

Internal Memorandum

To: All branches

From: Ian Hill - Chairman, Events Committee

CC: Events Committee, Regional Directors

Subject: COVID-19 advice to events – March 2020

Date: 27th March 2020

Status: For information and advice

Introduction

By now branches will be only too aware of the very serious nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our first concern is of course for our family, our friends, and the vulnerable in society. The Government have suspended all public events for the foreseeable future and naturally we in CAMRA will strictly observe this sad but necessary restriction.

This memo provides some more guidance for branches who had events planned in the coming months.

Period of suspension

The National Executive have instructed that all events be cancelled until the end of June. This period of suspension will be extended in a rolling fashion every two weeks until further notice, as follows:

- Friday 27th March → events cancelled until Friday 26th June
- Friday 10th April → events cancelled until Friday 10th July
- Friday 24th April → events cancelled until Friday 24th July
-and so on.

Any events which fall into the period of suspension must sadly be cancelled or postponed without delay.

Cancelling events

When cancelling an event please do whatever you can to minimise costs to CAMRA. For example, if you have already booked a venue for a beer festival you can try to avoid losing the deposit, perhaps by agreeing to postpone rather than cancel the event completely. Several beer festivals have already been able to negotiate very favourable arrangements, for which we are very grateful.

To help you with this, any festival which has already had their business plan approved for 2020 can consider themselves **conditionally approved** for the same dates in 2021. You will still need to complete a business plan for 2021 as normal when the time comes, but you can use this conditional approval to negotiate a postponement with your venue rather than an outright cancellation, if this helps you avoid losing a deposit. You must not commit any other expenditure apart from the venue costs until your 2021 business plan is approved.

We are asking branches to avoid rescheduling festivals for alternative dates in 2020. It is very hard to know when things will be back to normal and we can't fit in a large number of festivals all together at the end of the year. As well as overcrowding the market, this would place too much of a burden on volunteers and our equipment supplies.



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Still, if you would like to move your festival to alternative dates (rather than postponing for a year) then we are asking you to submit a revised business plan and get approval from your assessor **before making any bookings**. It will not be possible to grant this approval to more than a small number of festivals.

If you need any advice about dealing with a venue or any other major commitment, please email events.disruption@camra.org.uk and we will help you as much as we can.

Events beyond the current period of suspension

If your event falls soon after the current period of suspension then you will naturally question whether you will be able to go ahead. It is hard to give a universal answer to this question as we don't know how long the suspension will last, and every festival runs to a slightly different calendar. It is important that you don't commit to any extra expenditure now in case the suspension is extended and your event cannot go ahead.

If your event is after the 26th of June then we are asking you to work out when you think it will be too late for your festival to go ahead. This will be different for every festival – some smaller events may not need to start placing firm orders until six weeks before they open, others may have equipment that has to be booked several months in advance. You will also need to judge how late you can leave it to cancel any commitments that you have already made. Only you can judge this for yourself, and of course it will be an estimate.

For example, if your festival is in late August you might already have a venue booked but you know that you need to start ordering stillage and beer by the end of June at the latest. Your point of no return is the end of June.

Once this “point of no return” is reached then sadly you too must cancel, as this means that even if the suspension is lifted there won't be enough time left for you to complete your preparations. You will need to bear this in mind as the suspension is extended.

Please can organisers of events after the 26th of June please give this some thought, decide what your “point of no return” is and let us know by emailing events.disruption@camra.org.uk. This will allow us to forecast which festivals are likely to be cancelled as the suspension period rolls on. I stress that this only needs to be your best estimate and to the nearest week or two is good enough. If you change your plans and cancel at a different point for any reason, please just let us know at the same email address.

Please be mindful of selling advance tickets. Remember that any ticket we sell and later refund is likely to cost us in transaction fees. It may be best to suspend selling advance tickets until the future becomes clearer.

Refunding tickets

We believe it is important for CAMRA's reputation that we must offer refunds to anyone who has bought an advance ticket to an event that is cancelled. This may not be strictly obligatory, but we believe it is the right thing to do.

Campaigning during the suspension

There is a lot you can do to campaign even when your events are suspended, for example our #PullingTogether campaign which hopefully you have already heard about.

Please don't let your festival social media go silent – people will have been expecting to see you tweet about your beer festival so please use every opportunity to promote our other campaigns instead.



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Resuming festivals

The truth is that we don't know when we festivals will be able to resume. Festivals in August, September or even October need to be aware that there is a risk that they will not be able to go ahead – but only time will tell.

We also don't yet know what impact COVID-19 will have on visitors, volunteers, or breweries. Once the time is right we will work with breweries and others to let you where we stand. For now though, please keep safe and be careful.

Summary

1. All events up to June 26th must be cancelled or postponed
2. The suspension will be extended in a rolling fashion every two weeks until further notice
3. If your event is cancelled please do what you can to minimise the financial loss.
4. All events after June 26th please consider your “point of no return” and email events.disruption@camra.org.uk to let us know. Do not commit to any additional expenditure until further notice.

Please don't hesitate to contact events.disruption@camra.org.uk if you need any further advice about the impact of COVID-19 on your events. A group of CAMRA staff and volunteers have been formed to help you in any way we can.

To everyone working even harder during this crisis: thank you.



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