

PRESS RELEASE
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THE IMPACT COVID-19 HAS HAD ON WILTSHIRE BUSINESSES AND VISITWILTSHIRE'S RESPONSE TO THE LATEST GOVERNMENT MEASURES

VisitWiltshire has surveyed Wiltshire businesses to get an accurate indication of the impact Covid-19 has had and what further support is required

VisitWiltshire, the Destination Management Organisation for the county, conducted its second survey of Wiltshire tourism businesses on Tuesday, 17 March to establish what impact Covid-19 has had on businesses that rely on domestic and international tourism, and what support is urgently required now and in the long term.

As well as pubs, cafes and restaurants, all of Wiltshire's ticketed attractions are now closed. The results of the survey were received before the government's latest announcement on Friday, March 20, at which time businesses across all sectors had experienced a significant amount of cancellations for bookings due to take place in the next 12 weeks. However, a significant proportion of businesses were already reporting cancellations into the main summer period, 22 per cent of businesses had received cancellations in July, and 9 per cent in August. Forward bookings for accommodation providers were also down, on average, by 78 per cent over the next three months, and already by 40 per cent in the main summer months.

Of the businesses that were surveyed 65 per cent received cancellations, rather than postponements.

David Andrews, Chief Executive at VisitWiltshire, said: "Tourism is worth £1.5bn a year to Wiltshire's economy and employs 28,000 people in the county. Over the last few weeks we've seen what devastating effects Covid-19 has had on Wiltshire's tourism industry which includes the closure of businesses and staff being let go, or asked to take unpaid leave. This is an important sector to the UK's economy and we are doing everything we can to ensure

the government is taking the necessary steps to support businesses in Wiltshire, that rely on domestic and international tourism.”

VisitWiltshire is working closely with VisitBritain, the Tourism Alliance and the Tourism Industry Emergency Response (TIER) group, keeping the government updated on what impact there has been on Wiltshire businesses, and to make the case for further support for tourism businesses.

David, added: “We welcome the efforts of the government to support businesses of all sizes, but there is still lots that needs to be done. With significant cancellations of existing business, and no new bookings, we are urging the government to consider suspending the requirement for tour operators to refund customers and instead issue credit notes valid for 12 months, similar to what other European countries are about to enforce.

“There are a number of other actions the government could take that we are working with UKinbound, VisitBritain and TIER to highlight, specifically what support is required urgently by businesses and also what is needed in the long term to ensure these businesses survive and grow.”

VisitWiltshire will be regularly surveying Wiltshire businesses and providing results and feedback to these organisations who are working closely with the government.

The survey also revealed that the type of support most needed by Wiltshire tourism businesses is legal advice about insurance and cancellations, 1:1 business advice and reassurance that there will be a recovery campaign to help drive tourism to Wiltshire once businesses are able to open their doors again.

VisitWiltshire has been, and will continue to be in contact with its Partners to offer advice and support, share stories and push out inspirational images and content via its digital and social channels. VisitWiltshire is also providing a payment holiday for SMEs to alleviate some financial pressure at this difficult time.

To be kept up to date with the latest tourism-related support and advice available for Wiltshire tourism businesses, visit: www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/information/important-information-on-covid-19

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75 Wiltshire tourism businesses responded to a business survey issued by VisitWiltshire on Tuesday, 17 March.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About VisitWiltshire

VisitWiltshire is the official Destination Management & Marketing Organisation for Wiltshire representing 500 partners. It is a public/private sector membership organisation. VisitWiltshire's priority is to grow the county's Visitor Economy by raising awareness of the destination and generating additional tourism visits and spend. Wiltshire's Visitor Economy currently generates an estimated £1.5billion and supports over 28,000 jobs.

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Images

If you are looking for images to support your news stories and features, VisitWiltshire has an extensive photo library of images featuring the vast array of product on offer around the county. Over 1,200 images organised into 135 albums have been uploaded onto Flickr and are available free of charge to press. To view the full list of VisitWiltshire albums, click this [LINK](#).

To request access to files, please contact: Hollywindsor@visitwiltshire.co.uk

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