

Mr Matthew Cheung Kin Chung, GBM, GBS, JP
Chief Secretary for Administration
25/F, Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar
Hong Kong

21 February 2021

Dear Chief Secretary,

Hong Kong Residents in the United Kingdom

As you are aware, there are currently a large number of Hong Kong residents stuck in the United Kingdom ("UK") and unable to return directly to their homes and places of work in Hong Kong. This follows from the restrictions imposed on residents entering Hong Kong who have spent more than two hours in the UK in the 21 days prior to arrival at the Hong Kong border. The UK has been specified as Group A Place of Origin ("Extremely High Risk") for the purposes of Covid-19 travel arrangements.

At the time the restrictions were introduced in December last year, Covid-19 infection cases, hospitalisations and deaths were rising very rapidly in the UK and the restrictions introduced by the Hong Kong SAR Government ("HKSARG") were considered necessary and proportionate.

However, some two months later, the facts and data are pointing to a much-improved situation. Infection rates in the UK are dropping rapidly and are now at levels last seen at the beginning of October. The all-important "R" number (which measures the rate of infection) is between 0.6 and 0.9 and the National Health Service has managed to vaccinate some 17 million "high risk", mostly elderly, people. The United Kingdom has also been in "lock-down" since Christmas. This means Hong Kong residents in the UK have been required to "stay at home" with limited and very prescribed activities permitted outside. Schools have been closed; household mixing is not permitted; all "non-essential" shops have been closed, and pubs and restaurants have only been permitted to stay open if they are serving "take-away" food.

At the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, we have consistently expressed support for the HKSARG measures in the fight against Covid-19. We have done this publicly and applaud the way the Government has tackled the pandemic and the successful counter-measures. We have not written previously on the subject of Hong Kong residents in the UK as we always believed that the restrictions would be short term and we wanted to show support for the HKSARG's fight against the virus.

The measures have now been in place for two months and we now feel compelled to write and to reflect the concerns not only of our Hong Kong resident members but also non-

members in the UK, many of whom have been in touch with the Chamber. We no longer believe that the current restrictions are justified or proportionate in the light of improved UK data and the existing test and quarantine arrangements in Hong Kong. Their continued imposition is creating levels of extreme personal and professional stress.

We strongly urge the HKSARG to relax the current travel restrictions as a matter of urgency and to allow Hong Kong residents to return to their homes and their places of business. A further delay in lifting the current restrictions is hard to justify in light of the UK data, the lockdown measures and the vaccination programme as well as the test and quarantine arrangements in place on arrival in Hong Kong. We believe the chances of importing Covid-19 from returning Hong Kong residents are now de minimis and it has become the compassionate thing to do.

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong stands ready to support you in any way we can to ensure an urgent lifting of these restrictions and the safe and orderly return of Hong Kong residents as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Burnett

Chairman

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Cc : Professor Sophia Chan Siu Chee JP, Secretary for Food and Health
Mr Edward Yau Tang Wah GBS, JP, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development
Miss Carrie Chang Kar Wai, Administrative Assistant to Chief Secretary for Administration
Miss Elizabeth Fung Hoi Yung, Political Assistant to Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development
Mr Kelvin Cheng Sau Kong, Political Assistant to Secretary for Food and Health
Ms Leonie Lee Hoi Lun, Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Health)¹