that have gone before us who have already captured an awful lot of the insight from those who are affected. That's very helpful. And we may beg your indulgence to come back to you at some point on that. Suzy.

**Suzy Davies:** [01:03:21] Yes. Thank you. I mean, this is specific to Wales. So sorry, everybody else, but I'm looking for some ideas from yourselves. Because our Visit is a Government department. It's quite difficult to treat them as an independent investigator in these circumstances, nothing personal against anybody who's a member of Visit Wales, of course. Organisations like ourselves, of course, can do with the survey work, although there's a bit of survey burn-out here in Wales at the moment for those policy areas I mentioned earlier.

But is there any merit in considering how to use elected representatives to hold specific surgeries in their constituencies, completely without rosettes on obviously, they're there as representatives, and maybe they can do it for other industries and public sector activities as well? I mean, that's one way of making sure we can reach every constituency, isn't it?

**Ben Connah:** [01:04:17] Yeah, thanks, Suzy. I don't think I've come across that idea before. And it's one that we ought to think about. Thank you. Joanne.

**Joanne Stuart:** [01:04:26] The other option is your chambers. So most cities and towns and areas will have Chambers of Commerce. And so that may be another way. But like Marc and Suzy, obviously as the Alliance and we do represent all of the different sub-sectors within the tourism economy. So from a perspective of surveys and that type of thing, we see that as something that we can help. Obviously, there is lots of evidence that was produced throughout the last two years, so maybe there is some sort of sharing the information that we all have, but you may want to consider doing the evidence regionally, as there is stuff that is very specific to the the different regions.

So, you may want to do that, and then that also gives you the option of producing information on a devolved nation as well as then up for a UK perspective. I think one of the things around bereaved people as well, is maybe working with the likes of your arts organisations, around how you can engage. So merely having a project that bereaved people – you know, where they can share. So there's two aspects to it; there's sharing the experience that they had, and then identifying things that could have been done better and things that we need to learn from. I also think there's a way of letting people talk about the grief and the impact. And that's something that maybe could be done as a more creative, artistic type project across the regions, which may

enable you to do a report slightly quicker around the recommendations, but also, people that have been bereaved believe that they haven't been forgotten. And it could be more around, how do we remember those that were lost through the pandemic, but in a different way, rather than through this Inquiry?

**Ben Connah:** [01:06:30] That's great, Joanne, thanks very much indeed. So we're already thinking along some of those lines, although not all of them it has to be said. So we're thinking about whether, as you say, some parallel process that's perhaps less formal and less legalistic, but that enables people to be heard and to tell us their experiences and perhaps feel some catharsis and that they and their loved ones haven't been forgotten. I really like the idea of using arts organisations. Thank you. I missed whose hand went up next, so I'm going to go for Kurt, because I don't think we've heard from him on this one yet, please.

**Kurt Janson** [01:07:11] I was going to say it was Marc that got in first, so I will defer to him.

**Ben Connah:** [01:07:19] The floor is yours, Marc

**Marc Crothall:** [01:07:21] Generous of you, Kurt. Thank you very much. I think there's another really important group of people that need to be considered in this piece of feedback. And that's young people, the younger generation in the schools, obviously, kids who've been at home and witnessing their parents work from home, and living through the process, and who often in that cohort are probably maybe, at times a bit reserved about speaking out in certain types of forums.

So whether or not the education sector is suitably skilled and comfortable with actually having that conversation with the younger generation, they're the ones that are going to be shouldering most of this debt, etc. I think they are, yes, the bereaved are obviously critical. But that group of people, that younger generation are absolutely essential, I think, in trying to foster their sentiments and I guess their thoughts on perhaps, ways forward as well.

**Ben Connah:** [01:08:23] Thank you very much, Marc. And Kurt.

**Kurt Janson** [01:08:28] Yes, I was thinking if you kind of wanted to get stories and personal experiences from a tourism perspective, we have Destination Management organisations throughout the UK, which are responsible for the tourism and visitor economy in particular regions. So my thought would be to think about rather than obviously contact all of them, maybe do some case studies i.e., a city-based destination, a rural destination, and maybe a seaside destination. A lot of the themes and comments will probably be very similar. So kind of a case study process is probably an easy way of dealing with that, while covering a range of different circumstances. And so that will be easy to coordinate through the local destination management organisation and a particular area. And we can help with contacts.

**Ben Connah:** [01:09:35] Great. I was going to ask exactly that. That kind of proportionate approach is the Holy Grail, I suppose we're seeking, right across the Inquiry. We can't talk to absolutely everybody and find every single piece of paper but at the same time, we want to make sure that we've got a broadly representative view so that sounds great. I've not come across Destination Management organisations. So we may well come back to you on that. Thank you. Marc, was that your hand?

**Marc Crothall:** [01:10:07] Yeah, I suppose just jumping in there again. The mechanics of gathering feedback through our own industry council group of 35 plus, we have a separate destinations forum of 40-odd destination groups that meet regularly to feed into that network – many of them are actually operated by the Chambers of Commerce as well, which Joanne referred to earlier on. But I'll just go back to the point - certainly, from a Scottish perspective, we have a huge amount of collected data already. To Suzy's point around elected members, I think if you were to look at any MP or MSP's inboxes, you could probably harvest a huge amount of response and factual evidence around impacts through their own communications with constituents in the past.

So businesses, I think, what mustn't be forgotten as well, we're very time precious now, even more challenged because of the lack of workforce that these businesses have got. So to get qualitative feedback, when they're up against trying to sort of still survive and be competitive again, also, maybe challenging to the point of convening people, asking them to regurgitate a lot of what's already been provided in different forms. So through, as I say, the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group, we could, again, provide all of that sort of data set that you might want to consider as well. The forums exist, and like Kurt, I'm happy to facilitate any additional activity that you want to do.

**Ben Connah:** [01:11:50] That's great. Thanks very much Marc. So you're making some very generous offers at the moment. Forgive me if I don't take them up immediately. There's a provision in the Inquiries Act that means that the Inquiry simply isn't allowed to take evidence until it's formally set up. And we haven't been formally set up yet. Which is why I'm not pouncing on these yet. But rest assured, we will keep these in mind.

I'll come to you Joanne, and then I'd just be keen to give Henk or Mark Tanzer the floor in case they want to let us know about some of perhaps the bigger organisations that have suffered and whether they've got any views on how they might be hurt by the Inquiry. But Joanne.

**Joanne Stuart:** [01:12:32] Yes, thank you. It's just a question, really. Is the Inquiry going to be engaging with the devolved assemblies? And politicians? Obviously, as Suzy has said, we're not aware of a Covid-19 inquiry that's going to be run by the Northern Ireland Assembly. So I just wanted to – are they stakeholders or will they be asked for evidence?

**Ben Connah:** [01:13:00] So I can't pre-empt the decisions that the Chair will make. But that said, I would be staggered if politicians in all four nations are not asked to give evidence in some form or another. The different government departments in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, who hold evidence on this will certainly be contacted and asked for that evidence in that proportionate manner that I'm hoping we can find. Thanks, Joanne. Joss.

**Joss Croft:** [01:13:30] Yes, thank you, just a couple of points on that. I think what might be useful here is splitting out the bereavement piece. Obviously, people who have lost friends or colleagues or relatives, you know, is probably the most significant form of bereavement. There's also kind of a business bereavement that people are struggling with at the moment; I've come across a couple of companies who have spent the past 25 years building up their business from nothing. They've developed a team of 20, 25 people that have been with them for that period of

time; just as things are opening up, they suffer from a lack of working capital, and their business has gone under.

There's an element of bereavement there, I'm not trying to belittle the personal bereavement by any means here. But I think the Inquiry might be well served by splitting that out in terms of the kind of business bereavement side from the personal bereavement side as well. That's just one thought.

Then the second thing is back to Marc's points around data and how much we have of it. We already survey our members, as I'm sure most of the people on this call will be doing in terms of the surveys that we have asked go out on typically a quarterly basis. There would be no problem whatsoever of including the Inquiry's research requirements within those. We just need to know when those might be coming along so that we can plan those in. But I'm sure all of us will have those means to get to some of these people who you want to hear from. So yeah, just count us in. But again, we just need to know so that we can profile those in so that we're not duplicating and we're not enforcing survey ennui upon these people as well.

**Ben Connah:** [01:15:14] I quite understand that Joss; that's generous and very helpful. Thanks very much indeed. Right. I think we may have wended our way to the end of that question. And therefore, to the end of our consultation. I'll just leave the floor open for a minute or two for any last thoughts on any issue. Kurt?

**Kurt Janson** [01:15:44] Yeah, it's just a small thing. But I think something that should be kept in mind from a travel and tourism perspective, in that travel and tourism in the UK is very dependent on the country's natural historic and cultural assets, that is what people go and visit and see. And kind of what we sell to them.

I've got a very big concern that with the problems that businesses have had for the last couple of years, there's going to be a lack of investment in those resources, which would have implications for the future. For example, one of our members is the historic houses, which are privately-owned stately homes. And the lack of maintenance and upkeep in those homes has been phenomenal over the last two years, with owners looking at selling off some of their property or paintings or that type of thing, to support their business. So it's just having a look at what impact this has had on the resources on which our industry is based.

**Ben Connah:** [01:17:07] So thanks very much indeed, Kurt. Suzy.

**Suzy Davies:** [01:17:12] Just finally, for me, just in case retail is being dealt with separately in the Inquiry, it's worth remembering that retail is also a big part of tourism. And if there's any need to find some space for crossover in the types of questions you might be asking them. Okay. Thanks.

**Ben Connah:** [01:17:27] Yeah, thanks, Suzy, it's a really good point. There were a great many crossovers in the draft Terms of Reference as they stand. But you're absolutely right tourism, retail are two obvious ones that we mustn't forget. Thank you. Marc.

**Marc Crothall:** [01:17:42] I suppose one last point is the significance of the supply chain to our industry, in all the other ways, and its consequences of breaking down or becoming broke. And the impact on the ability to deliver front-end and needing in the future is another sector; retail is

one thing but certainly, supply chain, we're also integrated. And that goes back to my point earlier about when tourism stops, basically, then the consequences in the knock-on impacts into the whole raft of different sectors of the economy and people's lives has certainly been felt.

**Ben Connah:** [01:18:21] Quite. Thank you. Joanne.

**Joanne Stuart:** [01:18:27] Yeah, just, again, it's more about the impacts of what this is going to do to us moving forward. And there is the impact on the workplace and how people want to work. And I think that has also impacted on our difficulties with getting the staffing levels we have. So obviously, you know, a lot more about hybrid, but we're having to rethink and be very agile with regards to, how are we going to manage that going forward? So I think, again, it's another unintended consequence or, you know, outcome of the pandemic.

**Ben Connah:** [01:19:05] Yes, quite true. Thank you very much, indeed. And thank you all. I said at the beginning, I was really grateful to you for joining us. And, that was an incredibly helpful and insightful session on an issue that I personally know far less about than I perhaps ought to, but I feel like I've been educated today. And we will continue with that education over the course of the Inquiry.

Now, of course, not everything that we've discussed today will make its way into the final version of the Terms of Reference, I'm certain of that; the Terms of References you have seen are designed to be a set of pegs on which we can hang various issues for investigation within the Inquiry. But some of the issues that you've raised today, especially those around divergence across the four nations, which is something that we've been talking quite a lot about in other sessions, but also with international partners, including the Republic of Ireland, and between parts of the section within the UK and especially Kurt your point about tiers is really well made. And, really helpful for us to reflect on as we take this work forward.

I think we heard a fair bit today about statistics and the need to make sure that decisions are, and indeed can, be based on data. And that I'm sure is something that we'll be looking at not just in the context of your sector, but in others too; a really helpful reminder though, that we need to make sure that we have a focus on that.

You very generously offered at several points over the course of this to share with us data or insight that you've already got, or to help us out in collecting some of our own. And I'm very grateful for that. And as I say, when we begin the process of going out there a bit more widely and a bit more formally, we might well come back to you on those points.

And, yeah, I won't insult your intelligence by trying to summarise everything that you've helped us with today, because there was so much in it. But do rest assured, as I said at the beginning, this session has been recorded, there will be a transcript made available at the end of our consultation process. And that transcript itself will be read into the analysis for the Terms of Reference exercise. I'll say a few closing words. But Mark, you've got your hand up.

**Mark Tanzer:** [01:21:43] Yeah, you might be covering this. Can you just say about our onward communication of our engagement in this and what we'd like and what – I mean, in terms of talking to members about what we're doing or talking publicly about this session or other sessions? I'm not quite sure what the confidentiality parameters are around the Inquiry.

**Ben Connah:** [01:22:02] Sure, yeah. So we're not advertising these widely, but there is absolutely nothing to stop you from letting your members know that you've been involved in this conversation. We are clear on our website that one of the things that we're doing in addition to the online public offering is going around the country and talking to different groups of people. So we've absolutely no problem with you letting your members or letting the public know that you've been involved in this conversation.

Obviously, if you were to put a positive spin on it, we'd be most grateful. We're at the beginning of our work and keen to build and then maintain public confidence. But what you say is entirely for you. I think in the interests of not providing a running commentary on the consultation process, we won't be putting out the detail of what was discussed today until the end of the consultation process. So I might ask you to be a little discreet on the detail. But you know, Mark, you made a couple of very good points. And I don't see any problem with you sharing those with your members; I'm sure they came from them in the first place.

Great, thanks very much indeed. So a quick reminder that Martin, our counsellor is available today and after this session if there is anything that today's session just brought back or triggered for you. It just remains for me to reiterate my thanks and the thanks of Lady Hallett, the Chair. Thank you for your incredibly valuable contributions. Bye.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]