

Extract from Hansard – House of Lords – Friday 12th March 2021
That this House takes note of the economy in light of the Budget statement.

Lord Agnew of Oulton - The Minister of State, Cabinet Office and the Treasury

Baroness Doocey (LD)

My Lords, much of the tourism sector has fallen through the cracks of government funding for business during the pandemic. Tours and coach operators, English language schools and event organisers are not eligible for leisure and hospitality grants, despite the fact that they bring in £15 billion a year, which is half of all inbound tourism revenue. The Budget has not changed that, so will the Government ask councils to prioritise some of the £425 million in new ARG grants specifically to those sectors and agree to include those businesses in the extended business rate and start-up grants? The details of those grants have not yet been announced, but it is essential the Government do not make the same mistakes as we have at the moment.

For example, a travel agent who sells a ticket to a customer for a tour is eligible for support, but the tour or coach operator who actually takes the customer on the tour is not. Children's nurseries are eligible for support, despite the fact that they are open, but language schools, which have had to close, are not, despite the fact that they host half a million overseas students a year and bring in £1.2 billion a year. Finally, car hire premises, which have been open all the time, are eligible for support, but coach hire premises, which were forced to close and have seen their business decimated, are not. Frankly, you just could not make it up.

I make a plea to the Government urgently to address those anomalies and target support to those businesses, which bring in £15 billion a year in export earnings, employ 250,000 people and are hanging on by just a thread.