



BOURNEMOUTH
TOWN CENTRE BID

Conor Burns MP
Bournemouth West

October 9th 2020

Dear Conor

We are writing to you concerning the current Covid-19 outbreak & the significant & far reaching challenges the leisure & hospitality sectors are facing within the town centre of Bournemouth as a result of the pandemic.

As you know the Bournemouth Town Centre BID covers most of the town centre with the “sister” Coastal BID covering the seafront, hotel sector & surrounding villages including Westbourne, & Southbourne.

In our area we represent nearly 720 levy paying businesses with over 225 of them falling into this sector. That is a significant 31% and this figure is rising in line with the changing nature of towns & cities across the UK. As consumer’s shopping habits shift, the attraction of our high streets & town centres will inexorably move from primary retail destinations to places where traditional shopping is a secondary or even tertiary choice. There appears to be little doubt that people will come to us for an ‘experience’ driven by events, hospitality & leisure activities.

The pandemic has not caused this change but without doubt has accelerated the process and where tourism/hospitality has always been vital to the Bournemouth economy, it is increasingly even more important as people look for that aforementioned ‘experience’ It is interesting to note that of the 10 new businesses opening up in vacant units in our town in the past 3 months 9 of them have been hospitality/leisure whereas traditional retail outlets continue to decline.

Thus, we write imploring you to have discussions & use your influence at Government level to lobby for a review of the 10pm curfew for hospitality & leisure venues – without putting too fine a point on it Conor, this strategy is crippling the sector.

Hospitality is not like a traditional retail business where a transaction can be completed within minutes. By insisting on a 10pm curfew, especially in outlets where food is consumed on the premises, an entire sitting is being wiped out. Given the additional number of restrictions including table service & “Rule of Six”, it is not alarmist to foresee a significant number of closures & job losses not only in Bournemouth but across the conurbation.

This is also true of the bar/nightlife element of the sector where not only ‘viable’ but thriving businesses are in serious risk of disappearing – the immense frustration felt by the operators is the apparent lack of empirical evidence to substantiate the focus on hospitality. These business owners are skilled in running their organisations and we would argue have

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done more than most to comply with regulations & guidance. Nightclubs remain the unforgotten businesses representing cultural significance in our community and society and yet facing closure.

The Chancellor has done much to support businesses during this difficult time and we suspect given the impending announcement for the Midlands & the North, will be required to do more. However, unless there is a review of these measures then there will be a significant number of these “thriving” businesses lost.

The Night Time Economy co-ordinator for BCP estimates that licensed premises & restaurants represent £131M to the conurbation with @2,500 FTE equivalents – this figure does not include hotels, guest houses or the significant supply chain that serves this sector.

Conor, as a BID we take seriously our responsibility to play our part in working with agencies & the Government to beat this pandemic. However, the impending catastrophe upon this essential sector within our economy here (and nationally) cannot be allowed to happen – we repeat these are thriving businesses run by skilled operators who make a major contribution economically, culturally & socially to the success of our area and are businesses that would be viable, profitable and successful but for the COVID restrictions.

When the government for public policy reasons decides to close an entire sector of our economy it must surely have a responsibility to support those businesses until it allows them to re-open.

We need your help

Yours sincerely

Paul Kinvig
Chief Operating Officer
Bournemouth Town Centre BID

Martin Davies
Chair
Bournemouth Town Centre BID

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