What are the Government’s plans for pubs? – LVA

Minister Donnelly says pubs could “materially add to the possibility of a second wave”

If pubs will continue to be singled out, special treatment is required

The Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) has asked the Government what their future plans will be for the pub sector should further spikes in the infection rate arise? Following comments made by Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, that pubs could “materially add to the possibility of a second wave”, the LVA is asking the Government to develop a plan for protecting the future of the pub industry and it’s 50,000 employees in this country.

Pointing to the singling out of the pub sector, the LVA has said if the Government wishes the pub sector to survive then special measures will be needed to safeguard the future of the industry.

Following yesterday’s announcement pubs who are yet to reopen will go 40% of the year without trading. This amounts to 147 days or almost 5 months. Pubs were the first sector to close and will be the last to reopen.

The LVA is asking the Government to commit to the following measures for the pub sector:

- Significant grant aid for pubs based on their licence band, with a minimum of €20,000 rising to €50,000 for 2020.
- Maintaining the Wage Subsidy Scheme for pubs for as long as social distancing restrictions apply.
- A cut in the VAT rate for on-trade alcohol until the end of the year.
- The abolition of commercial rates for 2020.

“It is clear that the Government is making a special case of the pubs,” said Donall O’Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. “We are the only sector still to reopen. We have repeatedly been separated from the rest of the economy and from the rest of the hospitality sector. The livelihoods of publicans and their staff are being badly affected. The infection rate is rising while they remain closed.

“Minister Donnelly’s comments are a further indication of the Government’s stance towards pubs. Well if pubs are going to be singled out by the Government, then we deserve special treatment. No other industry is being told they can’t return to work. No other business owners or staff are being told they can’t earn a living for 40% of the year.

“We have continually respected and abided by the public health advice. We recognise the gravity of this pandemic and the need to listen to the expert advice. However it must be recognised that there are economic consequences too and that the pub sector is bearing a real financial burden.

“What happens if there are further spikes in the infection rate? Will the Government delay the opening of pubs even further? How much more is an industry expected to take?

“We are asking the Government outright. ‘What are your plans for the pub sector?’ We can’t be left in limbo like this. It is debilitating to these businesses and to their employees. If the Government wants the pub sector to survive then they need to come up with specifics. Mature and detailed conversations are now needed between the Government and the industry and this needs to be prioritised. These issues will continue to arise until they come up with an actual plan. Otherwise we can expect to see jobs being lost and businesses being closed on an almost daily basis from here on,” Mr. O’Keeffe concluded.