

Subject: CoronaVirus Update No8
Date: Wednesday, 18 March 2020 at 17:39:30 Greenwich Mean Time
From: EHA Secretary
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Member,

Mark and I have attended the Eastbourne Crisis Cobra meeting this morning and we wanted to provide this update as soon as possible. This is a lengthy email, but as part of our communication promise, we want you to have all the information as it comes through. Whilst writing this Mark is in discussions with various news outlets following the coverage on the BBC at the weekend.

These are certainly unprecedented times. I'm sure all of our members have now experienced the floor falling out of tourism and great anxiety about what that means for our survival. The meeting today which was made up of 30 senior stakeholders in the town via video conference. It was chaired by David Tutt and Caroline Ansell was also dialled in. We were given the opportunity to speak second on the agenda and put forward the concerns shared by the membership so far, but also to try and get answers for everyone. Here is our industry specific updates. However there is also a lot of work happening about all areas of our community and other business sectors. This is Eastbourne pulling together and we are all taking on a specific group to drive forward and get as much support as possible.

Business Rates

Tim Whelan the Director of Service Delivery confirmed that they are working very hard to re-issue the Business Rates bills for all those who are now exempt. It was confirmed yesterday that any business in our sector will now be exempt for 12 months. They have already identified all eligible businesses in their system but this will take some time so we asked what practical steps you should take.

Advice to members

The council can only work on a case by case basis in the immediate term. Call the council and tell them that you cannot pay the bill and they will put a temporary hold on your account. This will then bridge the gap for when the bills will be cancelled.

Business Interruption Insurance

The Chancellor announced in the press conference yesterday that our sector should now be able to claim from their business interruption insurance. However insurers are saying it's a case by case basis and the original guidelines that we previously sent out still apply.

Action

Caroline Ansell is taking this to central government to ensure it is acted upon because everyone agrees this could provide a lifeline to those who have that in their policy's.

Grants for businesses

There is still ambiguity around the pledge of providing grants to business. The concern was raised that could the grant actually be that in just name and in fact turn out to be a loan. The interpretation that the council has taken from their senior level is that this will be a grant and non-repayable. However we need more clarity about eligibility and how it will be implemented. Pressure is being put on central government from every agency and local authority for that guidance. There is hope this will come through soon. Any new information can be found by [clicking here](#).

Business Interruption Loans

Tom Meggison from Metro Bank advised anyone planning to apply for a business interruption loan should go to their existing bank first. He said you will not get very far if you contact a new one.

Claremont Hotel and the road reopening

We stressed how the road closure is another major issue affecting our members and what is the plan for re-opening. Tim Whelan provided quite a detailed response:

- An agreement has been reached with Historic England for the Claremont's owners to apply for retrospective listed building consent. Without this they wanted to close the road for two years!
- There was a further collapse to the building that attaches to the Burlington which caused structural issues.
- They now have a Party Wall Award in place between the Burlington and Claremont, so work can now progress.
- Scaffold will be going up and they will send a further public update by the end of the week.

Parking charges in Eastbourne

In order to try and find ways to support attracting those people who want to travel, we had proactively via Steve Wallis (Mayor) started to lobby ESCC to allow any hotel/accommodation guests to park for free for the next six months. Today we lobbied that they also delay the increase in parking charges for both hotel permits and resident permits in addition – everyone was in complete agreement.

Action

- David Tutt will lobby ESCC in addition to Steve Wallis.
- Ann-Marie Field from the Herald will also run an article calling for this action, helping to put public pressure on ESCC too.
- I will be speaking with Ann-Marie shortly to arrange that release.

Tourism News

- It was decided as of yesterday that all the theatres will now close.
- It is causing an overwhelming amount of calls to the box office. They are contacting everyone by email and offering a credit for a future performance in the first instance. However they will issue a refund if people insist.
- You may have seen announced yesterday that the Soapbox event has been postponed and future event decisions are being taken on a case by case basis and following the changing government advice.

Essential Items

- As you may have all experienced there is panic buying and essential items are not on the shelves in supermarkets. As there is a robust supply chain within the industry Mark is exploring utilising that to make a bulk order of essential items that you can purchase. This is also been looked as a way that the EHA can support the community groups, such as (but not exhaustive) Matthew25 Mission, Warming up the Homeless etc.

Next Steps

- Firstly please be assured that Mark and I are working all our networks hard to push for progress and find out information. The EHA is being included at the highest levels so we will be one of the first to know any updates.
- As an overall working group, the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 25th March at 9.30am.
- In the meantime the sub groups will be meeting regularly to make progress.

This is the most stressful time for everyone so please do keep communicating with us and let us know any of your concerns, questions or any information that you might come across.

With best wishes

Kristian

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