

Mayday for pubs as Government announcement treats them as “second class citizens” – LVA and VFI

Social distancing presents same challenges to all hospitality businesses

Government need to explain why they have discriminated against pubs

Call on Government to work with industry on a reopening plan

Keeping pubs closed, while restaurants and cafes can reopen, represents a ‘Mayday’ moment for pubs across Ireland, who believe the Government measures are treating them as “second class citizens”.

The two representative bodies for pubs in Ireland, the Licensed Vintners’ Association (LVA) and the Vintners’ Federation of Ireland (VFI), said that implementing the social distancing guidelines will be just as challenging for all hospitality businesses and that all should be given the same opportunity to trade.

They have asked the Government to clearly explain why they chose to discriminate against pubs in the announcement.

Both organisations are calling on the Government to come forward with a plan specifically geared to maintaining the viability of the pub sector during this crisis and to work with them to overcome any obstacles that exist to reopening so as to provide certainty to the 50,000 people employed in the industry.

The LVA and VFI also highlighted that a large proportion of pubs throughout the country already possess restaurant certificates and they fully expect those pubs to reopen at the same time as the restaurants, taking into account the same public health guidelines that will apply.

VFI Chief Executive Padraig Cribben says: “This is a truly horrendous decision that has cataclysmic implications for our members. It’s perverse to suggest a pub is incapable of managing social distancing rules while allowing restaurants to trade. We want to hear the Government’s explanation as to why they have taken this decision. Are they saying to publicans ‘we don’t trust you’? It certainly seems that way. It is totally unfair and will cause uproar in the trade.

“We have always said that public health is the number one priority during this crisis. If the Department of Health feel restaurants opening doesn’t impact public health, then surely the same logic applies to pubs. All we’re asking for is equal and fair treatment,” said Mr. Cribben.

LVA Chief Executive Donall O’Keeffe says: “This represents a Mayday moment for the Irish pub industry. It beggars belief that our members are being treated in this fashion. The decision to keep pubs shut for the foreseeable future while allowing neighbouring restaurants trade will reduce publicans to the status of ‘second-class citizens’. As a matter of urgency we need the Government to engage with both associations to address whatever obstacles exist to pubs reopening. There is still time and we remain fully committed to working with the Government towards an agreed solution for our members.

“Many pubs possess a restaurant certificate so we expect those outlets will open at the same time as restaurants. More food is consumed in pubs than in full service restaurants or cafes, so why should pubs be denied this invaluable source of revenue? Pubs with restaurant licences already have dedicated kitchens, can provide table service and are just as capable of adapting to the public health guidelines as any restaurant or cafe ,” Mr. O’Keeffe concluded.