

Singling out of non food pubs again would completely destroy publican trust in Government

Cabinet must stick to its decision of last Tuesday to re-open all pubs Contradictory messaging from Government and NPHEt adding enormously to uncertainty and stress facing publicans

If Dublin pubs are not allowed to re-open on 21 September the repeated singling out of non food pubs from other hospitality businesses would completely destroy the trust of publicans in the current Government and their handling of this crisis, according to the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA).

Last Tuesday, when the Government announced that non food pubs would reopen on 21st September, the Government also confirmed that if there were any regional restrictions these would apply to other businesses and not solely pubs*. Yet despite the Government commitment, two days later NPHEt called for the continued closure of non food pubs in Dublin. A decision is expected to be made by the Government on this issue on Tuesday. The LVA said the contradictory messaging from Government and NPHEt is adding enormously to the uncertainty and stress in publicans, staff, suppliers and all the families involved.

The non food pubs played no role in the current infection levels in Dublin, having been shut by order of the Government for more than 6 months. By the 21st September, the doors of these pubs will have been closed for 189 days. Any further delay in re-opening would mean that the Government is pushing many of these pubs into mortgage default, with the moratorium on mortgages provided by the banks set to finish at the end of September.

Another delay would represent the fourth reopening delay, with the non food pubs in Dublin having previously been preparing to reopen on the 20th July, 10th August and 31st August.

"If the Government were to further delay the reopening of the non food pubs in Dublin, it would completely destroy any trust publicans have in the Government's management of this crisis," said Donall O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. "It would fly in the face of the commitments made by Government last week, shatter the value of that Cabinet announcement and would raise the question as to what basis the Government is making its decisions. It would also have the immediate impact of driving many of these businesses into immediate mortgage default. The mixed messages coming from NPHEt and the Government is really adding to the uncertainty facing the publicans, their staff, suppliers and all the families involved. They feel like the ground keeps shifting around them. This is not the way a crisis should be managed.

"This is a bizarre recommendation to have been made by NPHEt. Rather than seeking to tackle the actual problems that have led to the rise in infections in Dublin, NPHEt is trying to use this as a means of keeping the pubs closed for longer. There is zero rationale behind that advice, given that these pubs made no contribution to the infection rate in Dublin as their doors have been shut by order of the Government for six months. NPHEt has repeatedly singled out pubs for draconian treatment and has continued to obsess about pubs rather those elements of Irish society where the real problems lie such as meat factories, direct provision or household gatherings," Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.

Note for Editors:

*As reported by the Irish Times on Tuesday 8th September 2020 – "Following the Cabinet meeting, a Government spokeswoman said the reopening would apply to all pubs. If there were any regional restrictions introduced as a result of rising numbers, it would be wider and would affect other businesses and not pubs solely, she added."

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/cabinet-decides-all-pubs-can-open-from-september-21st-1.4349607>

As reported by TheJournal.ie on Tuesday 8th September 2020:

"If there is a change in the situation between now and then it won't just affect pubs, it will affect all businesses," the spokesperson added."

<https://www.thejournal.ie/pubs-reopening-2-5199270-Sep2020/>