

C10/ec
30th April 2020

Dear Member,

Firstly, I hope that you and your dear ones are keeping safe and well in this terrible crisis. I know for many there is the combined fear of contracting the illness on the one hand and the fear of where the business might be on the other.

We have been attempting to keep members as fully informed as possible of daily developments while, at the same time, dealing with suppliers, banks, insurance, government, revenue and others. With the exception of the insurance debacle, good progress has been made on the other items but we see some as merely holding positions.

There has been much talk about re-opening. I can give no indication as to when that might happen and neither can anybody else. The powers that be simply do not know as they are assessing it all stage by stage.

It is clear from leaks from Government sources that they are looking at relaxing the restrictions on “eating houses” before “drinking houses”. **Our simple belief is that all should be treated similarly. That is what we will be seeking at all times.**

What is definite is that the earlier re-opening happens the greater the need there will be for social distancing. What is equally obvious to us is that there are great variations among members in what they think social distancing will mean in a pub

In the final analysis that decision will be made by The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) led by Tony Holohan and it will not be a negotiated document, it will be handed down. That will be the same for all sectors not just ours. We have looked for access and a meeting but have been refused. There will be no point in a member calling us and asking why did we let this happen.

Our mission is to get pubs open as soon as is safe for members, employees and customers. We believe all outlets should have an equal opportunity of trading whether it be a wet pub, a food pub, a bar in a hotel or a licenced restaurant.

Opening doors is one thing. Opening doors and being able to trade profitably is another.

So what might trading with social distancing mean? As I said that will ultimately be laid down by NPHE but the minimum they will use are the World Health Organisation Guidelines (for clarity WHO guidelines refer to 1 meter social distancing while our HSE have always talked about 2 metres). There might be a number of stages leading up to the day when you can trade normally again but stage one most likely would include:

- No use of the bar other than as a dispense bar
- All customers might have to be seated and remain seated with table service for both food and drink

- Might be a maximum of 4 people per 10 sq metres assuming social distancing can take place in all the area. A long narrow part of a pub might not count as space if one could not social distance in that part
- Might be a maximum of 4 or 6 people at a table
- Minimum of 1 metre between people seated at different tables unless there was a type of Perspex divider between the tables
- Minimum of 1 metre between people seated at the same table
- System of controlling access to toilets
- Possibly no live music or DJ
- Possibly some form of register to cover tracing
- For those doing food consideration has to be given as to how social distancing will be managed in the kitchen.

This has obvious implications for capacity whether for drink, food or both. It has implications for cost – table service, personal protection equipment, covering toilets etc. If it has those implications then clearly it has implications for viability. Some work is being done on the effect on capacity and we hope to be able to share that next week.

It also could have insurance implications. What happens if a member of staff or indeed a customer contracts Covid 19 and there is a trace back to the premises? Some new policies are now specifically excluding cover for C19 so there will be no debate at that stage – no cover.

Whatever decisions NPHEAT come to, significant supports will be needed for the trade over a protracted period. We are finalising this set of “asks” at present and are already strongly lobbying for special status. So are many other sectors. Each member will have to assess what the framework that NPHEAT hands down will mean for them.

I should make it clear that the above are merely my thoughts on what might come at us. I repeat that there has been no discussions with NPHEAT and won't be unless they change their stance

I thought it important to put those thoughts to you so that you can begin to consider the next set of challenges that may have to be faced.

Kind regards,


Padraig Cribben