



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HOTELS
FEDERATION

NIHF STATEMENT – 23rd June 2020

Minister Dodds releases Guidance &

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

“The Northern Ireland Hotels Federation welcomes the industry guidelines for the visitor economy that have been issued today. We also recognise and appreciate the considerable support Economy Minister Diane Dodds MLA and her Executive colleagues have given to the sector. The guidelines are augmented by an industry framework which will ensure that the sector can open in a safe and secure manner. This will give reassurance to employees, businesses and our visitors.

Hoteliers are looking forward to playing a pivotal role in restoring tourism and contributing to the local economy in a significant way. It is imperative that we open in an orderly manner and that we put the health and well-being of staff to the fore. The size and diversity of the hospitality sector means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to reopening. Across our industry there are many sub-sectors and widely different businesses models.

The industry has gone through a period of considerable challenge and is keen to return to trading with the appropriate safety measures in place, and in a manner, which is COVID-19 compliant. It is important that we mitigate the risk of spreading the virus.”

The Executive had announced that, depending on the rate of infection, caravan parks, camping sites and self-catering tourist accommodation would be able to re-open on 26 June. Hotels and other tourist accommodation would be able to re-open from 3 July along with restaurants, cafés and coffee shops. Pubs and bars can also open from July 3 for the provision of food, and also their beer gardens on a table service basis. These re-opening dates are of course dependent on the continued management of the rate of transmission of the virus.

The Minister said: **“The re-opening of our tourism and hospitality sectors is essential to the rebuilding of our economy. The return of tourists and customers to our hotels, caravan parks, restaurants, cafés and pubs is undoubtedly a boost for the industry as a whole.**

“However, the application of social distancing and hygiene practices is vital. We must ensure the transmission of the virus is minimised and we need to reassure customers, employees and visitors that establishments are as Covid-19 safe as possible. That is why the publication of this guidance today is so important. It is the responsibility of businesses to read it and apply it. It is also the responsibility on all of us as visitors and customers to play our part in tackling the pandemic and to behave responsibly.

“It is also reassuring for customers that an industry standard will be established to show the guidance has been adopted.”

The guidance – entitled Working Safely During Covid-19 in the Visitor Economy – is aimed at business owners, operators and workers in hotels and other tourist accommodation, indoor and outdoor attractions and experiences, hospitality businesses including restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars.

The information provided is intended to help businesses make decisions that will enable them to re-open as safely as possible for both their workers and customers. Businesses will be required to translate the guidance into specific actions, depending on the unique nature, size and type of business and how it is organised, operated and managed. It is published on Tourism NI’s website and on nibusinessinfo.co.uk.

Tourism NI is rolling out the guidance. Its Chief Executive John McGrillen said: “The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented pressures to bear on our local tourism industry and it is crucial that businesses receive guidance as they re-open.

“The advice published today will allow businesses to undertake unique risk assessments and translate this into specific actions. Tourism NI will be following up with a wide range of industry support including webinars, a practical business re-opening guide, and a helpline and advisory service to support businesses through re-opening.”

The guidance is based largely on UK Government guidance and has been tailored for Northern Ireland by the Department for the Economy and Tourism NI in consultation with statutory agencies and industry stakeholders through the Tourism Recovery Working Group.

Hospitality Ulster and the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation will be releasing further sector specific guidance for hospitality and tourism businesses.