

Dear First Minister,

Over the course of the weekend, I have been consulting with fellow Forum members regarding what, in our view, amounted to a decision made by yourself to arbitrarily close nightclubs from the 27th of this month.

The decision to close nightclubs from the 27th December came completely out of the blue. None of the groups with whom WG claims to 'consult' had the first idea that this was going to happen. This speaks volumes as to the disdain in which WG holds the hospitality sector. The fear among many of us is that WG, having taken this step, is equally likely to take further damaging action against the rest of the Cardiff/Welsh hospitality sector

Further to the above **none** of the agencies that will be required to **advise** businesses on how new restrictions will work, have thus far been consulted or advised by WG. The same goes for the 'financial support package' that is supposed to cover an unknown number of sectors in an unknown number of ways.

Given the first point, and the catastrophic effect on trade that WG restrictions have already caused through multiple cancellations of bookings and drastically-reduced footfall, Forum businesses are hugely fearful about what WG might do next and what further dire consequences will ensue. As a direct illustration of this:

Several Forum-member businesses have already ceased trading

A huge cohort of employees in the late night / hospitality sectors have no idea how/if they will be paid in January or for the foreseeable future

Serious questions are being asked by politicians, journalists and others around how 'modelling' of the spread of the virus is being **a)** requested by politicians and **b)** presented by scientists.

Cardiff Licensees Forum has been publicly saying, for several months, that there is **no evidence** to suggest that transmission of the virus takes place in hospitality venues to a degree that should be considered any cause for concern. Indeed, we go further and say - **if WG had the evidence that hospitality venues contributed to transmission - we would be closed already! WG Health Minister is on record as saying 'there is evidence' - we say PUBLISH IT! Publish the data on where infections are coming from and how it shows hospitality to be unsafe.**

Testimony from a multiple (UK-wide) pub operator):

I absolutely agree that a letter such as this is the right thing to do.

I also agree with the points you have detailed below.

I thought that the FM comments in regards to not having control over a furlough package for the businesses that he is closing and that a decision on that would sit with the UK Government just laughable. That statement is of no use to any Welsh business being instructed to close from 27th as a result and gives them no certainty. Surely, he needs to reach an agreement with PM and treasury before instructing Welsh businesses to close - if his attempt to blackmail the Prime Minister backfires, it is at the cost of Welsh businesses and employees.

Also, what's happened to Covid Passports? I thought they were meant to create a safe bubble within the premises! Have they not been successful? Where is the data? Only a week earlier, the UK Government was rolling them out in England and now Wales seems to be giving up on them and closing down nightclubs. We have seen no data since they were launched in Wales on how effective they have been.

We just keep bouncing around with different restrictions: 18 months ago, we had physical controls and distancing, then local lockdowns. 12 months ago, it was all about Track and Trace,

and then we moved onto Covid Passes. None of these measures get us anywhere and the industry is never consulted with regard to the review of the data and its decision making. There is also very little detail given of what the hospitality sector face after 27th December other than nightclubs. We can't be asked to implement controls with only 24/48 hours' notice at what should be the busiest time of year and over a Bank Holiday weekend.

Testimony from Swansea colleague, and Chair of Swansea Hospitality Forum – Gary Lulham:

*“Completely agree and am more than happy to add my name.
I'd like to add the point that Nightclubs are destinations, event-based businesses. WG don't realise that they have just decimated my entire Q1 calendar. It doesn't matter how long we're locked down for - every event (and I'm not over exaggerating - I mean literally EVERY event) that I had booked between January and March has either been cancelled or rescheduled to the back end of the year. I honestly have no idea what we're going to do, as when we do get to reopen there will literally be no point.
I'm more worried now than I have been at any point through the whole pandemic”*

Although not resourced as some of the hospitality organisations that fight our corner are, Cardiff Licensees will continue to represent city centre licensed premises as it has done for more than 20 years.

Yours faithfully,
Nick Newman
Chair - Cardiff Licensees Forum