



11th November 2020

The safe and sociable return of hospitality from 3rd December

Dear Prime Minister,

While we have just entered a four-week closure period our focus must be on how we come out of it in the most positive manner. Hospitality can ensure that we can get the economy moving again, bringing people together for Christmas and beyond, and, critically, providing a safe environment for them to socialise in. Working together to adapt the tier system, Government and the hospitality industry can ensure that the nation is able to enjoy Christmas in 2020, look towards a much more positive 2021, and ensure that hospitality can open to the fullest extent possible across all three tiers.

The negative impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality sector – across pubs, restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, visitor attractions and breweries and the wider supply chain – has been profound. The sector has been devastated throughout 2020, facing the brunt of the economic catastrophe the nation faces. The sector will effectively have been shut for 18 weeks, and in many parts of the country has faced such extreme restrictions that profitable trade has been simply unachievable, since March. Before restrictions came into place in September trade was approximately 30% down on the previous year. Curfew and the various other changes pushed this down to around -50%, with a shift to Tier 2 leading to -60% and a move to Tier 3 knocking a further 10 percentage points off.

Since reopening the sector is incredibly proud of the work it has done to provide safe, secure venues, and this has been recognised by the public, with 72% quite or very satisfied with the measures they had witnessed (versus 11% unsatisfied). We have transformed our premises into well-spaced and well-ventilated places to socialise, we have enforced a range of health restrictions on our customers which would have been unthinkable at the start of the year and have been at the vanguard of the Test & Trace system. We overwhelmingly believe that our sector has risen to the challenge of making itself the safest possible place to socialise. The moderate changes suggested below will not affect our ability to continue to do so.

As we look towards re-opening, we are conscious that we must maintain these high standards. Our venues can provide a counterpoint to the risk of uncontrolled gatherings in household environments that will be inevitable, particularly as Christmas approaches. If families and friends are getting together then surely it is better for this to take place in an open, spacious, controlled environment, rather than behind closed doors in flats and houses that are far from Covid-secure. Is it not better for hotels and other accommodation settings to be made available for travelling guests rather than trying to sleep extended families in the same room?

As a sector we fully support the Prime Minister's desire to return to a recovery based on local risk levels. In addition to this we believe that as far as possible there should be

alignment between the four nations of the United Kingdom. While Government may feel the need to apply additional restrictions, we believe these must be strictly time-limited and be removed in early January.

The tier system needs revision on both health and economic grounds. We believe a reformed system should meet three tests:

1. It should have health at its heart, building on the measures that have worked (e.g. table service, Test & Trace) and making changes to improve it elsewhere.
2. It should factor in the need for human beings to socialise safely, and recognise the role that hospitality plays in that, particularly for isolated and vulnerable members of the community.
3. It must create an environment where all hospitality businesses can open and have some hope of December trade to help them survive beyond winter, with the appropriate level of financial support, including the two-thirds of wet-led pubs unable to operate in Tier 3.

It goes without saying that adequate preparation time and certainty for both venues and suppliers ahead of the re-opening date is also critical.

The key reforms that we believe can deliver these balanced objectives are around household groups and closure times. **With groups we would recommend a return to the 'Rule of six' throughout the tiers.** At the 'very high' tier we understand that there may be a desire to limit mixed households, but we would urge you to ensure that this permits at least two households – single household groups have been shown to make businesses virtually unviable and isolate people. This adaptation would avoid uncontrolled gatherings in homes (which we all know are happening and are all but impossible to police), help to tackle loneliness and allow for a reasonable level of trading.

Closure times have provoked much consternation in the industry, being both damaging to trade and causing hotspots as people are dispersed at the same time, causing queues for taxis, public transport and at local shops. This well-intentioned measure has proved counterproductive and is having a disproportionately negative impact on the sector. It is **time to move to a later cut-off time for entry or sale to 11pm, with an hour for dispersal from this point.** This could include maintaining a cut-off time of 10pm for last entry.

Alongside these changes we are willing to discuss other measures that could help to facilitate the safe and smooth operation of the sector and to address any outstanding concerns. We would also support strong enforcement where these rules are flouted and play our role in communicating the need to adhere to the rules. Let us be clear, these changes will not see the vibrant December nightlife that we have become accustomed to, but it will allow a form of safe and moderate festive cheer with friends and family, and a pathway to business recovery.

While the focus is rightly on the immediate health impacts of coronavirus, it is critical to recognise the economic harm of both lockdown and a return to the current tier system. Around 20% of profits are typically banked in December and, while these may be reduced this year, this period remains critical for business survival. **No, or vastly diminished, December trade will accelerate business failure, and that is a very real threat with the tiers as they currently stand.**

This will also lead to a long-term scarring of the economy, making recovery that much more lengthy and painful. Help us to get through the winter and we will drive the economic and

employment revival that the country needs – particularly now that we have tangible hope of a vaccine being rolled out and a vast increase in testing capabilities.

As the only sector of the economy materially affected by the tier system, we are committed to working with the Government to create a safe, welcoming and economically viable framework for reopening from 3rd December, with regular reviews thereafter. Collectively we can provide the weary British people a Christmas and new year to look forward to. We strongly believe it would be mutually beneficial to discuss these proposals with you and your team at your earliest convenience, and hopefully welcome you to visit a venue to demonstrate how safe this sector is.

Yours sincerely,



Emma McClarkin, Chief Executive, British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA);



Tom Stainer, Chief Executive, Campaign for Real Ale;



Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive, UKHospitality (UKH);



Steve Alton, Chief Executive of the British Institute of Innkeeping;



James Calder, Chief Executive, the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA);



John Longden OBE, Chief Executive, Pub Is The Hub;



Rick Bailey, Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB)

CC:

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Chancellor of the Exchequer

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport