

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership's Coronavirus Business Support Survey was launched on April 6 to try to gather a statistically significant database of evidence about the impact of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown on the Marches business community.

It has proved to be the most-responded to survey conducted by the Marches LEP, with 500 individual businesses taking the time to complete it within the three weeks it remained open.

The result is a significant insight into the challenges and difficulties the virus has created for businesses in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and the views of the business community about the support they have been offered and its implementation.

Many businesses gave detailed comments about how they had been affected, what support they had tried to access and what their experience had been. The key themes which emerged from these comments were:

- Many were not eligible for the coronavirus support schemes,
- A perceived lack of information and detail coming out and it was being released too slowly
- Banks were being unhelpful in the way they were handling the schemes and there was some concern at a slow response in processing grants from some quarters.
- Praise from many businesses for the ease and speed at which they had received their grants

The quantitative data:

54% of respondents are based in Herefordshire, 37 per cent in Shropshire and 7.4 per cent in Telford & Wrekin.

24% of respondents are in the tourism, hospitality and leisure sector
16% in professional services
12% in retail
10% per cent in food and drink
8% in manufacturing and engineering.

55% are limited companies, 26.5% sole traders and 15% are partnerships.

Key statistics to date:

98% of businesses have been affected by the outbreak.

51.4% are **not** eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rates Relief and therefore not eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund.

44% have applied for/taken advantage of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to furlough staff.

35% have applied for/taken advantage of the £10,000 cash grant scheme for small businesses.

12% have applied for/taken advantage of the Coronavirus Business Interruption loans Scheme.

32% have not applied to any of the schemes.

44% have suffered a complete loss of sales.

25.5% say cashflow is their greatest challenge, whilst 15 % say it is falling sales.

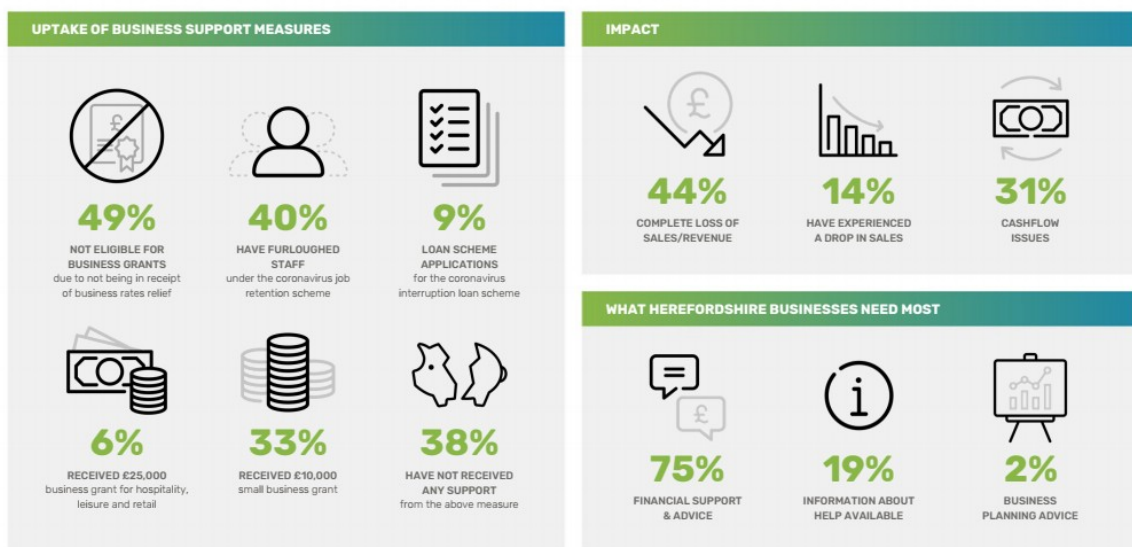
72 % say financial support and advice would be the most helpful response for their business.

Data by Local Authority area

Herefordshire

MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

HEREFORDSHIRE
27TH APRIL 2020



Based on 257 Herefordshire responses in total with 98% businesses impacted by COVID-19

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Qualitative data from Herefordshire.

Question: Can you tell us briefly how your business has been affected?

Answer: Sales have reduced and customers are using 'working from home' as a reason not to pay outstanding accounts. We only have 50% of our staff in; self isolating/shielding/home working – **manufacturing business**

Our main trade with pubs which have been closed so we have no ongoing trade. We have switched to home deliveries for bottles and small packs of bright beer – **food and drink business**

We are a project and event management company, organising and managing both our own events and events for others. In recent years we have worked on a number of external projects but these have all been cancelled for this year. We have already cancelled three events, one at Easter, one over the weekend of May 8-10th and one over August Bank holiday. We still have four Christmas fairs booked. However the combination of no outdoor events for traders to generate income and the general uncertainty has resulted in very few bookings to participate in these events. In simple terms we have no opportunity to generate income until November and the likelihood of a great deal of uncertainty and reluctance for trader/exhibitors to book/participate until a guarantee that the events will run – **a tourism/leisure/hospitality business**

Wholesale and retail orders 'fell off a cliff' after lockdown. I have had just two B2B wholesale orders in April to date – **food and drink business**

The package cycling and walking holidays we organise in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Wales have been cancelled up to end of June. We have bookings for July/august/September – but we do not know whether these will be able to go ahead. And of course new bookings have completely stopped - **tourism/leisure/hospitality business**

A large proportion of work is conducted on site at client businesses – this cannot take place. Also client businesses are being affected and are consequently stopping work – **professional services business**

Question: Tell us more about your experience of applying for or implementing any of the measures above (business support schemes)

Answer: Smooth operation and received grant within 2 weeks – **food and drink business**

CJRS not live yet, but £10,000 grant via Herefordshire Council could not be faulted. Proactively promoted by the Council and paid over as soon as funds in their hands; very impressive - **manufacturing business**

I haven't received anything yet and I'm desperate now as I only have this business and I'm also a single mum with no other income coming into the household – **Retail business**

Applied 14 days ago no response at all from bank as at 10th April will have to close businesses if we do not get it for cash flow purposes by 25th when we run out of money – **manufacturing business**

Wish the Gov had been clearer about manufacturing from day 1, lots of businesses shut too early. The message we are getting now of 'During this time of unprecedented disruption, the UK Government is not asking all businesses to shut – indeed it is important for business to carry on.' and 'Manufacturing plays an important role in the economy. It can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible' may have come too late. The Stay at Home message has meant some staff are anxious about attending work. Sales dropped off significantly in last 10 days. We started implementing furlough last week, via a daily information stream to staff. Pleased how we have implemented it so far, but info changing daily and you have to be really sharp to keep up to date – **Manufacturing business**

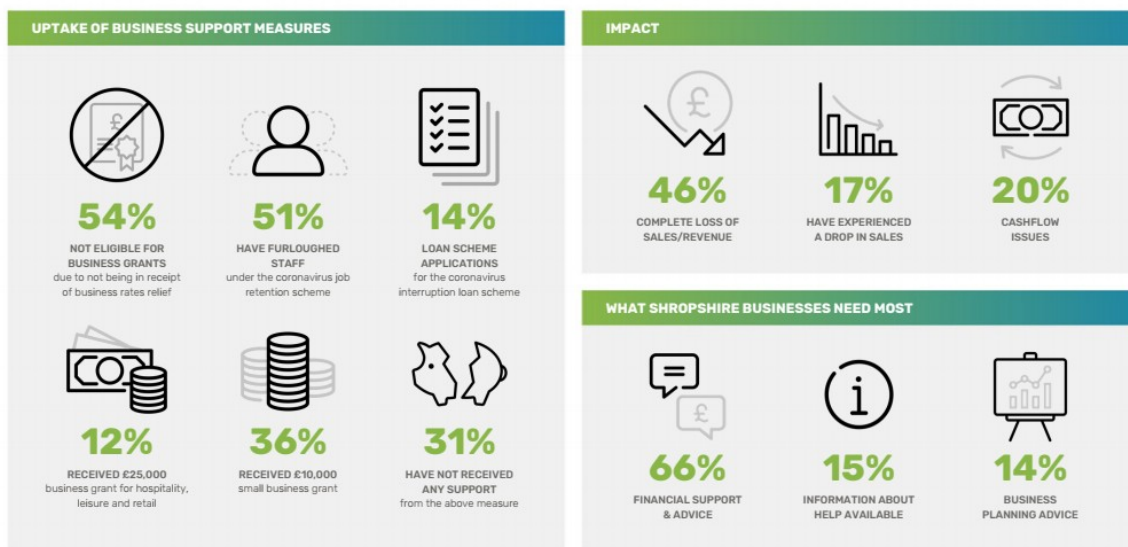
At present very poor. We have applied for all of the above and as yet not received a penny from either Herefordshire Council, HSBC or the Government. We can only last for another 10 days from cashflow, before we would have to stop paying everyone – **Retail business**

Banks are very slow to respond. Not getting anywhere with the council regarding the small business grant, yet time for sending out a survey – **tourism, leisure and hospitality business**

Shropshire:

MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

SHROPSHIRE
27TH APRIL 2020



Based on 161 Herefordshire responses in total with 97.5% businesses impacted by COVID-19

WWW.MARCHESLEP.ORG.UK



Qualitative data from Shropshire.

Question: Can you tell us briefly how your business has been affected?

Answer: We have been closed since the 20th March and can't foresee us opening in the next few weeks, companies are still charging us for our overheads regardless of what we say and things just aren't being taken into consideration for young directors – **food and drink business**

The business has been closed. We have lost 100K in turnover for a three month closure period. Closure is costing 1.5K a day. We have had no support because we are rated at 83K. However the staff are furloughed for the time being! Weddings have been moved to other dates. But now customers are demanding their money back for weddings that did not take place/can not take place. We have had legal issues which are expensive. We could go under if we have to return the next quarter's wedding deposits and fees. Bank seems unhelpful and only interested in making their margins. Our business interruption insurance is utterly useless. Wedding insurance providers just put the buck all on us. While we keep all the staff on, no payments come through for the self employed like our three partners. Been in business here since 1986. This will kill us and forty jobs – **food and drink business.**

75% drop in demand. 70% of workers furloughed. Current cash flow ok but severe pressure will come over next 3 months – **manufacturing business**

I produce a monthly local magazine but I am unable to get my April issue delivered and I will be unable to print and distribute an issue for May or June. So I have no income for at least 3 months. As a limited company and being a director I can only claim 80% of my salary which is low as I usually pay myself dividends which I am unable to do at present – **unspecified sector**

We have had to suspend all project work as our clients and consultants have requested a pause/break. The shock of the lockdown made clients put work on hold. All staff are furloughed – **professional services**

We operate a travel agency and all travel has stopped, we also now need to repay and collected commission on cancelled trips. This results in not only no income but a repayment bill of £80k – **tourism and leisure business**

Question: Tell us more about your experience of applying for or implementing any of the measures above (business support schemes)

Answer: As we do not have Bricks and Mortar premises, we get no relief despite the fact we pay Corporation Tax every year. The Banks (NatWest) have been utterly useless, pushing you into their products rather than government support. I know from Shropshire Council Data that around 2,500 businesses in Shropshire fall into our category regarding business rates and not being able to access the grants – **construction business**.

We were originally in line for the £25,000 grant but the government seem to constantly be moving the goal posts, we were also eligible for our business rates during 2019 to be reimbursed but this statement has since vanished and not been spoken about, our rateable value is £13,500 which means we are £1,501 away from being eligible for a grant 2.5x bigger? The setup does not make sense and the grant category we have been moved down into does not reflect our overheads at all – **food and drink business**.

Cash grant – can't fault it, took around 10 days very happy. However, applied to my bank NatWest for a loan over 4 weeks ago and have heard nothing – **information and communication business**

Furloughing workers was new to us but we managed to use common sense and issued all staff with a letter explaining we were joining the Job Retention Scheme as they couldn't work from home they were to be furloughed – **unspecified sector**

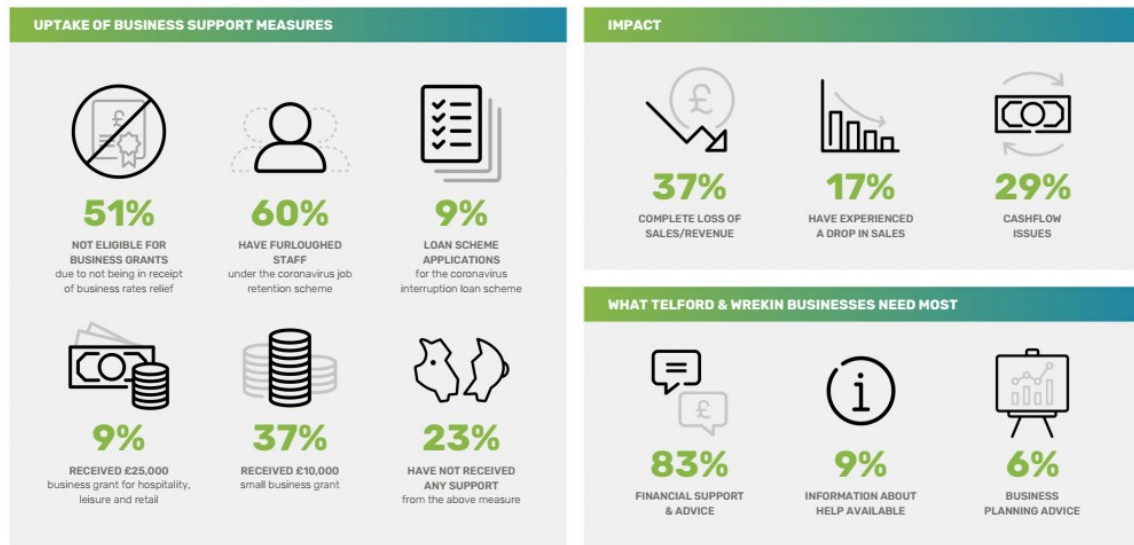
Delay of income from JRS doesn't help in the immediate term. Will revisit loan scheme now that individual guarantee is not necessarily a requirement, but the turnaround timescale appears to be slower than hoped. We rent space but our occupancy does not qualify us for the small business grant scheme....which seems to be an anomaly....as the operating body receives the rate relief, rather than all businesses operating in the building – **unspecified sector**

We are very confused with the grant situation, our business is occupying 2 properties next to each other. We pay 2 lots of rates despite the fact that one shop is exempt but we have to pay for it because the business occupies both shops, Separately each shop is under £15,000 RV but combined the RV is over £18,000, so, it's not clear for us, do we get x2 lots of £10,000 (one per property) or one lot of £25,000 for the whole business? We applied for a grant for each property as stated in the government directive, we are still awaiting confirmation – **Retail business**.

Telford & Wrekin

MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

TELFORD & WREKIN
27TH APRIL 2020



Based on 35 Telford & Wrekin responses in total with 97.9% businesses impacted by COVID-19

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Qualitative data from Telford & Wrekin.

Question: Can you tell us briefly how your business has been affected?

Answer: We have had to close the office and move our staff home – we have not had any support from the Local Authority for Rate Relief as we are £1,000 over the £15,000 Rateable Value. Many of our customers have now put plans on hold for 6 months – **Information and communication business**

Business continuity plan implemented to facilitate homeworking to protect our employees, client contact increased due to concerns of outbreak and potential insurance claims (we're insurance brokers), further increased contact as clients seek to cut premium costs in the short term, vehicle laid up, premises closed – **professional services business**

We are a charity and all our activities have had to be cancelled – **unspecified sector**

Following severe flooding in February which catastrophically drowned our glassmaking studio & manufacturing facilities at The Coalport China Museum. We have now completely shut down due to C19. Since the COVID lockdown sales have dropped to almost Zero. We also have a Retail shop at Trentham Gardens which is also fully shut down due to C19 – **Manufacturing business**

Clients closing doors without paying, jobs postponed, jobs cancelled. Banks not replying to request for CBIL loans, staff furloughed or working from home, unable to do site work – **unspecified sector**

Turnover has dropped by about 95%. Most staff have been furloughed, with a skeleton crew continuing to fulfil open and new orders. We incur significant losses every day – **Manufacturing business**

Question: Tell us more about your experience of applying for or implementing any of the measures above (business support schemes)

Answer: Application denied as the business does not operate from a permanent office premises, but makes use of e-Innovation Centre 'Launch Pad' and Growth Hub facilities – **Unspecified sector**

£10k grant via T&WC sorted really easily – **information and communication business**

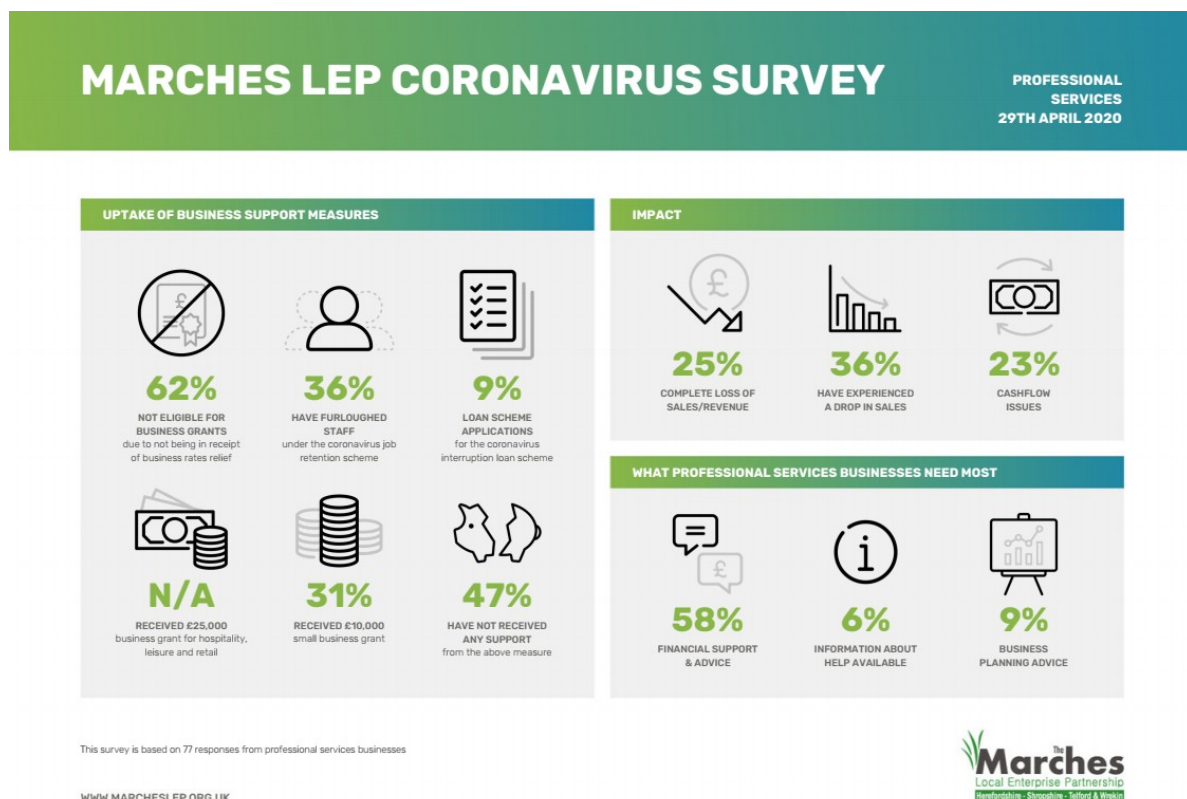
Not a happy one. Slow and eligibility questioned. Government words mean nothing – **Unspecified sector**

I've tried applying for the Government backed loan from NatWest. Been waiting for a call back since 23rd March. I've called 5 times since and get same response someone – will call back in 48 hours but never get a call back – **logistics and transport sector**

We have been told we are not eligible for the Govt loan scheme because of viability however it appears our bank is willing to offer a commercial loan – **tourism, leisure and hospitality business**

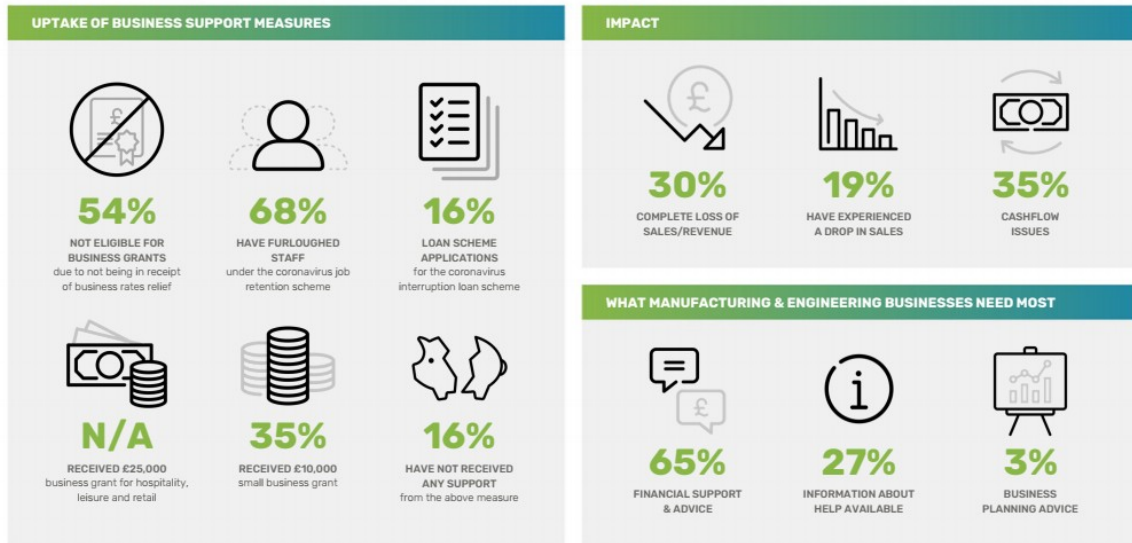
Very simple application process, great support from the council's phone support – **Retail business**

Data by sector:



MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

MANUFACTURING
AND ENGINEERING
29TH APRIL 2020



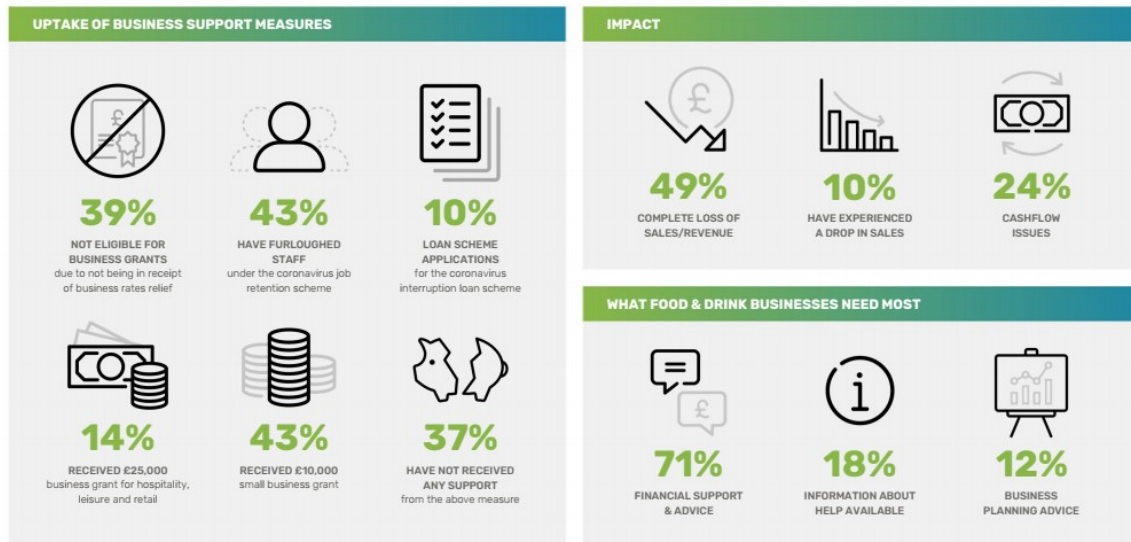
This survey is based on 37 responses from manufacturing and engineering businesses

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MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

FOOD & DRINK
29TH APRIL 2020



This survey is based on 51 responses from food & drink businesses

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MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

RETAIL
29TH APRIL 2020

UPTAKE OF BUSINESS SUPPORT MEASURES



23%

NOT ELIGIBLE FOR BUSINESS GRANTS due to not being in receipt of business rates relief



41%

HAVE FURLOUGHED STAFF under the coronavirus job retention scheme



15%

LOAN SCHEME APPLICATIONS for the coronavirus interruption loan scheme



16%

RECEIVED £25,000 business grant for hospitality, leisure and retail



54%

RECEIVED £10,000 small business grant



25%

HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY SUPPORT from the above measure

IMPACT



59%

COMPLETE LOSS OF SALES/REVENUE



8%

HAVE EXPERIENCED A DROP IN SALES



25%

CASHFLOW ISSUES

WHAT RETAIL BUSINESSES NEED MOST



72%

FINANCIAL SUPPORT & ADVICE



18%

INFORMATION ABOUT HELP AVAILABLE



5%

BUSINESS PLANNING ADVICE

This survey is based on 61 responses from retail businesses

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MARCHES LEP CORONAVIRUS SURVEY

TOURISM, LEISURE
AND HOSPITALITY
29TH APRIL 2020

UPTAKE OF BUSINESS SUPPORT MEASURES



46%

NOT ELIGIBLE FOR BUSINESS GRANTS due to not being in receipt of business rates relief



44%

HAVE FURLOUGHED STAFF under the coronavirus job retention scheme



12%

LOAN SCHEME APPLICATIONS for the coronavirus interruption loan scheme



15%

RECEIVED £25,000 business grant for hospitality, leisure and retail



34%

RECEIVED £10,000 small business grant



30%

HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY SUPPORT from the above measure

IMPACT



57%

COMPLETE LOSS OF SALES/REVENUE



4%

HAVE EXPERIENCED A DROP IN SALES



24%

CASHFLOW ISSUES

WHAT TOURISM BUSINESSES NEED MOST



77%

FINANCIAL SUPPORT & ADVICE



18%

INFORMATION ABOUT HELP AVAILABLE



7%

INSURANCE ADVICE

This survey is based on 115 responses from tourism businesses

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