



Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister of Scotland  
The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Monday 30 November 2020

Dear First Minister,

### **Covid Restrictions Unfair for Hospitality**

Covid-19 policy has left hospitality businesses out in the cold. The Level 4 restrictions imposed on 20 November have closed our sector down in eleven local authority areas and businesses have no certainty about what faces them after the review on 11 December. In Level 2 and Level 3 areas the restrictions are having a devastating effect on trading and are, in some instances, imposing closure on businesses that are legally permitted to remain open, not least because of travel restrictions. The relaxations announced for the Christmas period between 23-27 December may give heart to millions of Scots but bring no cheer to hard-pressed hospitality businesses that have invested heavily to provide Covid-secure, safe, welcoming venues but are denied the chance to open their doors. Nor is there much to be positive about following your comments about Hogmanay. Any beneficial change from level 4 in the Central Belt on 11 December is likely to come too late to allow businesses to capitalise on Christmas trade as they ponder what is likely to be a much quieter than normal first quarter of the year.

It is simply unjust that our sector is forced to struggle under increased restrictions when there is little evidence to show that hospitality is responsible to any material extent for transmission of Covid-19 infection. Data published by Public Health England (PHE) suggests that supermarkets are likely to be the most common source in England where people are exposed to the virus followed by secondary and primary schools, hospitals, care homes, colleges, warehouses and pre-school nurseries. Hospitality businesses were lower on the list. It is a matter of regret that there is no similar published research for Scotland, but it will be unlikely that findings would be materially different here.

The hospitality industry has taken its share of responsibility – and made a significant investment of time and money - to contribute to the national effort to protect public health through protective measures, changes to operating practices, training of staff, enhanced hygiene practices and management of customers. The industry provides a safe and controlled environment for staff, customers and local communities. Since March, the industry has complied with a raft of regulatory changes, guidance and restrictions – often imposed at impossibly short notice. Restrictions are forcing businesses to trade sub-optimally on a much greater physical and temporal basis than any other sector. There are parts of our industry that are still unable to reopen after initial lockdown in March.

There is an understandable sense of injustice in our sector when a YouGov poll demonstrates that the British public finds it least difficult to socially distance in hospitality premises compared to retail, shopping centres and public transport.

The ability to visit our regulated, supervised premises provides a lifeline to many young people and those living alone. We have invested millions and demonstrated that we can trade safely and responsibly. We offer one of the best pathways through this pandemic and we urge you to prioritise the following:

1. **Responsive review of levels and restrictions** - The levels need to be reviewed weekly in December. The decision to not allow people gathered in Christmas bubbles to visit our premises over the festive period is arbitrary given what we have set out above. Please consider that the alternative gathering to safe, supervised premises might be unmanaged and unmanageable house parties. And, if cases continue to rise, please look at the settings where the virus is spreading rather than closing our doors at the earliest opportunity.
2. **Recompense for restrictions** – We have committed resources to the reopening and are planning for the recovery which must surely come next year. We can avoid mass closures and job losses in January if the Scottish Government can provide adequate financial support to cover the costs of closure and compliance with restrictions on trade, extend the measures to prevent lease irritation to June next year and commit to the recommendations of the Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce ... and if the UK Government allows us to draw down the Job Retention Bonus promised to us.
3. **Route to economic revival** – We can provide a much-needed boost and support longer term recovery if Governments at Holyrood and Westminster can agree this side of the New Year that the business rate waiver and VAT cut will be extended across 2021 / 2022.

We want to help both Governments to roll out mass testing. We want to support community well-being in the cold, dark months of the New Year. We want to play a leading role in our economic revival. But we won't be able to do any of this unless the Scottish Government looks again at both the evidence and our commitment and gives the Scottish public access to hospitality services which will get us all safely through the winter.

We look forward to your response.

<b>Signatory</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Calum Ross	UKHospitality Chair in Scotland, Proprietor	Loch Melfort Hotel
Kate Nicholls	CEO	UKHospitality
Willie Macleod	Executive Director for Scotland	UKHospitality
Graeme Gibson	General Manager	Yotel Glasgow
Richard Cooke	General Manager	The Balmoral Hotel
James Thomson	Proprietor	The Witchery by the Castle and Prestonfield House
Peter Taylor	OBE	Strathaven Hotel
Hans Rissman	Owner	Strathaven Hotel
Kenny Blair	Managing Director	Buzzworks Holdings
Stephen Leckie	Chairman & Chief Executive	Crieff Family of Hotels
Russell Imrie	Managing Director	Queensferry Hotels
Rosanna Burns	General Manager	Euro Hostel
Chris Wayne-Wills	CEO	Crerar Hotels
Janice Fisher	General Manager	Novotel Glasgow
Nicola Taylor	CEO	Chardon Hotels
Neil Ellis	Group Operations Director	Place Hotels and Chair of Edinburgh Hotels Association
Frank Whitaker	Chair	Aberdeen City & Shire Hotels Association
Nick Mackenzie	CEO	Greene King
Kevin Blamire	Group Hospitality and Marketing Manager	Holt Leisure Parks Ltd
Malcolm Duck	Director	Ducks at Kilspindie
Chris Mitchell	Director	The genuine Dining Co.
Steve MacDonald	Managing Director	The Square Hotel
Dan Rose-Bristow	Managing Director	The Torridon
Gary Wallace	Business Manager	Hotel Eilean Larmain
Richard Hodgson	Chief Executive	YO Sushi
Peter Hancock	Chief Executive	Pride of Britain Hotels
Guus Bakker	CEO	Frasers Hospitality UK Ltd
Rob Pitcher	CEO	Revolution Bars Group Plc
Paul Smith	Managing Director	Castle Leisure Group
Daniel Hill	CEO	Escape
Jason Davidson	Co-founder	Champany Inn
Isabella Macdonald	Director	Kinloch Lodge
Simon Longbottom	CEO	Stonegate Pubs
Jens Hofma	CEO	Pizza Hut Restaurants
Stephen Burns	CEO	Hollywood Bowl Group Plc
Laurence Keen	CFO	Hollywood Bowl Group Plc
Robin Sheppard	Chairman, Co-founder	Bespoke Hotels
Phil Urban	CEO	Mitchells & Butlers Plc

Caroline Gregory	Director	The Lovat Loch Ness
Robert Cock	CEO	TGI Fridays
Dave Smith	Director	The Buccleuch Ltd
James Spragg	CEO	The Big Table Group
Adam Reeves	CEO	The Robert Parker Collection
Marco Truffelli	Partner and Managing Director	Rufflets St Andrews
Paul Flaum	Group CEO	Bourne Leisure
Steve Richards	CEO	Parkdean Resorts UK
Nicholas Northam	Executive Vice President-International	Interstate Hotels & Resorts
Peter Crome	Chairman	The Carnegie Club at Skibo Castle
Alexander Salussolia	Managing Director	Glendola Leisure Ltd
Suzanna Baker	Commercial Director	Stonegate Pub Company
Paul Callingham	Owner	Greenock Hotels Ltd
Murray Roberts	Managing Director	Bed and Bars Ltd
Marc Jones	General Manager	Holiday Inn Glasgow Theatreland
Philip Millward	Chairman	Tenpin Proprietors Association
Graham Blackwell	CEO	Tenpin Ltd
Tristan Nesbitt	Cluster General Manager	Edinburgh Hotels Association
Celia Hague	Regional Manager UK	Hague Motel
Robert Paterson	CEO	Best Western Hotels
Calum Ross	General Manager	Hilton Glasgow
Helen McBride	General Manager	Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa
Roddie Henderson	Proprietor	Savoy Park Hotel
John Hutson	CEO	JD Wetherspoon Plc
Susan Bland	Managing Director	RBH Hospitality Management
Chris Bray	CEO	Sports & Leisure UK&I, Sodexo Ltd
Angela Vickers	CEO	Apex Hotels
Andrew Ovenstone	Operations Director	Dakota Hotels