THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EVENTS INDUSTRY WEBINAR WITH PAUL BUSH | Q&A

Guidance

Questions:

- Can you share your thoughts on the likely phasing of events with regard to numbers/attendees? Is it likely that 500 might be an initial maximum, with distancing etc. still in place?
- What do you think the size limit will be for events, particularly for smaller events and awards from 100 or so upwards? When do you think they will come back?
- We all want to get back to normal as soon as we safely can, but we need to make the delegates and speakers feel safe to return. Firm guidelines from Scottish Government and EventScotland/Visit Scotland would help to create this safety for delegates to attend. Will you be publishing any guidelines?
- The Scottish Government suggests that Phase 3 is when live events will be permitted with restricted numbers, is there any idea of what 'restricted numbers' means? Is the size of the venue going to be considered when calculating crowd sizes (outdoor venue)?
- Will EventScotland be putting out any guidelines to help companies, as Scottish Government changes social distancing guidelines?

Answer: During our industry consultation, we received strong feedback from the events industry for the need for specific guidance for the sector and it is one of our key workstreams. Members of the EventScotland team are working with Scottish Government on this workstream to provide an advice framework for the events sector as to how events should and could be delivered when restrictions are lifted e.g. what social distancing measures, hygiene, cleaning etc.

Additionally, this workstream is working with Scottish Government to gain clarity on the classification and definition of different event types to help the sector understand how and when they might be able to re-start, and we would expect that to include a clear definition for ‘restricted numbers’.

Questions:

- Can we expect the distancing to change to one metre rather than two metres like other areas of Europe? That would certainly help some events survive.
- What are Paul’s views about social distancing in an outdoor environment as opposed to indoor locations?

Answer: The current policy from Scottish Government is two metres for both indoor and outdoor environments. Any adjustment to this will be made by Scottish Government and will be based on scientific advice.

Question: Will event organisers and operators be expected to provide some simple form of PPE (masks and gloves) to customers in addition to hand sanitisers and wiping down surfaces etc?

Answer: This is an area we are actively looking at as part of our advice and guidance workstream with Scottish Government and is also being considered in the review of EventScotland’s funding
programmes. However, it is clear that events will need to meet hygiene requirements and social distancing requirements in place at that time, and that could add an additional cost to the event.

**Questions:**

- What are your thoughts on when participation events can return? We organise mountain biking, road cycling and running events, all of which are participation focussed. When they can return, what restrictions will be in place?
- Is there any indication as to when outdoor participation events can recommence? (We run mountain biking, road cycling and running events). We have postponed our calendar until August onwards, but we need to start to let customers know. Can you offer any advice on the likelihood of such events being able to go ahead in 2020?
- How are the discussions around clarity on mass gatherings going?

**Answer:** The Scottish Government’s four phase route map details events returning in phases three and four and we are working with them to provide an advice framework for the events sector as to how events should and could be delivered when restrictions are lifted e.g. what social distancing measures, hygiene, and cleaning, as well as clarity on the classification and definition of different event types to help the sector. We don’t have a timescale at present for when events can return as we need to be guided by the scientific evidence and advice however, we will keep you updated as advice and timescales become clear.

**Question:** When test kit costs come down (in cost), and the time to implement such on site is also reduced, do you think testing pre-entry to an event would be possible?

**Answer:** This is another possible measure that could be considered by event organisers, along with other ways of monitoring and containing the virus such as the development of track and trace apps.

**Question:** Is there the potential of an advice line for ‘community event organisers’? Personnel working in events will quicker gain skills in dealing with the new situation. Community events are generally staffed by volunteers. It would be good to have guidelines available to assist those who don’t have the degree of expertise.

**Answer:** As events start to come back online, it will be important for us all to learn from the issues and challenges that appear along the way, and ensure that we communicate and improve our ways of working across the whole events community. It will be useful to think how we share and communicate those learnings. In addition to the advice and guidance which is currently in development for all the events industry, the [Events section of our VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitscotland.org) website contains tools and advice on planning and delivering events. Throughout the year we also hold a number of webinars, workshops and forums to support the sector. Follow us on Twitter [@EventScotNews](https://twitter.com/EventScotNews) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) for information on when these take place.

**Questions:**

- Other EU countries have started drive-in type events - movies/concerts/comedy/DJ events. When can we do this legally in Scotland? What is the guidance on this from EventScotland/VisitScotland and Scottish Government?
- We really need some rock-solid clear guidance on drive-in events. Can EventScotland/VisitScotland get some definitive guidance from Scottish Government so
we know where we are with this? For example, what Phase will drive-in events be allowed? Some are already planned - are they allowed?

**Answer:** As with any event, planning to hold events such as drive-in movies, concerts or performances will need the approval of their Local Authority and be in line with their licencing processes. In addition, any event will also need to be in line with the Scottish Government’s four phase route map. Sectoral guidance aligned to these phases will come from Scottish Government and we are working with them to develop more specific advice and guidance to sit alongside this. As part of this we will raise this specific question with the Scottish Government.

**Sustainability**

**Question:** There’s been a real push to make events more environmentally sustainable. Drive-in events may be a step towards getting events up and running again but how does this fit into sustainability agendas? Should we use this current situation as an opportunity to accelerate sustainability agendas?

**Answer:** The sustainability agenda is still very important, and we do have an opportunity to progress this. However, we must take a balanced approach as we get the industry going again. The implementation of new hygiene measures may present challenges, for example, the need for single use plastics, but this is a chance for the industry to be innovative and find ways to combine operating in the new norm while still meeting sustainability objectives.

Many event organisers have responded positively to the sustainability challenge and become high-profile ambassadors for the innovation that drives sustainability across the sector. The *Year of Coasts and Waters* is a good example of how the Scottish events industry had placed sustainability and responsible engagement at the heart of their event planning, so we should use the opportunity to continue that good work where possible.

**Learning and best practice**

**Questions:**

- Seoul, Korea has re-opened the international touring production of The Phantom of the Opera using temperature testing, audience health questionnaires and mandatory wearing of masks. However, they do not require social distancing. Thousands have attended these programmes without any reported further transmission of the disease. Do you see a similar system working in Scotland, and what else may we learn from other best practice countries?

- Could our events industry learn from those who have had to continue to run 'events' throughout lockdown and the venues who have had to host them with the strictest of restrictions in place and the most rigorous of hygiene programmes after every event, sometimes every hour... funeral directors and crematoriums? No cancellations possible.

**Answer:** It is important that we use this opportunity to observe and learn from those countries which have already reduced their restrictions, like for example South Korea and New Zealand, as well as other industries to help influence our own plans.
We will also learn from what’s happening here in the UK, with sports such as football, snooker and horse racing starting to return behind closed doors this week, providing the opportunity to test out safety measures.

It will be an ongoing process as we learn to live with the virus and any guidance will be in line with scientific advice. We will share any examples of best practice with the industry on VisitScotland.org and social media channels.

**Online events**

**Questions:**

- Do you think there will be an issue charging for live streamed events as so many have been free?
- Is it envisaged that online events could incorporate an advertising platform for tourism partners, who would normally be part of an event – i.e. retail?

**Answer:** Monetising digital content is a challenge, but it needs to be part of the recovery plans for the events industry. During this crisis we have seen first-hand how technology can keep us connected and events can use this technology to innovate how they deliver content as well as create a new revenue stream. There is a lot of opportunity in this area, including the opportunity for events to reach a wider, global audience. We recognise the importance of live streaming events and are looking into this through our Virtual and Digital Events workstream set up following our industry forums. It will then be up to individual events to determine how best to incorporate existing sponsors into online events.

**Question:** If there is a huge shift to online streaming of events, alongside live capacity, will these online audiences be counted towards our overall attendance figures - previously it was only "in-person" visits that counted?

**Answer:** Yes, in future online audience numbers could be included in overall attendance figures. We will need to look at the metric for how we measure this to ensure it is robust, but it is only right we reflect the reality of how we will be operating in the new norm.

**Business events**

**Question:** Would you agree that business events should be looked at separately given there is potential opportunity to apply more control with organisers and venues working together to reduce risk?

**Answer:** Business events typically take place in fixed, permanent venues which have existing operational and hygiene protocols which can be scaled up or down depending on the guidance or threat. Furthermore, delegate details will in all cases be known by the Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) or client, including their hotel, where they went during the conference dates (such as a gala dinner venue), their dates of arrival and departure, and in most cases which flight they arrived and departed on. This is invaluable for the ability to track and trace should it be required.
Event associations and partnership working

Questions:

- How is VisitScotland working together with the associations and bodies within the events industry e.g. Association of Event Organisers (AEO), Event Supplier and Services Association (ESSA) and Association of Event Venues (AEV) so that there’s joined up thinking?
- Interesting on the connection with VisitScotland and other associations (AEV/AOE/NAA & ESSA)?

Answer: We have established the national Events Advisory Group to provide advice on the issues facing the industry as well as a communication channel out to the wider industry and with the Scottish Government. More details on this group will be shared soon, however, we would expect them to work with other associations in the sector so there is joined up thinking.

Question: To accelerate Scotland’s recovery, we need to harness our collective inspiration, creativity, scientific advances, resilience and professionalism. How can we all contribute to the national effort and maximise our opportunity?

Answer: It is up to all in the sector to innovate and adapt to the new norm and part of the remit of the Event Advisory Group will be to bring the industry together to have a clear voice. EventScotland will also continue to deliver webinars and forums, and keep the dialogue running with the sector so we can harness our collective experience and share best practice.

Consumer insight

Questions:

- We need to understand exactly what the customer wants and what they will return to. We may have a desire to return to what we had (but in a different format) but will consumers want that or have the funds to do this in the future?
- As we move out of strict guidelines and are all tasked with decision making to move forward, what actions are being taken to consult with our audiences and customers?

Answer: Consumer confidence is vital to the event industry’s recovery. It is understandable during these unprecedented times that people’s attitudes may have changed and it is important we understand and respect that. Research into consumer sentiment and confidence is being undertaken across the sector. We have set up a dedicated section on guidance for event organisers in Scotland on VisitScotland.org to share research with the sector and will be regularly updating it as new insights emerge.

We acknowledge the delicate balance of the important impact events bring to host communities along with the anxiety host regions may have about hosting events and welcoming visitors. We expect community consultation will be critically important in the process of re-starting events.
Supply chain

Questions:

- Will we still have adequate contractors operating to allow the glut of events going forward to 2021?
- There are several initiatives for theatres and venues to represent the interests of organisations funded by Creative Scotland, local authorities, or Scottish Government. The Federation of Scottish Theatre are helping lead some of these initiatives, but there doesn’t seem to be clear sectoral representation for event suppliers (marquees, roadways, plant, AV suppliers etc.). Could you suggest anything that could help those businesses make their case for continuity support so that we retain a vibrant mix of event suppliers and service providers into 2021, where there’s a real risk that many suppliers will face significant financial difficulties without events to service?

Answer: We know the events supply chain is facing a huge challenge with the cancellation and postponing of events this year. Ensuring their survival is critical to the events industry recovering. This issue became evident in our industry forums and we have set up a specific workstream to understand the issues and challenges being faced by suppliers and what measures and support is required to ensure we have a supply chain to support the events industry to deliver post-COVID.

Question: Thinking about event transport providers - do you imagine independent travel will be encouraged? What this will mean for coach providers?

Answer: We expect independent travel to and from events will be many people’s preferred option as the events sector restarts. Coach providers will need to refer to Scottish Government sector guidance for transport and communicate to their customers how they will be able to operate safely within the new guidelines to provide consumer confidence.

Furlough

Questions:

- Are there discussions taking place between Scottish Government, Local Authorities and other venue operators about financial survival packages to help ensure that venues such as theatres, music venues and concert spaces survive after shutdown?
- Currently furlough looks like it will end for all industries at the same time across the board. Can EventScotland make representations to Scottish Government that the events industry may well be one of the last business activities to return to 'normal' and will need longer term support compared to, for example, construction or supermarkets?
- As furlough has now been confirmed as ending in October can you confirm if there will be any further support for our industry if it looks likely we cannot recommence activity until 2021?
- The bottom line is many of us have lost a year’s income which will make it virtually impossible to survive without support beyond furlough. How do we add pressure to the argument for further industry support beyond October?
- Thank you for addressing the furlough question. As you say we need to keep up the pressure for further support. How can we do this? Is this something you will drive forward?
**Answer:** Feedback from the industry forums clearly highlighted this concern and the potential need for an extension to the furlough scheme for the events sector, with events not able to take place until phase three and four within the Scottish Government route map. This feedback has been shared with Scottish Government.

EventScotland will continue to discuss with Scottish Government but also need the sector to continue to lobby and make the point of the need for continued support. Based on feedback from the industry forums, an Events Advisory Group has been established to give a voice to the sector, this is a national advisory group established to provide advice on the issues facing the events industry with a direct line into Scottish Government. It is expected that issues including furlough will be addressed by this group.

**Funding**

**Questions:**

- Any news on EventScotland’s currently suspended National Programme funding?
- As an organisation who was ready to submit our round 45 National Programme application, do you have any update for us on changed funding?

**Answer:** Given the unprecedented nature and impact of COVID-19, we acknowledge the need to update EventScotland’s existing funding streams. The team is currently reviewing the criteria and application process to ensure future funding programmes are flexible and appropriate to meet the current crisis, and to be focused on supporting and re-establishing Scotland’s events industry as soon as the current restrictions are lifted.

Announcement on future funding will be shared soon on EventScotland channels including VisitScotland.org, Twitter @EventScotNews and LinkedIn so do follow our channels.

**Question:** If a Producer held an event in October 2019 for £X and the same event following public health advice could go ahead in October 2020 yet cost £X + 10% - is there any possibility of Government funding to cover these COVID-related costs?

**Answer:** We appreciate there will likely be increased costs for events to operate in the new norm as a result of COVID-19. This is being considered as part of EventScotland’s review of funding programmes. We will also continue to discuss this with Scottish Government officials, particularly when we start to get evidence from some of the first events to happen, including those taking place behind closed doors.

**Question:** With Job Retention Scheme (JRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) winding down from August to October, if the events industry is not at least 50% delivery capacity by then, there will be a mass migration of talent from the industry. How do we push for financial assistance targeted to the industry with extended grants and tax deferrals?

**Answer:** EventScotland is working with the industry and the Events Advisory Group to establish the financial and employment challenges that the events sector is facing. We want to hear from the industry about the potential impacts over the medium to long terms such as this, so that we can work with Scottish Government to establish whether the current support mechanisms are meeting the needs of the sector.
Insurance

Questions:

- Difficult to make a go/no go decision about an event in October where financial commitment starts in August. So much uncertainty about the near future and so much can change quickly. How can we insure against cancellation or get help underwriting losses?
- I have heard about some insurance companies quoting up to 700% higher for cover for events going forward, is EventScotland across this and is there a discussion to be had with insurance companies?

Answer: The challenges events have faced in recent months but also the concerns around securing insurance in the future has come through to us as a clear concern from the events sector. We are seeing some shifts in the market; some organisers have been repaid premiums when they were unable to draw down on cancellation costs so continue to liaise with your own insurer, this will be individual to each business and insurance policy. EventScotland and Scottish Government officials have met with the Association of British Insurers to raise this issue.

Question: The costs of cancellation insurance are becoming unaffordable for many events. Could the government develop a Government Indemnity Scheme such as exists for museums and galleries?

Answer: This specific question was raised in our industry forums. It along with the other feedback from the forums was collated and shared with Scottish Government. Read the summary of the forum feedback.

General

Question: What do you think the future of working visas such as Tier 4 and Permitted Paid Engagement visas will be considering the pandemic is global?

Answer: Visa regulations are managed through UK Government – they are not devolved to Scottish Government. We will raise this with officials at Scottish Government and come back with an answer at a later date.

Question: The events calendar in 2021/22 has become very busy from the knock-on impact of this year’s cancellations. What considerations are there for organisers and is there any central support to bring events together to coordinate the calendars in a fair way?

Answer: We acknowledge this could become a challenge and will continue to work with local, national and global partners to identify and avoid clashes where possible.