CBI submission to the Global Travel Taskforce – November 2020

Business welcomes the creation of a Global Travel Taskforce as an opportunity to ensure consumer confidence and demand for travel into and out of the UK recovers. It will be critical that, ahead of the lifting of the ban on international travel for non-work and study related travel, action is already taken to accelerate the UK's recovery of international connectivity. This will enable vital business travel to key markets, provide greater freight capacity for exporters, and ensure a return to the free flow of tourists and talent that helped drive growth in the UK economy pre-pandemic. To achieve this, business believes that the taskforce must take the following actions:

1. **Immediately implement a robust and affordable testing regime for international arrivals that will significantly reduce quarantine times.**
   - The private sector has shown that it has the capacity to deliver a fast and effective screening regime for travellers into the UK without exposing the public to undue risk, or significantly restricting wider testing availability.
   - The government now needs to match this with an appropriately balanced approach to the risks related to different models of containing the international spread of Coronavirus. This should acknowledge the negative impact low compliance with the current quarantine arrangements is having on public health.
   - The government must push ahead with its planned 'test to release' system ensuring that by 1st December quarantine times are no more than 5 days for those who test negative for Coronavirus. Any longer would not have a noticeable impact on demand for international travel, nor would it noticeably increase public compliance.
   - This should be the first step and should be followed soon afterwards by setting up a test on departure regime that will eradicate the need to quarantine for arrivals. This will reduce risks by removing the need to rely on public compliance with quarantine measures.
   - A working test on departure regime would protect jobs at operators, airports and in firms all along their supply-chains, while rebuilding the business case for operating routes that link UK cities with the world economy.
   - To secure significant uptake and parity of access, airports and ports are eager to support the government through the promotion and sale of approved testing products. The government should also work with providers to keep screening costs to a minimum, considering an initial subsidy for tests if necessary.

2. **Put in place a longer-term framework for official travel advice and improved screening regimes to further reduce costs and quarantine times.**
   - Any screening system announced after the initial findings of the Global Travel Taskforce are presented to the Prime Minister must be considered as just the first step towards rebuilding demand for international travel.
   - The government should reappraise how it sets foreign travel advice due to the spread of Coronavirus, accepting that effective testing on departure should significantly reduce the risk of transmission from overseas compared to current arrangements. Any changes to this advice should be such that businesses and consumers are provided with greater foresight and a better evidence base for why they were made.
   - The taskforce must also lay out a clear framework for further reducing quarantine periods and costs for international arrivals from all destinations through improved data and investment in rapid testing technology. The expectation should be that, using a test on departure regime, quarantine periods and costs for screening are negligible long before the 2021 summer travel season.

3. **Commit to working multilaterally with international partners to facilitate a global return to flying and rebuild demand for the UK's leading aerospace sector.**
   - Most of all, the government must recognise the inherently multi-lateral nature of rebuilding demand for international travel, taking a leadership role in the drafting and implementation of plans set out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).
   - To secure important routes into and out of the UK, the government must develop its expectations for test on departure in step with key partners in the EU, North America, Asia and elsewhere.
   - Where possible, the government should also push ahead with the establishment of region-specific travel corridors that link key trading partner cities and regions such as New York, Dubai and key European destinations with all UK airports.

4. **Ensure testing schemes meet the needs of business travellers, recognising the value of this type of journey to the economy, as well as the disproportionate disincentive of quarantine for short trips.**
   - As the government implements its plans to restart global travel, the government should consider the disproportionate effect the implementation of a long quarantine period has had on business travel.
   - The average business trip in the UK in 2019 was for less than 3 days, while many international trips are just for one day.[1] Facing even a 5 day quarantine period, many business travellers will be put off their journeys.
   - Quarantine has not only undermined the competitiveness of high value UK firms in manufacturing, the professional services and tech, but also harmed a significant supply chain of hospitality and other providers.
   - In the immediate term, taking a similar approach to major trading partners in Germany, Singapore, China and elsewhere, the government could fast-track the availability of minimum quarantine options for travellers who adhere to pre-agreed criteria ahead of visiting specific destinations. This could involve business travellers following controlled itineraries in host countries that are the responsibility of firms that sponsor their visit.
   - Ultimately, only the removal of the need to quarantine on arrival in the UK through test on departure will significantly rebuild business demand for outbound and inbound international routes.

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[1] Visit Britain, GB Tourism Survey 2019