



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture,
Media and Sport
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

E: enquiries@culture.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dcms

17 June 2020

Giles Watling MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: MC2020/09710

Dear Giles,

Thank you for your letter of 12 June to the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, about the arcade sector's concern regarding the decision taken by government not to exempt adult gaming centres from the continued closure of amusement arcades in the coronavirus regulations. Your letter has been passed to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as this issue falls within the department's remit.

I appreciate this is a difficult situation for the industry and I have discussed this with them and have written to them over the weekend. Arcades are not considered as non-essential retail. They are listed in the regulations alongside other leisure and entertainment venues and they have more in common with these than a retailer not least in terms of the contact with hard surfaces that is required to use their games, which is relevant from a scientific perspective.

We understand that, on the basis of the guidance published by BEIS on reopening retail of 11 May, action was taken by the industry to prepare adult gaming centres for reopening on 15 June. However, at no time were we able to guarantee that this date would be the opening date. The government has maintained throughout that all final decisions must be based on the current situation and scientific advice. For example, while the Prime Minister made clear 15 June was the target date for the reopening of non-essential shops, it was only confirmed on Tuesday that some of this would be possible. Many other indoor leisure facilities, such as bowling alleys, remain closed, as do some of the other premises mentioned in the BEIS guidance, where the decision was taken that it would not be safe to open them all at this point.

I know you and the sector have expressed concern that staff have been taken off furlough in preparation for reopening, and that this will mean significant redundancies. I have made clear that where a decision has been made to bring staff off furlough, these members of staff can be furloughed again, and I hope this provides reassurance.

I also appreciate that effort and investment has been put into the development of social distancing measures and guidance by the industry, but none of this will be wasted. We are working through the next steps and when other premises can be reopened, in line with public health advice. We will continue to work very closely with the arcades sector and will look to confirm a date for reopening as soon as we can.

As you know, the next phase of the roadmap will begin no earlier than 4 July. You will appreciate that the government is yet to confirm precisely which sectors will be able to open from this point, but I want to see us make progress as quickly as is safely possible.

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport



