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Here is the latest update on the re-opening of hotels, based on the announcements from the Executive on 15th June.

On 15th June the Economy Minister, Diane Dodds, announced that hotels could re-open on 3rd July along with other aspects of the tourism and hospitality sector. Businesses do not have to open on this date but have the choice to do so.

The conditional re-opening of additional sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry are set out below:

- i. Restaurants, Cafés, Coffee Shops etc. NB - opening on 3rd July would not enable unauthorised access to pavement areas and other outside spaces as per pavement café legislation;
- ii. The indoor spaces of Pubs and Bars for the provision of substantial meals with the serving of alcohol being ancillary to this. Pubs and Bars which open on this basis would be encouraged to avoid providing activities such as bands, live sport screening, etc;
- iii. Pubs and Bars with outdoor spaces (e.g, beer gardens) would be permitted to sell alcohol in these spaces on a table service basis;
- iv. Hotel Amenities - In line with 3(i), (ii) and (iii) above, hotel restaurants would be permitted to re-open. Hotel bars to be restricted to the provision of substantial meals with the serving of alcohol being ancillary to this. As with pubs and bars, hotels with outdoor spaces would be permitted to sell alcohol in these spaces. NB - spas and leisure facilities would not be permitted to open at this stage and would open in line with relaxation of restrictions on the wider spa and leisure sector; and
- v. Visitor Attractions – this is a diverse sector comprising museums, historic houses, culture and heritage venues, and outdoor attractions (the outdoor areas of some attractions are already open). Facilitating a re-opening date of 3rd July would provide an

important step in helping to return this sector to a degree of normality. It is likely that there will be a phased re-opening of visitor attractions in line with site or building specific risk assessments. A significant number of Northern Ireland's visitor attractions are operated by local authorities, and large organisations such as National Museums Northern Ireland, the National Trust, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens (part of Historic Royal Palaces) who are already well advanced in terms of their organisational risk assessments and preparedness to re-open.

The dates are conditional on controlling the rate of transmission of Covid-19 and social distancing measures will remain in place.

The Executive also agreed that consideration should be given to reviewing the two-metre social distancing requirement.

Please note the following:

There is no restriction on the number of rooms people sell.

There is no fallow period for bedrooms.

There are no numbers for weddings as yet and this may be some time away.

There should be guidelines available soon, they are at the final draft stage and need to be signed off at a number of levels including at central government and locally in Northern Ireland. There will also be a safety mark for the industry which is again at its final stages. T

he guidelines are designed to be used by a variety of businesses and are based on premises doing a risk assessment of their own business, developing a set of standard operating procedures that are compliant with social distancing and which minimise risk.

There are a number of risk areas that you may wish to look at prior to opening and review during the course of the coming months;

- Staff & Employees
- Premises & Structure of your building
- Operational Activity
- Financial Position

There are a number of templates for this but if you are starting from scratch a good reference point is <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm> - you will find a range of simple guides and templates on this site.

PPE

This should be part of your risk assessment and be required in areas of your business where you cannot effectively operate at 2m distance at all times and for your housekeeping team. You may also want to offer this as a matter of choice.

Signage

You want your guests and your staff to remain safe and know the rules, however these may change. You can opt for movable signage to mark out areas and also space guests at gathering points for social distancing. It may be more effective to email guests with your terms of trading and have your operating policies and procedures on your website for people to read.

Contactless operations

This is an area you may wish to look at for checking in and leaving the hotel. There are a number of FREE apps – generally on a trial basis that businesses can explore, or you may wish to develop something bespoke for your own business. Again, this can be an expensive option and some off the shelf could be easily adapted.

Outside Spaces

Please note you can now use outside space that you own for food and beverage table service. There is work underway on the issue of Pavement Café use - planning permission for this has been removed. Please contact your local council to ascertain their position - a number have waived fees and you can get your licence extended to cover this area as well.

Marketing

The Federation is administered a marketing support campaign on behalf of Tourism Northern Ireland, and you may wish to consider availing of this to promote your business. 75% funding is available, and more details can be found on the NIHF website.

Conclusion

In the short term, we are recommending that businesses complete a comprehensive risk assessment and staff engagement as a matter of priority, limit spend on structural changes and try and avoid them completely if you can be compliant without any building works. Look at PPE as an option and offer it as a choice. Reach out to your customers via digital platforms and advise them of your plans to return to business with opening dates if you have them and any packages that you are planning to sell.