To Whom It May Concern

Further to my submission for funding for [insert business name] through [insert council]’s Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme, I am writing to provide additional evidence in support of my application.

I understand that guidance has been issued to support Local Authorities in administering the Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG) for businesses that are required to close under Tier 4 restrictions. As a retail travel agent, I am legally required by *The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020* to close my business premises to the public, as we fall under the non-essential retail category.

It is vital to stress that my business, like many other retail businesses, relies heavily on direct in-person for sales. Travel agents are not comparable to other businesses which can operate remote provision of services, such as accountants and solicitors.

ABTA – The Travel Association, recently conducted a survey of retail travel agents, which found that:

* 24% of high street retail travel agents do not operate any additional sales mechanisms other than in-person trade. These businesses are now effectively closed indefinitely with no means to trade whatsoever.
* Of those retail agents who do operate additional sales channels, such as online or telephone sales, on average these businesses receive 82% of their income through in-person sales only.
* What is more, on average, these businesses report that 32% of sales by other channels were initiated through in-person trading.

Nor can we adapt our business to operate takeaway, click and collect or online with delivery services, although we understand that those businesses are eligible to receive grants under this scheme because the substantive business must close.

Based on these conditions, it is logical, therefore, that retail travel agents are eligible for the LSRG (Closed).

More generally, the UK Government has also issued ‘stay at home orders’ for Tier 4 areas in England, and guidance which states, “If you live in a Tier 4 area, you can only travel internationally - or within the UK - where you first have a legally permitted reason to leave home.” Leisure travel, understandably, does not fall into the list of legal exemptions from this rule. The combination of closure of non-essential retail, and the inability of our customers to travel for the foreseeable future, is devasting for my business.

[ADD: financial details that show how income has been significantly affected by COVID-19.]

Certain sectors of the economy, notably hospitality, have received several targeted support mechanisms to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 policy measures, and that same rationale should apply to the travel industry. It is clear that the Government has set the current trading conditions for the travel industry – with businesses impacted at various times during the course of the last ten months by a combination of ‘stay at home’ orders, frequently changing travel corridor and quarantine policy, and FCDO Travel Advice against all but essential travel. These restrictions have negatively impacted travel businesses in the same way that other COVID-19 restrictions such as social distancing have impacted hospitality businesses; evidence produced by ABTA – The Travel Association, highlighted that 91% of holidays scheduled for departure in the peak summer months of July and August last year were either changed or cancelled.

The challenges presented by the pandemic are stark for all travel companies. However, the situation is especially pressing for travel agents because we are paid commission for the services we sell, which is settled by the tour operator close to the departure of their clients. As a result of COVID-19, travel agents have had very little income throughout 2020, and we have also had to refund a significant part of our expected earnings related to 2019 bookings owing to cancellations related to the pandemic.

[Optional/personalisation: The problem is compounded by the inability of many SME travel businesses to make full use of the Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme while staff have been required to undertake non-revenue raising activities such as processing refunds and re-bookings, as well as the limited ability of travel companies, who typically trade on very low margins, to make use of Government loan schemes.]

I hope that this letter provides suitable evidence to demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions of my business’s ability to operate, and will result in a favourable outcome for my application to the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme.

Yours sincerely,