

Positive to see commitment to removal of restrictions for all pubs and the reopening of nightclubs and late bars – LVA

Contradictory position to allow return of live music but prevent mingling, will delay the recovery of that sector

The Government's announcement that all restrictions be removed from pubs and that nightclubs and late bars will be able to reopen from the 22nd October has been welcomed as positive news by the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA). According to the LVA, this will be warmly greeted across the licensed trade.

The LVA also pointed out that it will come as a major relief to the approximately 300+ venues and 5,000 employees who were awaiting this news.

However the LVA believes the Government's decision to only permit live music with social distancing is contradictory and will delay the recovery of that sector. They warned that hospitality are one of the main platforms for live music and the sector will be "slow and reluctant" to commit to performers while the current restrictions remain in place.

The LVA also called for Government supports to be extended into 2022.

"Everyone associated with nightclubs and late bars will be extremely relieved to hear this positive news that they will be able to open their doors from October 22nd," said Donall O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. "For many of the 300+ venues around the country and the 5,000 people working in those venues they will have been wondering if this day would ever come. Thankfully they finally have a date and that will now allow them to start organising for their reopening.

"It was also very positive to see that the restrictions on indoor hospitality will be eased from the 22nd October. This will mean we won't have to restrict admission to only those with vaccine certificates, social distancing will no longer apply and bar counters will finally be back in use.

"However we were surprised that the Government took the decision to permit live music but then limit it to seated audiences. This seems a little contradictory. The practical impact of that is many hospitality businesses will unfortunately be slow and reluctant to commit to performers when everyone is restricted to their tables. Given that hospitality provides a significant number of the platforms available to live entertainment this will undoubtedly delay the recovery of that sector.

"Looking at the overall picture it should be noted that while there was progress in this announcement, the reality is that severe restrictions remain in place for all pubs for another seven weeks, while nightclubs and late bars will remain closed for that period. That will bring their total closure to 585 consecutive days. This is far from business as usual for our sector and we expect that will be acknowledged in the form of extended supports being provided by the Government," Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.