Following your call for evidence, JW Lees would comment:-

- The current business rates system is not fit for purpose and the government need to honour its commitment for a complete rehaul
- Pubs are currently over-rated compared to other categories
- Pubs are needed for regeneration of high streets as retail moves online and boarded-up facias will become more prevalent: this will increase post April when the rent moratorium comes to an end
- Even with the current system local authorities are too quick to re-rate properties when the rate is going up post-investment and too slow to re-rate when trade has fallen and so business rates are falling

We are now in a position whereby companies like JW Lees are not receiving any benefit of the government support since we are over the State Aid limit and this is not affecting our ability to invest in our pubs through CAPEX which will in turn create new jobs and take advantage of capital allowance incentives through the super-deduction. We think that the government is being naïve by not supporting larger businesses since this is where more jobs will be created and the UK no longer needs to adhere to EU State Aid limits and other countries are doing much more to support larger companies. This means that recent grants have been unfair towards larger companies, with JW Lees missing out on over £250,000 of support.

Many of the emergency measures brought in to help the recovery from Covid will have less impact because of the introduction of Plan B at Christmas (we estimate that this will add another five months to recovery owing to the disproportionate level of trade affected In December).

Business rates are a key lever for the Treasury to use to help support UK pubs, both in the short term with proportionate levels of support and in the longer term with a fair and complete reform.

William Lees-Jones
Managing Director, JW Lees