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JOSS CROFT: SOME BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN THROUGH 'THREE WINTERS'

23 JUN 2020 BY JAMES CHAPPLE

UKinbound chief Joss Croft has led a cautious welcome from the UK's hospitality and inbound tourism sector for the government's plans to further ease the country's coronavirus lockdown measures.



Some attractions will be able to reopen from 4 July

Croft said the plans announced by prime minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday (23 June) to ease two-metre social distancing and give businesses greater licence to operate would come as a "huge relief".

Pubs, restaurants, hotels and other attractions **will be allowed to reopen under strict new Covid-secure rules and operating practices from 4 July**, as well as B&Bs, campsites and other accommodation sites that could help meet demand for domestic holidays and staycations this summer.

However, Croft said it was vital to remember businesses would only have a curtailed summer season to recoup losses, and stressed some businesses had been through the equivalent of "three winters".

"Today's announcement will come as a huge relief to businesses across the tourism and hospitality industry, who have earned very little revenue since the beginning of March," said Croft.

"Reducing social distancing from two metres to one will also ensure many more businesses will be able to viably reopen at the start of next month."

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Croft's reaction was echoed by Jane Pendlebury, chief executive of the Hospitality Professionals Association (Hospa), who said having a definite opening date meant the sector "can finally see a way forward."

Pendlebury said the move would allow ancillary services at hotels and other forms of accommodation, such as bars, restaurants and spas, to reopen, making them more attractive prospects once "the novelty of simply getting away post-lockdown wears off".

"Reducing social distancing measures then will have a huge impact," said Pendlebury, who explained that as distancing requirements are reduced, revenue potential increases.

"If hoteliers and other restaurateurs are creative in their approach, they can work to increase those margins by implementing a variety of measures," she said.

"This, at least gives them a chance to head in the right direction, enabling the opportunity to develop a workable service. Of course, safety is paramount, and our priority is opening safely for both guests and staff, but this offers the industry a workable margin."

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Gloria Guevara, president and chief executive of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), added that while the measures would undoubtedly boost domestic and inbound tourism, Johnson's update offered no greater clarity on when travellers and holidaymakers can start venturing abroad, or when international travellers can arrive into the UK via air bridges without having to self-isolate.

"WTTC believes the recovery of the wider travel and tourism sector desperately needs a clear timeline for when overseas travel can resume," she said.

"It is essential airlines, tour operators and ferry companies, among others, can prepare their businesses to welcome back holidaymakers, who also need to be able to plan and book their getaways."

'THREE WINTERS'

Croft added he was pleased the government had "listened to the industry" and was "on the verge of agreeing air corridors with a number of countries", a step he said would signal the inbound tourism sector's readiness to welcome international visitors again.

"Although these measures are very much to be welcomed, government needs to recognise that while some businesses will hopefully be able to recoup a small proportion of their losses over the much shorter summer season, many businesses, especially those that rely wholly or mostly on inbound tourism, will have gone through the equivalent of 'three winters' and will need further financial support if they are to survive and continue to drive jobs and growth across the UK."

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