



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1047
Ein cyf/Our ref DET/02930/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Member of the Senedd
Chair – Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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30 October 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Minister for Economy, Transport & North Wales on behalf of the Petitions Committee. I note the enclosure of a Petition from Adam Smith regarding the 10pm curfew on alcohol sales in licensed premises in Wales. I am replying as I lead on hospitality issues.

The hospitality measures – including the 10pm alcohol curfew and 10.20pm closure of licensed premises – were developed in line with public health advice and after consulting the hospitality industry (including the British Beer & Pub Association). The measures are based on the social and physical distancing measures we should all be taking, which are there to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus.

The Technical Advisory Cell (TAC) provides coordination of scientific and technical advice to support Welsh Government decision makers during emergencies such as the current Coronavirus pandemic and ensure Welsh Government and Public Health Wales have timely access to the most up-to-date scientific and technical information related to the outbreak, which is published weekly here: <https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-cell-summary-advice-16-october-2020>.

We recognise the efforts the majority of hospitality businesses across Wales have implemented to operate safe environments for their customers, however TAC evidence supports the view that alcohol consumption still presents a major risk factor in the spread of infectious diseases. The effect of drinking alcohol – particularly drinking too much alcohol – can make people engage in more risk-taking behaviours. It can also make it harder for people to recall where they have been and who they were in close contact with if they are

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

asked by contact tracing teams in the event someone tests positive. This is supported by concerns from local authorities and the police over a breakdown in social distancing by groups of people following extended periods of alcohol consumption and from groups of people visiting multiple premises. The 10pm (22.20) ban on alcohol sales has been introduced to minimise these risks.

When people disregard social distancing the risk of COVID-19 infection rates rise. This is not necessarily as a result of hospitality businesses not putting suitable measures in place but is more about people's behaviour and interactions in and around these settings. Whilst one particular setting cannot be singled out, measures need to be taken in settings where social interactions typically last for 15 minutes or more. Since the introduction of time limited opening hours, there is evidence of a reduction in the number of contacts identified by individuals who have tested positive. We will continue to gather evidence on the potential role that hospitality settings play in the spread of Covid-19.

I am acutely aware of the immense challenges the hospitality sector is facing as a result of the measures taken to protect public health and save lives. Whilst we know the majority of hospitality businesses are working hard to comply, cases and clusters have been linked to hospitality settings and local authorities have taken enforcement action against pubs and restaurants where they have identified breaches of regulations – this includes, in some cases, closure notices. We are committed to doing everything we can to support the sector through this incredibly difficult period and thank them for the way they have responded to date. To this end, we are working with stakeholders to explore new and innovative funding solutions that will help the Tourism and Hospitality sector move forwards. Whilst the unprecedented national schemes delivered through the UK Government have provided essential aid during this period the ability of Welsh Government to offer additional financial support has allowed Welsh businesses to benefit at a far higher level when compared to other regions of the UK.

The number of businesses benefitting from government support, which includes both UK and Welsh Government schemes, was 14% in England and 34% in Wales. Meanwhile an additional £60m will be allocated to support businesses impacted by local lockdown restrictions. The [Eligibility Checker](#) for companies to find out if they can access funding from the third phase of the ERF is now open and the Fund will go live on 26th October.

For businesses affected by the firebreak, a new £300m fund, will open next week (week commencing 26th October) to support them. Every business covered by the small business rates relief will receive a £1,000 payment. Small and medium-sized retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, which have to close, will receive a one-off payment of up to £5,000. There will also be additional discretionary grants and support for smaller businesses, which are struggling.

The £80m fund announced last week to help businesses develop in the longer term, will be increased to £100m, which includes £20m ring-fenced for tourism and hospitality. Businesses will also be able to access the support available through the existing Job Retention Scheme or the new expanded Job Support Scheme.

As you will be aware, a short, sharp, **firebreak** was introduced across Wales from **6pm, Friday 23rd October**, until the start of **Monday 9th November 2020**, to help regain control of coronavirus. During this time, certain businesses and venues, including bars, restaurants and most shops must close. See FAQ guidance at: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-circuit-break-frequently-asked-questions#section-53253>

Following the end of the firebreak, a new set of national rules will be introduced, covering how people can meet and how the public sector and businesses operate, including the hospitality and venues sector.

My officials continue to engage with the sector through the hospitality stakeholder group and we are endeavouring to do all that we can to support the sector and keep everyone safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elis-Thomas'.

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism