

Coronavirus – Scottish Hospitality Group demand talks with the government

Following the announcement by the First Minister in parliament on Tuesday of changes to lockdown to allow the country to find a route out of Level 4, some industry sectors have expressed their views.

The First Minister set out [general guidance](#) which will come into effect if Scotland meets the World Health Organisation's criteria for easing restrictions.

World Health Organisation criteria for easing restrictions

1. Evidence shows that Covid-19 transmission is controlled.
2. Sufficient public health and health system capacities are in place to identify, isolate, test and treat all cases, and to trace and quarantine contacts.
3. Outbreak risks are minimised in high vulnerability settings, such as long-term care facilities (i.e. nursing homes, rehabilitative and mental health centres) and congregate settings.
4. Preventive measures are established in workplaces, with physical distancing, handwashing facilities and respiratory etiquette in place, and potentially thermal monitoring.
5. Manage the risk of exporting and importing cases from communities with high-risks

of transmission.

6. Communities have a voice, are informed, engaged and participatory in the transition.

Ms Sturgeon said: "There will be a return to a levels approach with all of Scotland moving to at least level 3, with some possible adjustments. This could mean that from the last week of April that we would expect to see phased but significant re-opening of the economy, including non-essential retail, hospitality and services like gyms and hairdressers."

This has not proved quite enough for those in hospitality who want more information.

Spokesperson for the Scottish Hospitality Group, Stephen Montgomery, said: "While the measures may seem like a small step in the right direction we're concerned that our industry has been offered the promise of better days to come without the detail or confidence to plan for them.

"It's extremely frustrating for operators in Scotland to be looking at their counterparts in England who are finally able to start preparing for a return to normality with greater certainty. And if the Government's plan is to kick proper decisions down the road because of the election then that is unacceptable to everyone in our sector. We've endured repeated lockdowns and our worst festive trading ever.

"We pay into a furlough scheme that costs us more than it saves, we're racking up huge amounts of debt, and we've already paid out a fortune to make our premises Covid-compliant only to be shut down. All the indicators should be giving us cause for hope and optimism, yet The Scottish Government seems hell-bent on following a precautionary approach that's not backed up by evidence.

"The old levels system was inherently flawed and the Scottish Government must listen to industry and develop an approach that allows businesses to trade viably by permitting

hospitality firms in Levels 2 and 3 to trade to at least 10pm, with all due safety measures.

“Our proposals submitted to the First Minister last month must now be brought to the table for open discussion and dialogue and a confirmed plan agreed before parliament dissolves on 25 March. There can be no delay in this happening.

“The First Minister said support would continue for a further four weeks after businesses reopen, with some help continuing until June. Given all that we, our staff and suppliers have been through, the government aid must continue into next year and can not be pulled from our sector if we are to survive.”

The Scottish Hospitality Group is made up of businesses with a combined annual turnover of £275 million. It includes names such as Buzzworks Holdings who own Scotts in South Queensferry, Signature Pubs (who own Cold Town House, McLarens on the Corner, The Black Bull, Copper Blossom, Auld Hundred, The Fountain, The Basement, The Queens Arms, Element, Heads and Tales, Badger & Co, The Rutland Hotel and Apartments, Kylee Restaurant and Grill, The Huxley and The Boozy Cow), Montpeliers (who own Eastside, Lulu, Indigo Yard, Rabble, Candy, Montpeliers in Bruntsfield, and Tiger Lily), Manorview Group, Lisini Pub Co, G1 Group, The Townhead Hotel Lockerbie, The DRG Group, and Mor-Rioghain Group.