

Ministerial Update:

- Opens the meeting discussing that FM will be outlining the position tomorrow, with another cabinet meeting scheduled for 4pm today.
- Discusses the Omicron variant, outlining the uncertainty. More transmissible, 2 doses isn't adequate enough and the importance of the booster campaign to encourage staff to get vaccinated.
- Million more people than the population of Wales haven't had the dose in England which shows the scale of how the variant could spread quickly and become a big problem for the NHS.
- The Minister understands that staff are already off work isolating and that it's already difficult to run businesses and for the supply chain.
- Education Minister has already mentioned that two days before term starts next year will be planning days. Important to get children back into education for economic and social achievement.
- Sobering advice from Public Health Wales (PHW) with the challenge of the variant getting worse. England and Scotland are a week ahead of us and the numbers are creeping up in Manchester and London.
- Messaging is having an impact already, Chief Medical Officer for England had a press conference yesterday, with people already cancelling bookings.
- 78,000 cases recorded and will rise in the coming days and weeks. Challenge is to sustain another week of activity before something more significant or to action now and try and influence the way people behave.
- The Minister points out that officials are already working on guidance. UKG don't see the need to act to support businesses and Wales needs the consequential as WG don't have the financial resources, or information to subsidy.
- Understands that that there are tax demands coming in January, which have already been deferred and could raise issues of meeting tax demands if deferred again.

Comments from Industry / wider stakeholders

- Appreciated the Minister taking time to talk to the group.
- Concerns if the country goes back into lockdown it will be catastrophic for the industry, businesses will close, people will lose jobs – people already losing jobs.
- Alert level 1 without financial aid will be worse than what we went through last year. Cliff edge, without knowing what the horizon is like. Thousands of customers coming to hotels etc over the next few weeks and it will all depend on messaging.
- Already having an impact on hospitality, consumer confidence is low with consequence on footfall. Data showed that the UK had 3 million cancellations which is around 30–40% income over the last few weeks, impact on pubs and brewers is significant.
- Plea regarding economic support, process of obtaining on an individual business level, which is simple for business owners.
- Plea regarding giving enough notice, changes over night would be disastrous.

- Concern about leaks of information verified or unverified.
- Targeted finance, UKG budget did give flexibility for tourism and hospitality businesses. Possible for an insight into this?
- Query to who the WG are speaking to in the industry about the potential options available, 6% of transmission was from the hospitality sector with the delta variant, has the percentage changed at all and should the industry be expected to carry the burden of this?
- On the Trade Union side – plea for discussions with UKG need a new furlough scheme for this occasion. UKG have put fear on hospitality with a direct effect already e.g. events cancelled.
- If the Covid pass is going to be extended to hospitality the industry needs as much notice as possible to allow members to implement.
- Rumours of alert level 1, let us know what is being considered as it could effect hotels occupancy which are full for the festive period with 8-10 family members which then will be a huge issue in relation to confrontation with 50% capacity.
- Request for 100% business rates relief as part of the package, doubtful if business will get to April, however would be beneficial.
- Seen the return of miss information and hostility towards interventions. Lost the public trust in recent events.
- Agreed that the funding through LA is the best way of getting money out. Sector would be supportive of that. Highlighting the need for clarity and how funding will be distributed.
- Query on why there isn't a plan in place to rollout or a financial package to deal with the issues being presented. Businesses have to future proof and have continuity, why can't WG do that? The lack of strategy is disappointing.
- Question on the pattern of implementation of rules, will it be on the Friday or Monday.
- Plea for a plan to be introduced between 4 nations and not using it as political agenda.
- Request for positive comms in order to mitigate the damage, need to concentrate on messaging. Helpful for messaging on what the public are able to do rather than not able to do.
- Support packages needs to cover the period were in not the future period. Capacity this week at 65% with cancellation up to 20% with a hotel having 70 people changed to 5 people.
- Question if it's possible to jump through the covid plan from alert level 0-4.

Minister's response:

- The Minister discussed if WG are to introduce restrictions it wouldn't be in hospitality, guidance would be in relation to mixing which is the issue. Providing advice and guidance in relation to meeting in own homes.
- Pushing UKG hard to get finance in place. Understands how businesses are at the brink with no reserves or cash flow.

- No discussion in relation to the covid pass before Christmas in hospitality. Likely to be a measure to take place later on and to include the booster, with more significant intervention now.
- Ministers would like to get to Christmas without significant intervention, will have to follow PH advice. Pattern of announcement will be developed on PH advice and depends on urgency of the PH position.
- Minister confirms that he's discussing with officials, working with LA around designing the schemes.
- Discussion on the reality of finance with the UKG support through SEISS and Furlough previously, now looking at UK position who don't believe there is a need to act. The importance to balance covid in the PH harm but also the economic harm.
- Minister understands that there is more danger now than other points of the pandemic. FM will encourage UKG to revisit the position.
- Possibility of ending up at level 3 or 4 short notice. Urgency and spread of omicron and the need to prepare.
- Minister confirms that the Minister for Finance will be making an announcement on business rates and confirms that they have been listening to the industry.
- Minister confirms there are still uncomfortable choices to be made.