

29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

### **An open letter to the negotiating parties to the rail dispute**

We are writing to you today in the interests of the UK's towns and cities, and the hospitality businesses and their hard-working teams that help them to thrive both socially and economically. We are urging you with a singular voice to come together to reach a settlement so businesses and communities can operate freely in this most critical of trading periods.

For the first time in three years hospitality businesses across the country were preparing for a normal festive trading period, a period that is usually the busiest of the year for our industry and sees them through the quieter months that follow. Despite the cost-of-living crisis, and multiple other challenges, pubs, restaurants, bars and hotels were hoping for a boost after ongoing disruption to trading caused by the pandemic. However, this latest round of strikes is set to be incredibly damaging to the hospitality sector. December is the busiest month of the year for UK pubs in which they earn a significant portion of their annual takings – equivalent to £2.3bn for the month and £582m across the industry in the week of the proposed strikes themselves.

It is not our wish to assign blame or responsibility in this dispute but the longer we go without a resolution the more uncertainty and damage builds for businesses and their staff, with cancellations already being made and people up and down the country wondering whether they will be able to get to work, or have to miss out on hours and tips that would support them during the Christmas period.

The last three years have been a monumental struggle for the hospitality industry and this winter was already set to be the toughest yet. The prospect of strikes in such a critical phase of trading only exacerbates this. Make no mistake – businesses will be forced to close their doors as a result of this and for some it may be the last time they do so. We urge you in the strongest terms to come to a settlement as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Emma McClarkin OBE, Chief Executive, British Beer & Pub Association

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands

Steve Alton, Chief Executive, British Institute of Innkeeping

Michael Kill, Chief Executive, Night Time Industries Association

Ojay McDonald, Chief Executive, Association of Town and City Management