

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

UKFT: Fashion "industry may well look very different in the future"

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United Kingdom's Princess Anne, The Princess Royal, inspecting the making of fabric at Harris Tweed's facility in Scotland's Hebrides. Image credit: Harris Tweed

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The umbrella body for the United Kingdom's fashion and textiles sector is working with the country's government to help those in the business that have fallen through the cracks.

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A letter to UKFT membership from chairman Nigel Lugg and CEO Adam Mansell outlined the how the trade association is in touch with the U.K. government and business lobby CBI. UKFT is clear that more needs to be done as their members' businesses are damaged by the COVID-19 lockdown.

"In all of these discussions we have welcomed the package of government support but we have been very clear that the schemes do not cover a significant number of businesses in our industry and that to avoid business closures and job losses more needs to be done urgently," Messrs. Lugg and Mansell said in the letter.

"We continue to push for a rates holiday for all, for support for those businesses who don't qualify for the Small Business Grants, for more flexibility in the furlough scheme and for support for those entrepreneurs and company owners that are at the heart of our industry."

"We know that retailers have been extending payment terms and, in some cases, asking for unrealistic discounts and we have raised our concerns over these practices to the government."

UKFT represents the interests of textile manufacturers who contribute materials include fabric and buttons that support the overall fashion apparel and accessories business. Princess Anne, The Princess Royal, is patron of UKFT.

Here is the letter from the UKFT leadership in its entirety:

A message from UKFT to the U.K. fashion and textile community

This is a very difficult time for our whole industry. As your trade association, UKFT is in close contact with the Government and other business organizations such as the CBI, and together we have been providing you with the

most up to date, relevant help and advice. We hope you have found this useful.

Three weeks ago we said we very much wanted to hear how the Covid-19 situation was affecting you, your team and your business. Thank you to all of you who have been in touch, the information you provide is invaluable in our efforts to represent the industry to the Government.

Since then we have been in very regular dialogue with the Government and other organizations such as the CBI. We have held regular discussions with civil servants and Ministers from BEIS, including being part of a conversation with Alok Sharma the Business Secretary. We have had very positive conversations with Graham Stuart, the Minister for Exports and Paul Scully the Minister for Small Business and their teams and we have been in close contact with the Cabinet Office team who are leading on the PPE issues. We have also prepared a briefing for Lord Deighton, the PPE Tsar, and have given detailed information to Sir Keir Starmer and other members of the Shadow Cabinet.

In all of these discussions we have welcomed the package of government support but we have been very clear that the schemes do not cover a significant number of businesses in our industry and that to avoid business closures and job losses more needs to be done urgently. We continue to push for a rates holiday for all, for support for those businesses who don't qualify for the Small Business Grants, for more flexibility in the furlough scheme and for support for those entrepreneurs and company owners that are at the heart of our industry.

We know that retailers have been extending payment terms and, in some cases, asking for unrealistic discounts and we have raised our concerns over these practices to the Government.

We are also working with the industry and with government to start to plan how the industry moves back to some semblance of normality. This may feel premature, but it is vital that we help our industry get back up and running as soon as possible and that the Government puts in place appropriate and well funded help and support.

The UKFT team are currently planning for bigger and better export activities and for a massive increase in the promotion of training and opportunities in the sector. As well as looking at opportunities for increasing the use of domestic manufacturing capacity. However, we are still very focused on offering immediate support and advice to our members.

The industry may well look very different in the future but the fashion and textile industry has always proved to be extremely resilient and we know our member will change and adapt to meet the new challenges ahead.

Stay well, stay in touch, and together we will face the uncertainties ahead.

Nigel Lugg and Adam Mansell

Chairman and CEO

UKFT

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