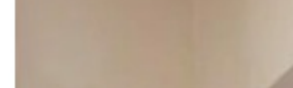


'Schools did not have to come at the expense of hospitality': Hoteliers respond to the new roadmap

For much of hospitality, a May reopening and potential staycation boom is simply too little, too late

By Charlotte Johnstone, CONTENT EDITOR
23 February 2021 - 2:14pm



Victorian House in Grasmere is owned by Serena von der Heyde, who is "hugely disappointed" by the delay in reopening hotels

Hotel owners across the country have spoken out on the Government's [roadmap out of lockdown](#). The "cautious" four-stage plan will see hotels unable to open before May 17 at the earliest, in phase three, potentially just five weeks before nightclubs, and after other parts of hospitality such as outdoor dining.

This is despite the fact that in the month leading up to the second national lockdown in November, hospitality (bars, cafés, pubs and restaurants) accounted for less than three per cent of outbreaks, according to figures from Public Health England.

While some hoteliers feel optimistic about having a date to work towards, and are looking forward to a surge in staycations, others say they will struggle to survive until then. We spoke to a range of those affected to find out what the roadmap means for them.

Our future just got a whole lot bleaker, we're holding on to our mental health by a thread

Many hoteliers are worried about how they will cope until they can reopen. Serena von der Heyde, who owns the [Georgian House](#) in Pimlico and the [Victorian House](#) in Grasmere, said she is "hugely disappointed" by the announcement as it means having to survive a further three months without work and income, which is "like starting the longest lockdown all over again" and is unclear as to whether grants will be offered. "I think the government see furlough as support; furlough supports our workforce but it costs businesses money, it doesn't support our businesses," she said.

"We have seen no pick-up in bookings since the announcement – just cancellations for April and May. Our future just got a whole lot bleaker. Some of our team members are holding onto their mental health by a thread – I simply don't know how we get them through three more months with no work and no interaction [...]. Social distancing worked really well in hotels because naturally people stay with the people they are travelling with."

This is echoed by Jeremy Goring, chief executive of [The Goring](#) in Belgravia, and Garry Fortune, general manager for the northern outposts of INNSiDE by MeliaUK. Goring said: "Every day we are shut, more people's livelihoods are tragically lost. Hospitality has taken the rules and regulations incredibly seriously and businesses have done a magnificent job making their premises very safe indeed for guests. So let's get them open very, very soon."

Fortune adds: "We don't simply turn a sign over from closed to open [...]. There's been no mention yet of ongoing financial support whether that be through deferred business rates or extended VAT reductions," but is thankful that at least there's a date to work towards. "Hopefully this will encourage consumer confidence and bookings."



"Let's get hotels open soon," says Jeremy Goring of The Goring, London

Of course schools should be the priority, but not at the expense of hospitality

Other hoteliers don't understand why their sector is one of the last to reopen. Dan Brod, who co-owns the Beckford Group, which operates four pubs with rooms in the south-west ([The Beckford Arms](#), [The Talbot Inn](#), [The Bath Arms at Longleat](#) and [The Lord Poulett Arms](#)), worries that the over-cautious approach will make it too difficult for many of the UK's small hoteliers.

"From hospitality's perspective and particularly from the point of view of smaller hotels, the Prime Minister has set out the most cautious approach possible," he said. "Of course schools should be the priority, but this did not necessarily have to come at the expense of the hospitality industry – and it is [ridiculous] to push socialising into homes or gardens where it is not monitored. [...]"

"The domestic summer may well be busy with a staycation [frenzy], but remember, there will still be (rightly so) social distancing and hotels or restaurants can only be full, they cannot be more full. Our places would normally be 100 per cent full in the summer anyway and so the staycation boom is not some kind of windfall that can plug the gap that has been created. [...]"

He says the costs outweigh the benefits and most hoteliers are facing a year without a salary. "It is now an obvious necessity that there must be: 1) a business rate holiday for at least another year for all non-takeaway hospitality; 2) VAT must remain at five per cent and 3) landlords must be required, at least, to cooperate with tenants."

A bitter pill to swallow – our industry has been singled out

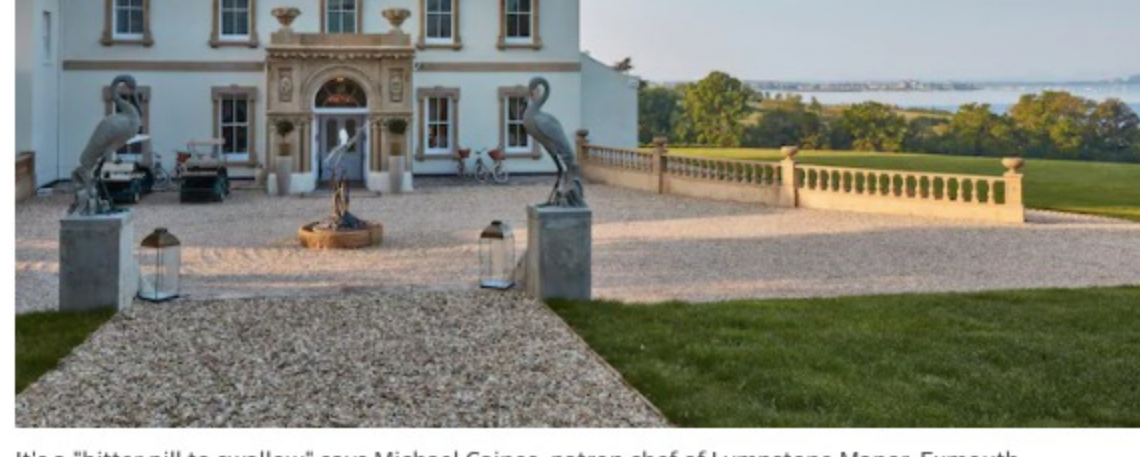
Chef patron of [Lymington Manor](#) in Exmouth, Michael Caines, said yesterday's announcement was "a bitter pill to swallow" and that instead of heralding the lifting of draconian measures, they're suffering the blow that they cannot fully reopen until at least May 17. He said: "It doesn't make much sense that our sector must wait another month to open while other closer contact sectors can go back. While outdoor hospitality can reopen, how can any business reliably base their operations on the English weather?"

He highlights that the Government published data on hospitality being a core part of the UK's economy (contributing £57.6 billion to the UK in 2019 and providing 2.5 million jobs) but that this has not been recognised in the roadmap to recovery.

"Between January 25 and February 7, 62 per cent of businesses in accommodation and food services had paused trading so far. How many of those will be able to reopen and who will remain?"

"It seems that our industry has been singled out in its wait to reopen until May, all the while shortening what could be a profitable season and reducing the opportunity to make back the losses in what could have been a great spring of staycations. The news is staggering and disappointing."

"We must hold onto the hope that this will be the last enforced lockdown and that May 17 will be the start of the building blocks for the long-term recovery of the industry and the millions that have been affected."



It's a "bitter pill to swallow" says Michael Caines, patron chef of Lymington Manor, Exmouth

Completely non-sensical that non-essential retail has been prioritised over hospitality

Iconic Luxury Hotels executive director Andrew Stembridge states that although the roadmap gives hotels a better idea of when to reopen, it feels "completely nonsensical that non-essential retail has been prioritised ahead of hospitality".

The group includes [Cliveden House](#), [The Lygon Arms](#) and [Chewton Glen](#) plus London's [11 Cadogan Gardens](#) and [The Mayfair Townhouse](#). Stembridge said the long return is "bitterly disappointing" for teams who he assumes will remain furloughed for another three months and for thousands of guests who had booked their hotels for Easter.

"Yet again this demonstrates that Government has little understanding of our industry and are oblivious to the fact that outside of Covid there are a multitude of tragic situations affecting so many businesses and individuals. [...]"

"With so much pent-up demand for the holidays, arts, shopping, restaurants and more, the industry felt so hopeful that a spring staycation boom in the UK would be possible and we really banked on being able to open our doors by Easter.

"It's heartbreaking and while we are trying to remain as positive as possible, the news that Easter stays [are not] on the cards is a huge blow."

A shame hotels can't open for Easter – but thankful for a date

For Eva Mount of London's The Guardsman, while it's "a shame" hotels will not be able to open for Easter, a date is cause for hope. Echoing this was Sarah Callander Beckett, owner of [Combermere Abbey](#), for whom having clarity and dates is a big positive to hold on to. "After lockdown was lifted last summer, we had more than 100 bookings within the first few weeks."

She attributes this to the extended periods of restrictions having helped people appreciate what's on their doorstep. "We think this will happen again in 2021," she said. "Guests are looking for space, a warm welcome and a different view [...]. We predict another successful season once restrictions lift – after an uncertain and difficult year, getting away, especially to the countryside, is the perfect escape and release. We're excited to see what the next few months hold following the roadmap announcement last night."



A "shame" hotels can't open during Easter, says Eva Mount at The Guardsman, London

At long last the end is finally in sight, but we still need to be cautious for it to be truly over

Sharing this view is Hospitality Professionals Association's (HOSPA) chief executive, Jane Pendlebury, who says it seems at long last that the end is "finally, finally in sight for hospitality" and it's "encouraging" that they now have a definite date to aim for. "We are feeling a real surge of optimism and hope – however May 17 is, of course, still a long way away. Many operators who have been left precariously hanging on are at risk of failing before then – even with the opportunity to establish a degree of income via outdoor hospitality from mid-April," she said.

"But while most hospitality operators are understandably desperate to reopen as quickly as possible, we can appreciate a cautious approach on the proviso that this is it for national lockdowns. The majority of us would take a more delayed start on the expectation that, this time, it truly will be the last enforced closure on a national scale."

HOSPA urges the Government to support hospitality. "[The sector] will be unsteady for a long time yet – and very much in need of assistance," Pendlebury said. "By continuing to support hospitality in its hour (or should that be year) of need, HMRC will almost certainly reap the revenue rewards in future from a fully recovered and flourishing industry."

Read more: [What the roadmap out of lockdown means for hotel stays in Britain](#)

Travel Newsletter
Destination guides, travel advice and the latest news from our experts around the world.

Sign up

Related Topics

Coronavirus

The Telegraph values your comments but kindly requests all posts are on topic, constructive and respectful. Please review our [commenting policy](#).

Show comments

More from Travel

Live Travel latest news: Vaccine travel pass will be ready 'within weeks'

By Tom Mulvihill
23 Feb 2021, 2:07pm

What the roadmap out of lockdown means for hotel stays in Britain

By Jade Conroy
23 Feb 2021, 2:05pm

The best hotels for spa breaks in the UK, for some much-needed pampering

By Suzanne Duckett
23 Feb 2021, 1:44pm

Can I visit Wales? Latest advice as Easter self-catering breaks proposed

By Emma Featherstone
23 Feb 2021, 1:43pm

Can I travel to France? Latest advice as UK says overseas holidays can restart in May

By Oliver Smith
23 Feb 2021, 1:30pm

The world's best beaches to set your sights on for summer 2021 and beyond

By Emma Cooke
23 Feb 2021, 1:26pm

More from The Telegraph

Four countries we predict will be open to Britons this summer

Great British Getaways: 10 amazing UK walking holidays for 2021

Which is the perfect Greek island? Here are 15 of our favourites

Sun, sand, scuba diving and stingrays - an expert guide to Grand Cayman

Is Sierra Leone about to become African tourism's next big thing?

Europe's most beautiful rivers - and how to explore them

Voucher Codes

The latest offers and discount codes from popular brands on Telegraph Voucher Codes

Travelodge discount codes

TUI discount codes

Lastminute.com discount code

Hotels.com discount codes

First Choice discount codes

STA Travel promo codes