



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HOTELS
FEDERATION

NIHF STATEMENT – 5st June 2020

Hotel opening in Republic of Ireland brought forward

Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) CEO Janice Gault said:

“The unlocking of the tourism industry has been moving at pace throughout Europe and the news that the opening of hotels south of the border has moved forward by a number of weeks is not surprising. The rescheduling from the original date of 20th July has been made against a background of a well-controlled pandemic and the subsiding of the risk it presents. This is an informed decision based on a falling “R” number and the COVID-19 pandemic lessening, and shows the need to bring an economy back to life as a matter of priority. Consumer sentiment in the south has brought real pressure to bear with people keen to resume some semblance of normal life albeit with social distancing restrictions in place.

Earlier this week, Economy Minister Diane Dodds MLA announced that hotels could reopen on 20th July. The Northern Ireland Hotels Federation was pleased to get a date and has been working with industry partners, tourism agencies and government on the services that could be available in the hotel setting. It is expected that hotels, bars and restaurants will open in England on 4th July.

There may be an opportunity for the date in Northern Ireland to move forward and we are aware that this is the wish of hotels in a number of locations who rely on a strong summer season. Again, this would be based on scientific data, industry readiness and consumer sentiment.

There has been significant work going on behind the scenes to create guidelines and operating procedures to ensure that hotels are COVID-19 safe. This will stand us in good stead as we move forward and may allow us to move swiftly if it is appropriate to unlock tourism and hospitality earlier than originally outlined.

There is no doubt that an earlier opening will afford hotels south of the border the opportunity to trade for the entire summer season and this has been something that has been mooted by hoteliers in Northern Ireland as well. The situation is a very fluid one, and we have seen countries like France and Italy move from strict lockdown to full trading in a very short window. It is positive to see tourism re-open and with it much needed contribution into the economy.