Dear [Member of Parliament]

I am writing today as the [owner/director/manager] of [insert business name], in response to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, to urge you to help save my business, and thousands of other viable businesses like mine, from insolvency, and in doing so prevent further job losses.

[Insert some information on your travel business – for example, how long have you been in business, how many people do you employ]

Travel is a strategically important sector for the UK economy, contributing more than £65bn annually in GVA and sustaining around 1 million jobs. In addition, the travel industry underpins the UK’s world-leading aviation industry, keeping the UK connected internationally and domestically, with those travelling for leisure and business vital to the viability of many air routes. Travel is not only viable as a sector, but also invaluable to the economic recovery of the country – and it is critical that the Government does all it can to help businesses and protect jobs.

The Office of National Statistics published data in December 2020 which showed that the travel sector has been the hardest hit service sector in the UK economy as a result of COVID-19. This follows ten months of severe restrictions on trade, including constantly changing travel corridors, FCDO Travel Advice against many destinations across the globe, and local and national restrictions in the UK, such as ‘stay at home’ orders and closure of non-essential retail, that have decimated the industry and destroyed consumer confidence in travel.

This is reflected in the fact that nine in ten holidays due to take place last summer were cancelled; new bookings were down by more than 80% in our peak period; and over 164,000 jobs have been lost or placed at risk already in the outbound travel industry. The latest announcements, including the ban on non-essential international travel and additional border restrictions, will only serve to worsen the situation further.

However, unlike many other sectors, travel businesses have not been offered tailored financial assistance. As the crisis continues, it is critical that the Chancellor urgently considers tailored support for travel if businesses like mine are to survive the difficult winter months ahead, and the jobs we provide are to be retained.

While the financial measures announced by the Government to date have been welcome, the situation is more complex for travel businesses, who have not been able to fully take advantage of all the support on offer. For example, it is impossible for travel agencies to make the most of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Despite the severe restrictions on trade, we have continued working to support customers affected by disruptions to travel plans, ensuring that they can be assisted both in destination, and also with future travel arrangements. When customers require our services more than ever, it is operationally impossible for travel businesses to furlough large numbers of their staff.

As a travel agency business, we receive most of our income through commission that is paid close to the departure of clients. Having had to refund all monies earned for holidays due this year, and with the outlook for travel appearing bleak in the coming weeks, we need financial support to help us through to the next major travel period in Summer 2021.

[Consider adding personal circumstances here, including any specific difficulties in accessing Government support schemes]

Recognising the seriousness of the situation, the Scottish Government recently announced a round of tailored grant support for both the travel agent and tour operator community in Scotland, and we need the UK Government to follow suit. As my local MP, I am therefore asking if you will write to both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Transport to urge them to also consider:

* Providing tailored financial support for travel businesses, including renewed grant support for SMEs and those who were excluded from previous support measures, as well as salary support which is flexible enough to allow staff to process refunds whilst in receipt of support. This would reflect the unique restrictions on travel which have seriously affected the ability of businesses to trade.
* Fully regionalising the UK’s quarantine policy and approach to FCDO Foreign Travel Advice. This would mirror the approach already adopted domestically and in other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, allowing a more targeted assessment of risk and the eventual reopening of important trading routes with partners such as the US.
* Working with the devolved nations to make sure appropriate testing regimes are in place across the whole of the UK without delay and lead international coordination of testing with the final aim of removing quarantine.

Yours sincerely,