To Whom It May Concern

Further to my submission for funding for [insert business name] through [insert council]’s Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) 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 still open but severely impacted by Local Covid Alert Level ‘High’ (LCAL 2) and ‘Very High’ (LCAL 3) restrictions, and that localised restrictions are defined as legally binding restrictions imposed on specific Local Authority areas or multiple Local Authority areas, where the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care uses powers in Part 2A of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 in response to the threat posed by coronavirus and commonly as part of a wider set of measures.

The Government’s Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) Guidance for Local Authorities states: “Local Authorities will have discretion as to how to award grant funding to individual businesses… aimed at hospitality, hotel, bed & breakfast and leisure businesses.”

Travel agents, as providers of leisure services, are directly impacted by restrictions on international leisure travel (under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) Regulations 2020) imposed by Ministers through powers exercised under Part 2A of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. The Regulations require all passengers a) arriving in England from outside of the Common Travel Area, or b) arriving in England from elsewhere in the Common Travel Area where they have been outside of the Common Travel Area in the past 14 days, to separate themselves from any other persons for a period of 14 days (“self-isolation”), which constitutes a significant restriction on our ability to sell our services. This is in addition to current Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) advice against all but essential travel to many countries and territories on the basis of COVID-19 risks, which has the effect of both invalidating consumer travel insurance policies and changing the terms of refund obligations by travel providers under The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018.

Based on these conditions, it is logical, therefore, that travel businesses should be considered eligible for the LSRG (Open), subject to [insert local council]’s discretion.

[Optional for travel agents in Tier 3: Furthermore, the UK Government has also issued guidance for Tier 3 areas in England which states, “those in Tier 3 should avoid leaving their tier, including for international travel”. This places travel agents in the compromised position of being legally open, but without customers (who are advised against travelling), and with restrictions on the services they can sell (as a result of quarantine policy and FCDO Travel Advice against all but essential travel to many destinations).]

[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 (Open) scheme.

Yours sincerely,