



Campaign for Pubs

Promote, Support and Protect Pubs

Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

2nd November 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

URGENT Situation for pubs, publicans, suppliers, staff and their families in and after lockdown 2

We are writing to you following the announcement of a second lockdown for England on Saturday. As you must be aware, this is devastating for pubs, publicans, pub staff and their families – as well as brewers and other suppliers who rely on pubs for their own business and livelihoods.

We are writing seeking urgent clarification on a number of key points – as well as urging the Government to do more to support pubs, publicans, staff, suppliers and their families during this desperately worrying winter.

1. Apparent ban on pubs offering takeaway of beer and other alcoholic drinks

There is utter dismay amongst publicans and brewers at the apparent decision to ban pubs from offering takeaway beer and other alcohol, whilst supermarkets continue to be allowed to sell it.

This is grossly unfair – and a serious threat to pubs and breweries for whom offering takeaways could be a lifeline that otherwise the Government is taking away, which would be another kick in the teeth for publicans and brewers.

Takeaways of beer and other alcohol were permitted through the previous lockdown, so there is no good reason why they should not be allowed to do so again.

There seems to be the suggestion from an unnamed ‘Government spokesperson’ that somehow this evidence free decision is based on reducing “the level of social contacts people are having”. Yet this makes no sense, as supermarket alcohol aisles will remain open (and much busier than pubs offering a collect service) yet pubs are being told they cannot sell off-sales? This is clear bias and, it seems, also prejudice against the pub, something that increasingly felt by publicans up and down the country.

The need to allow pubs to do takeaways relates to the second point too, the fact that lockdown (and forced closures under Tier 3 rules) means pubs having to pour away large amounts of stock. Pubs must be allowed to service takeaways to allow them to sell off remaining draft beer that will otherwise be wasted (which when done in huge quantities, as happened in March, also causes environmental issues).

In addition, as well as pubs, brewers and other suppliers also rely on sales from pubs, especially where a brewery is reliant on sales of draft including cask beer. So to ban this is disastrous not only for pubs and publicans but also for breweries.

So we urge the Government to think again and make clear pubs can responsibly and safely sell takeaway alcoholic drink, including draft beer, in sealed takeaway containers as well as packaged products such as bottles and cans.

Campaign for Pubs, The Volunteer Arms, 5 Watson Street, Holgate, York YO24 4BH

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2. Compensation for loss of stock

Enforced closure is tough for all businesses and all businesses in this situation therefore need support, but pubs and brewers face a particular problem when closures are announced at short notice, as pubs have to get rid of significant amounts of cask beer. In March, an estimated five million pints had to be disposed of and pubs and brewers had to cover the cost for this from their grants. This time the levels of grants on offer don't even cover ongoing fixed costs, never mind provide a livelihood, so the Government should compensate pubs and brewers for beer that has to be disposed of due to the Government's decision to close pubs due to lockdown or Tier 3 restrictions.

Without such help, the cost of lost stock will be very significant and in the current uncertain situation, this will be disastrous for many pubs and breweries and some will close as a result.

So we urge the Government to do the right thing and compensate pubs and brewers for the stock that has to be disposed of due to lockdown or Tier 3 closure – and factor this into decision making for any future such decisions.

3. Grant support for pubs and intervention on rents

It appears that all pubs will be eligible for the equivalent of Tier 3 grants through the lockdown period. This is insufficient for the situation, with pubs having ongoing costs and with the Government so far refusing to tackle pubcos and landlords charging wholly unreasonable levels of rent throughout forced closure periods. Pubs (and brewers) have ongoing rent or mortgage costs, utility bills, VAT bills and other costs.

So we urge that the Government looks again at the levels of grants being provided – but also announces action to stop property owners from charging unreasonable rent during closures and during restricted periods. So we call again for a statutory right to a rent review for all pub tenants.

4. Certainty post 2nd December

The whole point of a so-called 'circuit-breaker' lockdown, as opposed to localised and lesser restrictions, is surely that it is time limited to the four weeks of closure, to then allow certainty for businesses, including pubs.

This means that the Government needs to give certainty to all pubs that they can open again from 3rd December – which is what you seem to want to do, but this has been contradicted by Ministers. There also currently isn't any clarity about what happens regarding areas that have been in Tier 3. Now the lockdown has been announced, then this should supersede Tier 3 restrictions – and no area (and no pub) should be in Tier 3 on 3rd December.

For pubs to reopen, they need at least 10-14 days notice to be able to place beer orders and breweries need even longer notice so as to be able to take the decision to brew cask beer again in time to stock pubs as they reopen. It's clear this hasn't been factored into Government decision making and should be.

So we urge the government to:

- **Announce soon that the lockdown will be for 4 weeks only and that pubs will then be allowed to open again.**
- **Announce that areas will NOT go from the lockdown into (or back into) Tier 3, which would mean pubs still could not open despite lockdown finishing.**

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- **We also urge that the questionable and damaging 10pm curfew (that has caused a crowding problem in some areas) be dropped also.**

The alternative is disastrous for pubs, publicans, brewers their staff and their families. If the lockdown fails to bring down the figures then it is clear, as the evidence already suggests, that transmissions are happening in places that are allowed to continue operating. So it would be wrong to scapegoat and damage pubs and hospitality any further - and we urge clarity and certainty over the future post lockdown.

Please help pubs now – please don't cancel Christmas and cause pub closures

Without certainty – and the prospect of (and actual) trade in December, many pubs will close, some permanently, and many publicans and pub staff and their families face loss of livelihood and hardship.

All pubs must be allowed to safely open again and should be allowed to operate with social distancing measures in place according to the times specified in their license. Pubs and publicans have spent huge amounts of money on Covid-19 measures making pubs as safe as possible and the evidence shows that hospitality is not a major source of transmissions. Instead of blanket decisions, the Government needs to again allow publicans to safely run their pubs (and then for local enforcement only where pubs are not operating safely).

Without this certainty and without further support, including compensation for lost stock, many publicans, pubs and also some brewers simply won't get through the winter and that means a loss of jobs, livelihoods and the permanent loss of pubs, a unique and hugely important part of our culture.

We also urge you to also provide support for brewers and other suppliers to pubs, whose businesses are also being seriously affected by the decisions taken regarding pubs. As part of this, we urge that you drop the ill-considered and damaging proposals to reform Small Brewers Relief which would be an inexcusable thing to do at a time like this.

We also urge that you look at how to support pubs that do not serve food, who so far have not been supported, despite having significantly restricted trade.

We urge you to listen and support and indeed save our nation's pubs and breweries.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Crossman
Chair, Campaign for Pubs



Dawn Hopkins
Vice-Chair, Campaign for Pubs



Greg Mulholland
Campaign Director

cc Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for BEIS
Darren Jones MP, Chair, BEIS Select Committee
Toby Perkins MP, Chair, Pub APPG
Daisy Cooper MP, MP for St Albans, Save St Alban's Pubs campaign