

Midlothian MP criticises Prime Minister for refusing furlough extension

THOMPSON SLAMS PM FOR TELLING EVENTS SECTOR TO GET BACK INTO WORK

Owen Thompson MP criticised the Prime Minister Boris Johnson today at Prime Minister's Questions for refusing to consider extending furlough support for the events industry to prevent job losses before the sector gets going again.

Mr Thompson urged the UK Government to extend the furlough scheme and support the events, hospitality and creative sectors while festivals and events still cannot take place, but Mr Johnson said "it would be better for them to get back into work".

Mr Thompson said: "This was a staggering response from the Prime Minister who seems completely unaware that many in the events and creative industries don't have the work to go back to right now. Perhaps instead of hiding up north on holiday he should have visited Edinburgh and the Lothians and witnessed the devastating impact of Covid-19 on the festivals and events that the economy relies on here.

"I've been visiting local businesses to hear first-hand the situation they face. We have fantastic, successful companies here in Midlothian in audio-visual technology, hospitality and the creative industries doing all they can to get back to work

– but the jobs need footfall from conferences, festivals and events which still can't happen safely during this global pandemic.

“Even the gatherings which can take place do so at only 30% of capacity. It's a false economy for the government to stick its fingers in its ears, pretend Covid-19 has gone away and cut the legs from under these businesses at such a critical juncture.

“The creative industries support hundreds of thousands of jobs and put 100 billion in the UK economy, but it is in a perilous situation right now. The Prime Minister has the opportunity to take decisive action to prevent its collapse – I urge him to listen and to stop glibly ignoring their plight.

“If other countries like Germany, France and Ireland can extend furlough until 2021, what is stopping this government from doing the same?

“If they won't act to save jobs they should pass the powers to Holyrood to let the Scottish Government get on with it.”

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