



# Holiday Home Association News

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## What next after June 21<sup>st</sup>?

**The promised “roadmap destination” of June 21<sup>st</sup>, when all legal restrictions are due to be lifted, has been cast into doubt by a range of stories indicating that the government and their advisors are divided on whether to delay the end of restrictions or move to a twilight zone in which some restrictions persist, and others remain as voluntary guidance.**

For self-catering, the most important issue remains the “rule of six or two households”. This restricts the operators of large properties who are unable to welcome large groups and fill their properties.

For the tourism industry more widely the hospitality sector is still greatly restricted by quasi-legal restrictions imposed through guidance mentioned in the regulations. These ongoing restrictions do not allow pubs and restaurants to operate at full capacity, requiring table service only and such delights as music and dancing, skittle alleys, and all customers seated. It is unclear whether these requirements will end.

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The regulations requiring masks in shops, public transport, indoor tourist attractions etc. are due to expire on 20<sup>th</sup> June but could be extended.

We may potentially see a situation in which regulations are revoked but guidance continues, including social distancing guidance, and guidance on household mixing. There was a hint of this in the news recently when guidance was given to people living in so-called “hotspots” to limit travel in and out of those areas. There was no legal backup to that guidance so it could be ignored with impunity, but we could see a situation in which some customers cancel holidays because of government guidance that is not law but only advisory. In these circumstances customers might ask for refunds but as the holiday can lawfully go ahead, a grey area would exist in which an agency or owner might reasonably refuse a refund.

There has also been no clear statement of policy on whether venues will be required to maintain “Track and trace” after June 21<sup>st</sup>. This has perhaps been less controversial than other measures despite the pressure on citizens to report their whereabouts to the government.

It remains uncertain whether so-called “vaccine passports” will be introduced and whether they will apply to holiday accommodation.

## Insurance Tips from David Morris

### Make the Right Call

We’ve all heard of the strange stories that when somebody has called their insurance company for a general enquiry as to whether something is covered, at the next renewal their premium has increased even when there was no claim!

My question is to ask why you would call your insurance company? It is far better to call your Insurance Broker who will talk through the circumstances with you, let you know the ‘cost to claim’ (confirm the policy excess and provide an idea of how much the premium may increase at the next renewal), and, if necessary, submit the claim and manage it to conclusion.

One of the aims of using an Insurance Broker is to obtain free of charge advice as to how to comply with the policy terms and conditions – did you know that if you have a vermin infestation the circumstances must be reported to the local authority before you can make a loss of income claim?

Oh – and one other thing. It is extremely likely that your call will be answered in moments by your Insurance Broker – which is something most insurance companies do not understand!

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## Consumer Confidence in Travel remains mixed.

Visit Britain’s regular “Consumer Tracker” reports based on market research work give an insight into consumer attitudes and fears.

The latest report from late May shows a continued pattern of anxiety that has not changed a great deal over the last few weeks. The reports suggest that a significant proportion of the public does not expect this summer to be near-normal and intriguingly 7% are reported to believe that normality will never return at all. Only 43% of the public are said to expect normality by the end of 2021.

Reasons for not feeling confident about overnight holidays in the UK seem to be spread around a range of anxieties including catching the disease itself, perceived reduction in things to see and

do, and fears about restrictions and whether it was responsible to travel. It would appear that the impact of the “stay home” message is quite long-lasting. The “average appetite for risk” score on doing various things like eating out, shopping, catching a bus, has shown a modest increase in the last few weeks but there is clearly a sustained level of anxiety.

Around a quarter of the public expect to take fewer overnight UK trips this year than usual, with around half planning the same number or more than usual.

The research also looks at intention to plan trips in the UK and this highlights the continued uncertainty with more than a third of people not planning yet or uncertain, and only a quarter having already made plans by May.

Encouragingly for the UK holiday industry only a small proportion of those who have booked a UK holiday would consider cancelling it and going abroad instead if restrictions on travel abroad were lifted. 86% would continue to take the holiday they had planned for this summer in the UK, only 8% would cancel, and the rest didn't know.

Unsurprisingly, more people are leaving decisions later than earlier.

The research asks where people want to go on their UK holiday or short break and the results seem to reflect the usual story of the south-west being the most popular destination. Only 13% favour large cities, which doesn't look good for city accommodation providers who are already feeling the loss of overseas visitors.

There is another unsurprising finding that people who have been vaccinated are

more confident about their travel intentions in the summer, although this doesn't seem to be the case for plans further in the future.

The level of public anxiety is starkly shown in the day-trip intention responses with almost a quarter of people having no intention to take a day trip of any sort in the foreseeable future.

## Choosing hand sanitiser

Many offices and indeed holiday homes provide hand sanitiser for guests and staff. The HSE recently updated its advice on choosing hand sanitiser. The legal position on biocidal hand gel is so complicated and confused that even your editor, normally an unraveller of these things, was defeated. UK law is a mixture of EU law brought into UK law, UK regulations incorporating EU laws into UK law, and more. The HSE website states “Consolidated versions of the GB biocides laws are not currently available.”. A database is available of all the products that have been authorised for use in the UK, but this includes everything from toilet cleaner to rat poison, and a brief exercise in identifying whether a bottle of hand sanitiser was in fact accredited in some way came to nothing. It appears that most of the hand sanitisers sold in the UK are unregulated.

Your best approach is most probably to choose a reputable branded product, possibly one made in the UK!

## **Business Rates: Government moves slowly ahead on qualification criteria.**

HHA has recently taken part in a further consultation with officials at the Department for Communities on implementation of proposals contained in a 2019 consultation. The proposal is that in England, a property would only pay business rates if it was actually let for a given number of days per year, as opposed to being available.

Currently a property must be available for 140 days per year to be eligible for business rates. Below that, Council Tax must be paid. The consultation proposed that in addition to having actually been available for 140 days in the preceding year, a property should have been actually let for 70 days in the preceding year. HHA has been supportive of this proposal because we do not represent owners who are not genuinely in business as holiday home operators, and we do not want to encourage owners of personal second homes to do “a bit of letting on the side.

HHA has made the point that although the proposal has our support there needs to be provision for special situations that are outside the owner’s control and lead to loss of business. These could include:

- Agricultural diseases like Foot-and-Mouth
- Floods
- Road or bridge closures
- Epidemics of human diseases and regulations intended to suppress them

We don’t yet know what the government response is going to be to the consultation, which has been gathering dust since 2018, but we expect Ministers to make some decisions on this soon.

## **More on Destination Marketing Review**

If you have any further views on what destination management organisations should be doing, please let the Chief Exec know sooner rather than later.



*Poster extolling the virtues of Hampshire on a London station. HHA has said this type of promotion is wasteful.*

We have argued that the role of destination management organisations should be to enhance the product, so that tourists will want to go back and will recommend a holiday in England to their friends. Local authorities control much of the public realm, and are responsible for beaches, parks and gardens, signage, public toilets, esplanades and resort cleanliness. DMOs should not duplicate the work of local authorities but can contribute to product quality by:

- Training
- Tourist information online and offline
- Working to help develop and upgrade attractions (including wet-weather alternatives to beaches)

But they should be prohibited from using public money to engage in wasteful competition with other UK destinations. Rather, resources should be used by VisitEngland to promote the concept of holidays in England.

## ***Let's Do London*** **campaign launched.**

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, having been re-elected this month, has launched a campaign with a £6m budget to encourage visitors to London. A major part of the plan is to create a range of public art installations around the capital. Transport for London will be working to encourage people back onto public transport and there will be an advertising campaign. Whether this will work may depend largely on matters of government policy. If public anxiety levels do not diminish there will continue to be resistance to using buses and trains, without which the campaign may fail. If social distancing remains official government guidance after June 21<sup>st</sup>, the campaign may be in trouble from the start.

## **Have you any asbestos experience?**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) - is reviewing the regulations around asbestos and wants to hear from **people** about how they are working. If you have had issues with asbestos in the last few years they would appreciate your views. The survey takes about ten minutes and can be accessed at:

[https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HSE\\_CAR2012\\_survey](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HSE_CAR2012_survey)

The survey will close at the end of the day of Friday 11th June 2021.

## **BeWariant of the Variant**

The "Indian variant" has been in the news recently and government guidance got in the news too as it was changed without telling anyone on a Friday afternoon.

The latest official advice is that people living in these areas should "try to" "minimise travel":

- Bedford Borough Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
- Burnley Borough Council
- Kirklees Council
- Leicester City Council
- London Borough of Hounslow
- North Tyneside Council

The government evidently believes that the virus is somehow territorial and spreads from street to street like bubonic plague rather than by contact between humans who don't follow local authority boundaries. However, this is purely advisory and there has been no change in the law. Customers who have booked holidays are not obliged to cancel and, given the extremely low current prevalence, there is little reason for them to do so. Even the vague guidance does not specifically tell people not to go on holiday.