

No hope for hospitality in Government plan

The Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) has said it is "disappointed" no hope was provided for hospitality and the 150,000 people from the sector currently on PUP in the Government's revised 'Living with Covid' plan.

The LVA said they were not expecting any specific reopening dates to be included but they had hoped that the conditions for reopening would be outlined by the Government. These could include confirmation of the percentage of the population that would need to be vaccinated and how low the level of community transmission would need to be to facilitate a future reopening.

Of the 750 pubs across Dublin, 250 of them (33%) have not traded for a single day since 15th March 2020. By the time the next Government review takes place on the 5th April, these pubs will have been closed for 385 consecutive days – the most severe lockdown in Europe. 50,000 people were directly employed in the pub sector before the pandemic.

"It is disappointing there is no hope on the horizon for hospitality in the revised plan announced by the Government," said Donall O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. "No one was anticipating any specific dates to be provided, but there does need to be some indication that we are moving towards a light at the end of the tunnel.

"It would have been helpful if the updated plan broadly outlined the conditions that need to be reached to facilitate future reopenings of different aspects of the economy, including hospitality. That could include details about the level of vaccination, the number of infections and the rate of transmission in the community. This approach would have given everyone a sense of what we are all working towards.

"The hospitality sector, which currently has 150,000 staff on PUP, is not an inconvenience which the Government can sweep under the carpet. Our future matters to the future well-being of our society and our economy, particularly to the families and staff dependent on this sector.

"In the absence any clarity and with closures set to continue for an indeterminate period, there needs to be a marked increase in the level of financial supports provided to the sector. The extensions announced are not sufficient. There needs to be an immediate doubling of Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) payments, extension of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) to the end of 2021 and the waiving of commercial rates for the rest of the year. These supports are essential in ensuring these businesses can survive and reopen when it is safe to do so" Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.