

“About Time” – Vintners welcome fixed reopening date for pubs

Latest date is fourth reopening date provided to non food pubs

Non food pubs will have been closed for 189 days by the time they reopen

The two representative bodies for pubs across Ireland have welcomed the announcement that non food pubs will be allowed to reopen, saying “it’s about time”. The Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) and the Vintners Federation of Ireland (VFI) said the non food pubs will have been closed for 189 days – more than 6 months – by the time they get to reopen.

Pubs were the first part of the economy to close at the beginning of the crisis, with pubs across the country closing their doors in the interest of public health on 15th March 2020.

This will be the fourth reopening date provided to the non food pubs, with the Government previously having delayed reopenings scheduled for 20th July, 10th August and 31st August.

Currently 3,500 pubs across the country remain closed, impacting approximately 25,000 employees as well as their families. It was also noted that the Government was likely to force thousands of these pubs into defaulting their mortgage should they have not been allowed to reopen, with the six month moratorium due to close at the end of September. The banks had indicated to the vintner representative bodies that this moratorium could not be extended.

Strict guidelines have been put forward by the Government which will require table service only. The guidelines also put a strong emphasis on social distancing.

Speaking about the announcement, LVA Chief Executive Donall O’Keeffe said, “It’s about time this decision was made. We feel there was little justification for the Government to have repeatedly delayed the reopening. If all pubs are following social distancing then they should all have had the opportunity to get their doors open long before now. The vast majority of pubs have acted incredibly responsibly during this crisis and the pubs still closed have taken a real hit for the good of public health. It is about time that this contribution was acknowledged by the Government. We look forward to raising a glass once these pubs do get to open their doors again after six long months.”

Padraig Cribben, Chief Executive of the VFI said, “We have been marched up this hill several times before however this will come as a real relief to the 3,500 pubs across Ireland who are still closed as well as their staff and all the families concerned. The Government have belatedly acknowledged that we need to live with this virus and that meant having the pubs reopened. The conditions facing these pubs will be tough once they reopen having completely missed the summer tourist season, strict guidelines being in place and their capacity severely impacted. The support package put forward by the Government was derisory and this financial reality facing the pubs who are still closed needs to be recognised in a meaningful way. However at least there is now a sliver of light after what has been a very dark six months,” Mr. Cribben concluded.