

All hospitality businesses serving food/ alcohol must be treated the same

**Call comes in response to suggestions that restaurants and cafes may reopen in 'early Phase 2' of Government plan, while pubs stay closed until 'later phases'**

**Majority of LVA members have Restaurant Certificates and must be allowed to open**

All food and alcohol serving hospitality businesses including pubs, restaurants, hotels and cafes should be treated the same when it comes to reopening, according to the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA). Their call comes in response to reports that Government reopening plans will allow cafes and restaurants to trade again in 'early stage phase two', with hotels reopening during the 'middle phases' and pubs being kept closed until the 'later phases' of the plan.

Pointing to research from Bord Bia\* which shows that more food is consumed in pubs than in full service restaurants or cafes, publicans believe it would be completely discriminatory to allow restaurants or cafés to serve food while pubs were forced to remain shut. Most Dublin pubs already possess restaurant certificates and are entitled to trade as licensed restaurants. The LVA believes this principle must remain in any reopening plan.

There are over 7,000 pubs in the Republic of Ireland, compared to 2,800 licensed restaurants, with pubs serving customers in every village, town and city across the country.

The LVA has described any measures to keep pubs shut while other foodservice venues reopen as "massive slap in the face for the entire pub sector" which would increase the number of permanent job losses and threaten the future viability of the sector.

Speaking about the suggestion that pubs may be kept closed for longer than restaurants and cafes, Donall O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA said, "Pubs that serve food should be allowed to reopen at the same time as restaurants or cafes, with the same public health guidelines in place. To ask pubs to remain closed while their competitors down the street are trading would be a massive slap in the face for the entire pub sector. It would also greatly damage the future viability of the industry, putting more jobs at risk of being permanently lost and more premises going out of business for good.

"When it comes to foodservice there is no reason why pubs can't operate in the same manner as other types of establishments such as restaurants, hotels or cafes. Food serving pubs have dedicated kitchens, can provide table service and can implement the public health guidelines in the provision of food just as well as any other type of venue. The majority of our members hold restaurant certs and accordingly are licensed restaurants. So we would fully expect them to be allowed to reopen," he said.

"There can't be a sense that there is one rule for restaurants and another rule for pubs serving food. We would question the thinking behind such provisions and we know it is something that will be fiercely resisted by the entire pub sector in this country. It is the logical first step in re-opening the pub trade and should be quickly followed, assuming it is safe to do so, by all pubs being allowed to trade, following the same social distancing guidelines. It is also essential the Government provides a clear roadmap to normalising the economy for all our sakes," Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.

The Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) is the representative body for Dublin publicans.

*\*Taken from Bord Bia 2019 Irish Foodservice Insights Report which showed that Ireland's 'out of home' foodservice market consisted of 35% Limited Service Restaurants, 18% Hotels and Accommodation, 16% Pubs, 12% Full Service Restaurants, 6% Coffee shops and Cafes, 4% Other Commercial and 9% Institutional.*

