

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

UKFT asks fashion-community members to write MPs to pressure government on export, pandemic-related issues

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UKFT is looking to pressure the United Kingdom government to take actions to save fashion and textile designers from pandemic-related actions and inactions. Image credit: UKFT

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The U.K. Fashion & Textile Association is embarking on a drive to get members to write to their constituency's member of parliament to pressure government to act on several issues triggered by pandemic-related official actions.

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UKFT is calling on U.K. fashion and textile designers, manufacturers, brands and retailers to write to their MP as a pressure tactic. The goal is to ultimately pressure the country's finance minister and Department for International Trade for funding toward virtual trade shows that replaced physical events, export support and post-Brexit help with free-trade agreements.

"In our view, only the intervention of a lot of MPs across the various parties, could give us the chance to make a difference at this critical time," UKFT said in its letter to members.

"While the issues we are trying to get progress on relate to COVID-19, inevitably they also have a direct business on the U.K.'s trading relationship with Europe and the rest of the world from 1st January."

Choose wool

A simple way to support British wool...



66,796,800 People in the UK (2019)



27,000,000 KG of British wool (2019)

= 400g of greasy British wool per person (per year)
= 220g of processed clean British wool per person (per year)

Do your bit and support British Sheep Farmers!

It would take every person to buy...



2 balls of British wool knitting yarn

or



Half of a British wool pillow

or



One British wool Scarf

...to increase the demand for British wool.

UKFT is a strong supporter of British wool. Image credit: UKFT

Please see below for the entire letter to **UKFT** members and a template letter for them to write their MPs:

Calling all UK fashion and textile designers, manufacturers, brands and retailers ...

It's time to write to your MP

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UKFT has been and remains committed to working with the government to make sure that the industry gets the help, information and support we all need for businesses to survive in the short term and beyond the pandemic.

We have been in daily contact with the government and civil servants to exchange information and contacts. We have written to Ministers and MPs, as well as the key opposition parties on issues facing the industry. We have also participated in calls and Select Committees. We have submitted recovery strategies for the industry with requests for funding and additional support. We are represented on key committees and groups informing the government about the challenges facing the industry.

However, when it comes to support for our exporters we need your help in getting our message heard by the Chancellor and the Department for International Trade.

- The U.K. government has failed to support funding for virtual tradeshows that have replaced physical events such as Pitti Uomo and Premire Vision.
- We have yet to discover if we will be allowed to use unspent export support funding from 2020/21 in 2021/22
- In the midst of an extremely challenging business environment, the government is toughening the rules and conditions on access export support, which makes it more difficult for companies to claim grants
- Above all, there is a lack of any new activity for exporters to help them survive COVID-19 and prepare for the U.K.'s new Free Trade Agreements post Brexit

In our view, only the intervention of a lot of MPs across the various parties, could give us the chance to make a difference at this critical time. While the issues we are trying to get progress on relate to COVID-19, inevitably they also have a direct business on the U.K.'s trading relationship with Europe and the rest of the world from 1st January.

We are now asking you to help us by writing to your MP to outline the issues and challenges facing your export business and to ask for the MPs help in getting the government to support the industry in its efforts to safeguard its export business.

UKFT has prepared a template letter you may find useful but we hope you will amend the template to reflect the issues and challenges facing your business. In this way, we hope to make sure that MPs and ministers understand just how difficult business is for all at the moment. We also need companies to look beyond their own businesses

and to the longer term. If we allow our exports to slump then this will impact our U.K. manufacturing base and damage the whole U.K. fashion and textile supply chain.

The next six months will be critical and the industry needs the government to give what it alone can give: a level playing field for U.K. businesses, promotional support for our exporters and access to funding to make things happen. The industry will do the rest as it always has done.

Please help us to get the message across. If you are able to write to your MP, please let us know that you have done it so we can track the impact of our collective response. If you would like further information or to get more involved in the campaign, please email paul.alger@ukft.org

To find the contact details for your local MP, click [here](#).

Below is the template letter:

Please write your own letter to your MP and copy your industry trade association. This template is intended to get you started but it would be even better if you could write your own letter. Please send it to the MP where your business is physically based. You may copy your personal home MP if you think it's appropriate. MPs' details are at <https://members.parliament.uk/constituencies/>

[Name and address of your constituency MP]

[Email address]

[Date]

Dear [name]

Support for Exporters

I write to you as my Member for Parliament to ask you why the government is not doing much more to help and support UK exporters. I am [business title] of [name of business] based in [place]. We [produce/design/sell] [information on products or services] and we employ [number of people] in the UK. Exports account for ___% of our business.

[Short paragraph to explain the importance of exports and how the company (or industry in general) has been affected by Covid-19]

We have approached the UK Fashion & Textile Association (UKFT), which represents our industry, to ask what government support is available to us as a UK company. It is clear that, whilst our competitor nations have increased grants to encourage their exporters throughout Covid-19, no similar support has been offered to British exporters. Furthermore, there appears to be a blockage between the Department for International Trade and HM Treasury on how to use the already agreed budgets for the DIT Tradeshow Access Programme which we, as British exporters, would like to use for digital tradeshow.

In these extraordinary times, we are looking to the UK government to provide clarity of message, speed of response and leadership, to help businesses get back on their feet after Covid-19 and plan for 2021, when the UK should be actively working to build new relationships with the EU and the rest of the world. Our competitors are being hugely supported by their governments with grants of between 50% and 100% of all costs on digital virtual tradeshow. The UK is lagging behind and very few of us can afford to show on these platforms without government support.

I would like to ask you to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for International Trade to urge them to work together with our industry trade association to help us to save British jobs. In particular, in relation to the TAP scheme, we urgently need:

- TAP grants to be available for all UK companies to stimulate a return to exports and re-establish the UK in key export markets and create/save jobs for this to be in place by the end of October
- From October, confirm transfer of TAP budgets to virtual trade fairs which replace other agreed shows in the TAP programme within the current budget
- By November allow upspent money from 2020/21 to be rolled into 2021/22
- In conjunction with UKFT for DIT to produce an ambitious, well funded, global fashion and textile export campaign to help the industry reach significantly boost exports and find new markets

Now that the UK has left the EU, there is no reason why the UK government cannot decide to support our exporters at least to the same degree as the competition. We must not be put at a competitive disadvantage by our own government.

I hope you will agree to write to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State. I look forward to hearing from you and a copy of their reply.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Position]

Cc: Paul Alger MBE, international business director at UK fashion & Textile Association (UKFT)

Email: paul.alger@ukft.org

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