



19th February 2021

Dear Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP and Paul Scully MP,

Thank you for your letter dated 18th February in response to Fashion Roundtable's Open Letter, signed by over 455 industry signatories, dated 2nd February and subsequent follow up letters on the 9th and 16th February, regarding the impact of the UK-EU trade deal on the fashion and textiles industry and UK government policy and our possible sector facing solutions.

We would like to continue to request the opportunity to meet and discuss a full response to your points, as an email does not allow for sector engagement and solutions to issues, which are impacting on our industry already. While we wait for that opportunity, we would like to respond to the particular point raised within your letter as detailed below.

1. With regards to the below statement, please could you confirm who you are speaking to, so we are able to engage and ensure an aligned working group as we have not been included in the DCMS steering group, despite repeated requests, from ourselves and other stakeholders.

We are working closely with businesses in the fashion industry

2. In regards to the below statement, the fashion sector is rather wide reaching, complex and has many types of stakeholders within this who were not made aware of this meeting/webinar. Therefore we approached DCMS to offer a webinar in conjunction to support wider engagement. We do share the BEIS briefings which we receive daily and despite the fashion industry not being a part of the DCMS Select Committee meeting, we briefed the committee members, to ensure that fashion, as the largest of the creative industries, is not overlooked and therefore facing unintentional consequences, as a result. We would like to request an opportunity to engage in a similar way across DCMS and other departments at such a critical time.

also recently organised a webinar with the fashion sector to provide clarity on the new rules

3. In regards to the below point: firstly, please see a compiled list of [Industry Quotes](#) which highlights lived experience of UK Fashion businesses since 1st January 2021. Secondly, we are unable to liaise with the British Fashion Council, as they are not as responsive as we, or you, need. Whilst we appreciate their dedication to British design talent, new emerging designers and creating export opportunities for these brands overseas, they do not represent the entire fashion industry. London Fashion

Week is a twice yearly event, which for the modelling industry represents no more than 3% of their business and this is echoed across the sector. They do not have the entire fashion sector's interest as their core remit, unlike Fashion Roundtable. For example, if you are a machinist in Leicester, a model in Manchester, own a shopping complex in the West Country, a modest fashion company in Leeds, a denim brand in Cardiff, a brand in Liverpool, a manufacturer in Halifax, a fashion tech company in the Midlands, a boutique owner in Brighton, a stylist in London, a fashion photographer in Margate, a bridal shop in Mayfair, a consultant who lives between London and Paris, a sustainable brand in Oxfordshire, a handbag brand in Wimbledon, or a cashmere brand in Edinburgh, it is unlikely the BFC would be able to support your requests.

Officials in BEIS and DCMS would welcome any evidence you can provide and are happy to answer further questions where they can. We would also encourage you to liaise with the British Fashion Council so that your views can be fed into the DCMS-led working group.

We remain dedicated to supporting the diverse needs of the fashion industry so that they are able to have their voice recognised by the Government. As our Open Letter highlights, we urge you to meet with us and a wide cross section of representatives from the fashion sector to discuss a solution to an incredibly problematic trading landscape.

Fashion Roundtable has been inundated with personal testimonies from across the fashion industry, from stakeholders who are facing a crisis of livelihood. Without urgent action, we are facing a permanent exodus of talent, or business closures, from our world-leading industry.

We continue to urge the Government to negotiate a bespoke visa waiver agreement with the EU that is separate to the trade deal exempting all creative teams and crews from needing to obtain a visa when seeking paid work, as well as entering into bilateral discussions with individual EU Member States that do not currently offer cultural exemptions for work permits, such as Spain, Italy, Belgium and Portugal.

We urge the Government to provide an emergency funding package for the performing arts sector to mitigate against the additional costs and loss of work due to the lack of mobility provisions in the trade deal. Just yesterday for example a fashion editor returning items to Paris from London could not find accessories listed on the Government's carnet documents: a belt came up as a sheet of plastic or metal. Therefore we urge the Government to explore with the EU cultural exemptions for new Carnet and Cabotage rules

We look forward to hearing from you regarding our request for a roundtable meeting with you, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Home Department and we look forward to being asked to join the DCMS steering group, as a matter of urgency.

We urge you; don't make fashion history.

Yours sincerely

Tamara Cincik, CEO of Fashion Roundtable and our open letter signatories.

Tamara Cincik

Founder and CEO - Fashion Roundtable FRSA

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fashionroundtable.co.uk [Front Row To Front Bench](#)

Industry Quotes

ALL QUOTES that we have featured in press releases (and news articles)

Jenny Holloway, CEO Fashion Enter: “We have to order threads from Guttermann in Germany and normally it takes 5 days. Our latest order took 3 weeks using UPS. The original order was for £50 of threads, but because of the new VAT regulations being £134 as a minimum threshold for EU orders, we complied with that and over ordered at that amount. When it arrived we were charged an additional £44.85 by UPS for ‘additional paperwork’ and EU compliance. This thread is being used to make PPE. Just one order of cotton has quadrupled in cost and in escalated delays. Our Belles of London brand, which we make here at the factory and was doing well in the EU has seen sales go off a cliff for orders from Germany.”

Valery Demure, Valery Demure Showroom and Consultancy: “We are struggling with shipping samples back and forth. The documentation is taking so much of our time and small brands are struggling with added costs and delays. A client of mine used to send 18ct jewellery samples to London for €100 and now it is €400 for a small shipment. We are seriously looking at relocation to the EU after 27 years of business in the UK.”

John Horner, Managing Director, Models 1: “We are very concerned at the lack of response from the Government. Models are critical to every aspect of the fashion industry's interface with its customers and this is managed on a global scale. It seems absurd that both the EU and the UK government put forward freedom of movement proposals for the overall creative sector and simply because they couldn't agree, have walked away, putting many industry sectors in jeopardy. 30% of models represented by major UK model agencies are from the EU and 25% of income is derived from the EU. It is all at risk and work will be lost to UK plc.”

Paul Barnes, CEO Association of International Retail: ““As the Independent Office of Budget Responsibility has made clear, there is much uncertainty over HMT's figures on the decision to end the VAT Retail Export Scheme. Just a small drop in visitor numbers and spending would wipe out any VAT revenue HMT predicts from ending the VAT Retail Export Scheme and will lead to a significant net loss to the Treasury. With this policy estimated to cost around 40,000 jobs throughout the UK, we support the call from the Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee for an independent assessment into the full impact of this decision”

Jamie Gill, CEO Roksanda: “Although we are grateful to just retain zero-tariff trade, (which still came as a great surprise), the increased declaration process will cost us administratively. Immediately we are feeling the brunt of high freight costs and changes to EU VAT. It’s burdensome alongside the on-going impact of the pandemic and removal of VAT for our international Buyers”.

Jefferson Hack, Dazed Media Group: “Everyone who cares about the future of Britain economically or the future wellbeing of our youth needs to understand what's at stake if our fashion and textiles industry is trashed because politicians won't look at the paperwork and get ink on their fingers. How can they stand by and watch something built over generations collapse when they have the power to make a difference? Now is the time to act to save British Fashion, culture and livelihoods.”

Isabel Ettedgui, Connolly: “Connolly’s home is off Savile Row, but our horizon has always been international, and especially European. Our leather was on the first Rolls Royce and is now on the latest Ferrari. We sell Scottish cashmere but we manufacture our leather goods in a small town in Spain where all the top luxury brands manufacture - because we cannot find the skills to make the goods anymore in the United Kingdom, although the leather is sourced, where possible in this country. It is this dialogue between our island and our neighbours abroad that has shaped who we are. The sadness, the lack of goodwill and the red tape we are now experiencing as a Brexit trading outpost, the financial ramifications of creating barriers with our major trading partner and also the loss of their skills; will be devastating and the result could be the possible closure of a 185-year-old company that holds the Royal Warrant.”

Katharine Hamnett CBE: “We need a radical overhaul of customs arrangements including VAT on all goods shipped into the EU by the end of February, or British brands will die.”

Michelle Noel, MNN Agency: "The fashion industry is having its creative bones fractured by the implementation of Brexit. The emotional and financial impact has been immediate & damaging, to my consultancy practice and to my network of UK & EU clients. Brexit has eroded any slither of confidence in UK governance and highlighted the disdain & insufficient support for thousands of fashion businesses”.

Helen Brocklebank, CEO, Walpole: “Prior to the pandemic, the British luxury sector was in rude health with a value of £48bn to the UK economy and strong annual growth of nearly 10%. Very much a British success story, the sector supported more than 160,000 jobs throughout the UK. However, international visitors to the UK are a crucial revenue driver, and the last 11 months has put severe pressure on their businesses. On top of the pandemic, the

eleventh hour Brexit deal has compounded the sector's problems, making chances of swift recovery for British luxury recede compared to their European counterparts. With 42% of all British luxury export sales coming from the EU, the costs and administrative burdens of trading in continental Europe mean many of our members, not least the SME's, have concluded they simply can't afford to continue selling to those countries.

Before the pandemic, the UK/EU deal would have created exceptional difficulties for Walpole members. On top of the pandemic, its impact puts an unconscionable pressure on businesses who should be given every priority to be a calling card for Global Britain. Our luxury brands sell Britain to the world, exemplifying British craftsmanship, innovation and heritage, and their continued success is imperative if Britain is to maintain its reputation in the global marketplace. This is really not the time to inflict additional damage on British luxury. Our businesses are resilient, and they will work to navigate the challenges, however, now is the time for the Government to step up to the mark and support the sector with a set of very tailored measures if we are to bounce back swiftly."

Yasmin Le Bon, Model: "It is crucial not only for people in our business but crucial for the welfare of the UK economy that all people in the creative and fashion industries can travel freely within the EU. I have been working continually in this industry for the past 37 years, it works in a very particular way, with jobs being confirmed literally at the last minute. I may get a call, make a decision and be at the airport within 2 hours ready to fly to Madrid, Milan or Miami! The wealth of these creative industries is in our ability to move and change quickly. This is our future, we can not be stuck back in the dark ages or we will be left behind. Up until now, we have been at the forefront. These are crucial negotiations, the fashion business is huge, and every piece of the jigsaw supports each other, we rarely speak up for ourselves for fear of seeming uncool, but this is about more, it's about hundreds of thousands of jobs that may potentially be lost. You may think that fashion is all about frou-frou skirts and polka dot ties, but it is about so much more. From the designers not just of fashion and accessories, but all the machining for all the hardware, the craftsmanship of the manufacturers, the creativity and artistry of the marketing and advertising tribes, all the wily, resilient retailers, who have been hit so hard by this pandemic. For once we need to be listened to and for the Government to work with us before it is too late."

Karen Binns, Fashion Director and Brand Consultant: "There is a huge fear for independent designers and brands about the high rise in cost to get their shipments coming in and going out abroad. This is the biggest threat to young and independently owned brands, as this is the sort of escalating costs and delays to market that can shut their businesses down completely."

Nadja Romain, CEO Everything I Want LTD: "As a small business it's very hard if not impossible to deal on a daily basis, with the level of bureaucracy now involved in UK/EU trade. Not to mention angry customers who end up paying outrageous import taxes that we can't even anticipate. Large businesses can absorb extra costs and paperwork a small company with less than 10 employees simply cannot. As a French citizen I came to the UK 15 years ago for the creativity combined with a flexibility that allows anyone with a good idea to create a thriving business. This is gone. As if politics has become more important than business. I am opening a branch of my business in Italy to access the EU market which remains the number one destination for luxury goods."

