

## No option but to go along with Government proposal – LVA

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### Huge political will now required to achieve 19 July reopening date

The Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) has said they believe they have no option but to go along with the Government proposals for permitting indoor hospitality. Speaking following the latest discussions between Government and the hospitality sector, the LVA has said the choices came down to keeping hospitality closed for several more months or proceeding with a hugely challenging system.

“We don't like this approach and we don't want it,” said LVA Chief Executive Donall O'Keeffe. “We feel it is deeply problematic on a practical level. But when the choice comes down to this proposal or staying closed for several more months, we feel we have no option but to go along with it. With some pubs having now been shut for almost 16 consecutive months we're being put over a barrel because we have to get the sector open or more businesses will go bust and thousands more will lose their livelihoods.

“The system they are putting forward is open to abuse and there will be real questions and concerns in the coming weeks as to whether everyone claiming to be vaccinated will be. It is also deeply unfair and discriminatory towards hospitality staff and others who may not yet have been vaccinated or who are unable to do so for various reasons.

“We are expecting major problems on the ground such as individuals seeking to gain access under false pretences. Tourists that arrive here on a negative PCR test won't be permitted indoors. We have received many reports of members of the public taking serious objections to providing a single contact number for a group and that creating aggravation for the staff involved, so we do anticipate there will be even more difficulties once this approach is implemented.

“Accordingly, we urgently need to see the legislative proposal underpinning this approach.

“The key question now is whether the Government moving quickly enough to have this system in place by 19 July to allow indoor hospitality to proceed on that date. There can be no further delays in clarifying those questions so that everyone in our industry can start working towards a definitive date once and for all. After the catastrophic delay experienced to date, we need the Government to be crystal clear with removing the operational challenges to their approach and achieving a 19 July reopening date,” Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.