Government has abandoned 3,500 pubs – LVA and VFI

Decision will be met with fury and despair across the sector

Government “sympathy” won’t save businesses or jobs

Meaningful support essential with pubs facing full blown crisis

The Government has abandoned the 3,500 smaller pubs across Ireland following their decision to stop pubs from reopening next week according to the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) and the Vintners Federation of Ireland (VFI). The two representative bodies now believe the sector is facing a full blown crisis which will place “intolerable pressure” on publicans, staff, suppliers and all their families.

They also said that the decision will be met with “fury and despair” across the sector.

3,500 pubs across Ireland had been expecting to reopen next week but must now remain closed. The majority of pubs across Ireland are still closed and they will now have to keep their doors shut for a minimum of 168 days, which represents 46% of a year.

The LVA and the VFI said the “sympathy” being expressed by the Government figures will not save pub businesses or jobs. Both bodies called for the immediate introduction of a “meaningful support package” for the pubs in light of this latest development as pubs who are closed will not benefit from the stimulus package announced in July.

This is the second time in three weeks that the Government has delayed the reopening of the pubs. The Government is also yet to publish the guidelines for how these pubs will be expected to operate.

VFI Chief Executive, Padraig Cribben, says: “This is Groundhog Day for the trade as twice now the reopening of pubs has been postponed. The new Government’s decision has caused grave alarm within the trade as publicans face an extremely uncertain future with little to feel optimistic about. Make no mistake, this is a full-blown crisis for the trade as over 3,500 pubs must now remain shut.

“The Government has effectively denied pubs the ability to trade and as a result will have to provide substantial supports to our members, many of whom are deeply agitated at what they feel is the State abandoning a vital part of the hospitality sector.”

“The Government has basically just abandoned half the pub sector,” said Donall O’Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. “It’s becoming increasingly obvious that they don’t have a plan for dealing with our sector. We’re repeatedly being told that opening the pubs ‘could lead to an increase in the virus’. Well when will that not be the case? Was that not a potential issue at the other phases too? With NPHET always urging caution, when will this Government ever re-open pubs?

“This decision will be met with both fury and despair across the entire sector. It is creating intolerable pressure on those pubs still closed, their 25,000 staff, suppliers to the industry and all their families. The Government can’t keep stringing the entire sector along like this. Where is their plan? Where are their supports for the industry? The pubs that are closed or their staff certainly won’t benefit from the July stimulus if they have to stay closed and the future viability of these businesses is in doubt.

“There is only so much an industry can take. If the Government wants the pub sector to survive, there needs to be a solution for handling pubs during this public health emergency crisis. That means coming up with a meaningful support package for pubs whose doors remain shut by order of the Government,” Mr. O’Keeffe concluded.