

# Rowan



## Engineer's Report

Clifden Station House Hotel

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**Instructor:** Fieldfisher on behalf of Mr Justice Séamus Woulfe

**Contact:** Mr JP McDowell

**Rowan Ref:** 5965/FIE0001-1

**Matter Name:** Oireachtas Golf Society Dinner

**Event Location:** Clifden Station House Hotel  
Galway Road  
Clifden  
Co Galway

**Date of Event:** Wednesday, 19/08/2020 @ 9pm approx.

**Date of Inspection:** 29/08/2020 @ 4pm

**Date of Report:** 04/09/2020

**Consultant:** Morgan Duggan  
BE MSc MIEI

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Writer's Credentials

- Degree in Civil Engineering
- Post Graduate Diploma (Level 9) in Green (Environmental) Engineering
- Member of Engineers Ireland
- Health & Safety Laboratory (UK) training in slips, trips, falls and stairways
- Certified Building Energy Rating Assessor (domestic)
- Experience in Building Construction and Civil Engineering since 1995
- Cleanpass Seminar on Hygiene & Cleaning
- CIF Covid-19 Induction Course
- GAA Covid-19 Online Training and Covid-19 Supervisor Training

## 1.2 Summary of the Event

The Oireachtas Golf Society hosted their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary outing at Connemara Golf Club which was followed by a dinner on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 in the Clifden Station House Hotel. Judge Woulfe was an orally invited guest and a resident in the hotel on the night in question.

## 1.3 Writer's Instructions

I was instructed to inspect the event location and prepare a floor layout plan, book of images, and engineer's report.

## 1.4 Summary of my Conclusions

The hotel contains two separate function rooms, the Omey Suite and the Kylemore Suite, which are adjoining and divided by a full floor to ceiling height retractable wall. The society dinner was split between the two suites. I understand that there were 45 people, including Judge Woulfe, seated in the Omey Suite, and there were 36 people seated in the Kylemore Suite. There was a service route through an opening at one end of the retractable wall which staff used to serve dinner in the Omey Suite on the night in question.

I understand that on arrival guests were greeted and ushered to their respective tables in either suite. The dinner was followed by speeches and a prizegiving. A mobile audio speaker system had been installed in the Kylemore Suite in order for guests to hear the speeches, and to facilitate the adjustment of volume of the speaker a section of the retractable wall was opened which resulted in a narrow opening in the wall between the suites.

Judge Woulfe had been ushered to his table in the Omey Suite which contained 6 tables and less than 50 people. He sat with his back to the retractable wall during the course of the dinner. It is reasonable in my view that Judge Woulfe concluded that the dinner in the Omey Suite represented the full extent of the event given his positioning in the room and all of the attending circumstances. It would have been difficult for Judge Woulfe to have been aware in circumstances where the opening was directly behind him and as I understand it he hadn't turned around.

While the applicable Statutory Instrument (SI 234/2020) stipulated that the maximum number of persons attending a gathering should not exceed 50 persons, guidelines issued on behalf of the Government, Fáilte Ireland and the Irish Hotels Federation expressly permitted multiple such gatherings in separately defined spaces. I am satisfied that at the time of the event the layout of the Omey Suite and Kylemore Suite, which were separate defined spaces, and the arrangements in place in the hotel conformed substantially to the requirements of Section 18 of the guidance relating to 'Multiple Gatherings'.

## **2. Inspection and Background Information**

### **2.1 Inspection**

I carried out an inspection of the Clifden Station House Hotel on the 29/08/2020 and was accompanied by Mr JP McDowell of Fieldfisher. We were assisted by Mr John Sweeney and Mr James Sweeney, Proprietor and Manager of the Clifden Station House Hotel respectively.

I reviewed the following details, documents, and guidelines:

- Government, Fáilte Ireland and Irish Hotel Federations Guidelines for Reopening of Hotels and Guesthouses
- Government Guidelines on Covid-19
- SI No 234/2020 S.I. No. 234/2020 - Health Act 1947 (Section 31A – Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) (No. 3) Regulations 2020
- Seating Plan for the Oireachtas Golf Society Dinner Event

I have attached a separate Book of Images and I have also included Floor Layout Plans in Appendix A.

### **2.2 Background to the Clifden Station House Hotel**

The Clifden Station House is a 78-bedrom hotel with bars, restaurants, function rooms, a theatre, and a spa and leisure centre. The hotel contains 2 no. function rooms, the Omev Suite and the Kylemore Suite.

### **2.3 Background to the Oireachtas Golf Society Outing**

The Oireachtas Golf Society hosted their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary outing at Connemara Golf Club on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 with society members and invited guests taking part. The society's golf outing was followed by a dinner on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 in the Clifden Station House Hotel which was held to honour the late Fianna Fáil MEP Mark Killilea. I understand the event organisers included Mr Donie Cassidy, Society President, and Mr Noel Grealish, Society Captain.

### **2.4 Background to Mr Justice Séamus Woulfe**

Mr Justice Séamus Woulfe (Judge Woulfe) was an orally invited guest to the Oireachtas Golf Society outing which involved a round of golf in Connemara Golf Club, Ballyconneely, on the 19/08/2020, and dinner that evening in the Clifden Station House Hotel, of which I understand he was only verbally informed on the afternoon of Wednesday 19/08/2020. Judge Woulfe was a resident in the hotel on the night in question.



## **3. The Event Facility**

### **3.1 The Event Facility**

The Oireachtas Golf Society dinner was hosted in the Clifden Station House Hotel. Images 1-5 are views on entering the hotel lobby showing the reception desk, restaurant, seated lobby area, and residents bar. The hotel contains two separate function rooms, the Omey Suite and the Kylemore Suite, which are adjoining and divided by a full floor to ceiling height retractable wall. The society dinner was split between the two suites. I understand that there were 45 people, including Judge Woulfe, seated in the Omey Suite, and there were 36 people seated in the Kylemore Suite.

### **3.2 The Omey Suite**

Images 6-11 show the approach to the Omey Suite from the hotel lobby through a 1.83m wide hallway. The hallway contained two armchairs and a small table where I understand a seating plan was placed on the night of the dinner (which I understand Judge Woulfe did not notice en-route to the Omey Suite).

The 10.22m long x 8.72m wide Omey Suite contained six circular tables, Nos. 1-6, laid out as per the Floor Layout Plan and as seen in Images 12-15. The 1.53m diameter tables were laid out with ample circulation room and a minimum separation distance of 1.8m. Judge Woulfe was seated at Table 5, which seated 8 people in total. Images 16-19 are views from Judge Woulfe's seated position at Table 5, which was with his back to the retractable wall.

The Omey Suite and Kylemore Suite are separated by a floor to ceiling height retractable wall, which can be fully opened to create a single function room for large events. The retractable wall consists of 2.96m high x 1.2m wide x 95mm thick acoustic panels which are supported by a rail system at ceiling level. The wall panels can be slid along the rail to create a full width or selected opening between the suites. This is a common arrangement in hotel function rooms and conference centres. Image 20 shows the 1.09m wide opening between the suites which provided a service route for staff bringing food from the kitchen area.

### **3.3 The Kylemore Suite**

Images 21-23 show the approach to the Kylemore Suite from the hotel lobby through the 2.4m wide lift lobby and turning left down the 1.45m wide access hallway.

Images 24-26 show the 9.68m long x 9.62m wide Kylemore Suite which contained four circular tables, Nos. 7-10, as per the Floor Layout Plan. The 1.53m diameter tables were laid out with ample circulation room and a minimum separation distance of 2.25m.

Image 27 shows the entrance to the Kylemore Suite which is also the service route to the kitchen area. Image 28 shows the service route through the opening in the retractable wall to the Omey Suite. It is my understanding that staff used this route to serve dinner in the Omey Suite on the night in question.

### **3.4 The Dinner**

I understand from the representatives of the hotel that on arrival at the hotel at c. 8.50pm most guests, not I understand Judge Woulfe, were greeted by Mr Noel Grealish, who had a seating plan to hand, and ushered to their respective tables in either suite. There was no pre-dinner drinks reception in the lobby or bar area. The guests were seated at their tables and dinner orders were completed by c. 9.10pm. The speeches and prizegiving commenced on completion of dinner at c. 11.10pm and lasted c. 30 minutes. The hotel had put in place a mobile audio speaker system in the Kylemore Suite in order for guests to hear the speeches. However, to facilitate the adjustment of volume of the speaker a section of the retractable wall had to be opened which resulted in an 860mm wide opening in the wall between the suites as seen in Images 29-31. On conclusion of the speeches many of the guests left the hotel, some residents retired to their rooms, some chatted at their tables, and some retired to the lobby/bar area.

## 4. Inspection Issues & Discussions

### 4.1 Government Covid-19 Roadmap

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 the third phase of the Government's roadmap for the reopening of the national economy was implemented. After that date indoor gatherings of up to 50 people had been permissible when conducted in line with public health advice.

However, on the Tuesday evening the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2020, in response to an increase in confirmed Covid-19 cases, the Government announced the reintroduction of more restrictive measures across the country until the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. The restrictions included limiting all outdoor events and gatherings to 15 people, down from 200, and limiting indoor gatherings and events to six people, down from 50. There were exemptions, including indoor weddings and certain religious services, such as mass, which can still take place with up to 50 people, provided appropriate protective measures can be maintained.

### 4.2 Government, Fáilte Ireland, and Irish Hotels Federation Guidelines

I understand that Fáilte Ireland in consultation with the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) and the Government of Ireland published guidelines for the Re-opening of Hotels and Guesthouses which have been underpinned by advice from the HSA, HSE, Health Protection Surveillance Centre, Food Safety Authority Ireland, WHO, and other relevant bodies. The guidelines have been developed in line with the Government's roadmap to provide operational procedures to hotels and guesthouses in order to safeguard public health. The guidelines are a living document which evolve as Government advice changes. However, Government announcements changing public health advice is often in the absence of updated operational guidelines for businesses.

Therefore, Fáilte Ireland has an agreed process in place with the Department of Tourism for when changes are announced in that the status quo (existing guidance) remains in place until updated guidance is issued by the Department.

I have attached the current version (Revision 2.3 published on 24/08/2020) of the Fáilte Ireland Guidelines (see Appendix B) which provides the revision history from the date of the original publication on the 06/09/2020. The guidelines are a living document and I have been unable to locate the Revision 2.2 that was in place since the 06/07/2020.

The current version of the guidelines contains a paragraph in Section 18 headed "*Meetings and Events*" which states:

*"Multiple gatherings in venue facilities are only permitted if they are in separate defined spaces and there are systems to prevent intermingling in common spaces (e.g. entrances, exits and toilet facilities)."*

On the basis that the revision history does not include changes to Section 18 it appears that at the time of the event multiple gatherings were permitted where the venue facilities included separate defined spaces and systems to prevent intermingling.

#### **4.3 Timeline for Implementation of Guidelines**

I have attached as Appendix C email correspondence between the IHF and the event organisers regarding the guidelines in place at the time of the event. I have also attached a media statement released by the IHF clarifying issues raised by the Oireachtas Golf Society Event and the timeline of communications.

In summary, it appears that the new restrictions announced by the Government on Tuesday the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 had not been made operational by the Government, Fáilte Ireland or the IHF until Friday the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2020.

#### **4.4 Judge Woulfe's Attendance**

Judge Woulfe was an orally invited guest to the Oireachtas Golf Society outing and dinner. He was also a resident in the hotel on the night in question. It was his understanding that the organisers and the hotel had satisfied themselves that they would be operating within Government public health guidelines.

On arrival in the hotel lobby Judge Woulfe was ushered to his table in the Omey Suite. It was Judge Woulfe's understanding that the Omey Suite, which contained 6 tables and less than 50 people, represented the full extent of the dinner. I understand that the people present in the Omey Suite represented the people Judge Woulfe knew to be involved in the society and he was not aware of any other gathering. Judge Woulfe sat with his back to the retractable wall which contained a service opening for staff at one end during the course of the dinner. Table 4 was located between Judge Woulfe's seated position and the service opening. It may have been difficult for Judge Woulfe to have been very aware of that opening given where he was sitting and how he was facing. A section of the retractable wall was opened after the dinner for the speeches, however, I understand that Judge Woulfe did not become aware of the opening at the time. It would have been difficult for Judge Woulfe to have been aware in circumstances where the opening was directly behind him and as I understand it he hadn't turned around.

#### **4.5 Hotel's Covid-19 Procedures**

I have reviewed the hotel's Covid 19 procedures set out on their website which suggests that the hotel is taking every measure to adhere to Covid 19 guidelines and best industry practice. The hotel was awarded a Hotel Hygiene Assured Certificate which confirms they have exemplary standards of hygiene. Staff have completed Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Training, HACCP training and Hygiene Assured training.

During my inspection I noted that hand sanitizer stations were provided in the lobby and toilet areas. I understand that medical gloves and face masks are available to guests on request.

I am satisfied based on my inspection and information available to me that the hotel is taking every measure to adhere to the Fáilte Ireland and IHF guidelines. I am also satisfied that at the time of the event the layout of the Omev Suite and Kylemore Suite, which were separate defined spaces, and the arrangements in place in the hotel conformed substantially to the requirements of Section 18 of the guidance relating to 'Multiple Gatherings'.

## 5. Conclusion

This conclusion is my professional opinion based on my findings and the information provided to me. The Oireachtas Golf Society hosted their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary outing at Connemara Golf Club which was followed by a dinner on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 in the Clifden Station House Hotel. Judge Woulfe was an orally invited guest and a resident in the hotel on the night in question.

The hotel contains two separate function rooms, the Omey Suite and the Kylemore Suite, which are adjoining and divided by a full floor to ceiling height retractable wall. The society dinner was split between the two suites. I understand that there were 45 people, including Judge Woulfe, seated in the Omey Suite, and there were 36 people seated in the Kylemore Suite. There was a service route through an opening at one end of the retractable wall which staff used to serve dinner in the Omey Suite on the night in question.

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Judge Woulfe had been ushered to his table in the Omey Suite which contained 6 tables and less than 50 people. He sat with his back to the retractable wall during the course of the dinner. It is reasonable in my view that Judge Woulfe concluded that the dinner in the Omey Suite represented the full extent of the event given his positioning in the room and all of the attending circumstances. It would have been difficult for Judge Woulfe to have been aware in circumstances where the opening was directly behind him and as I understand it he hadn't turned around.

While the applicable Statutory Instrument (SI 234/2020) stipulated that the maximum number of persons attending a gathering should not exceed 50 persons, guidelines issued on behalf of the Government, Fáilte Ireland, and the Irish Hotels Federation expressly permitted multiple such gatherings in separately defined spaces. I am satisfied that at the time of the event the layout of the Omey Suite and Kylemore Suite, which were separate defined spaces, and the arrangements in place in the hotel conformed substantially to the requirements of Section 18 of the guidance relating to 'Multiple Gatherings'.

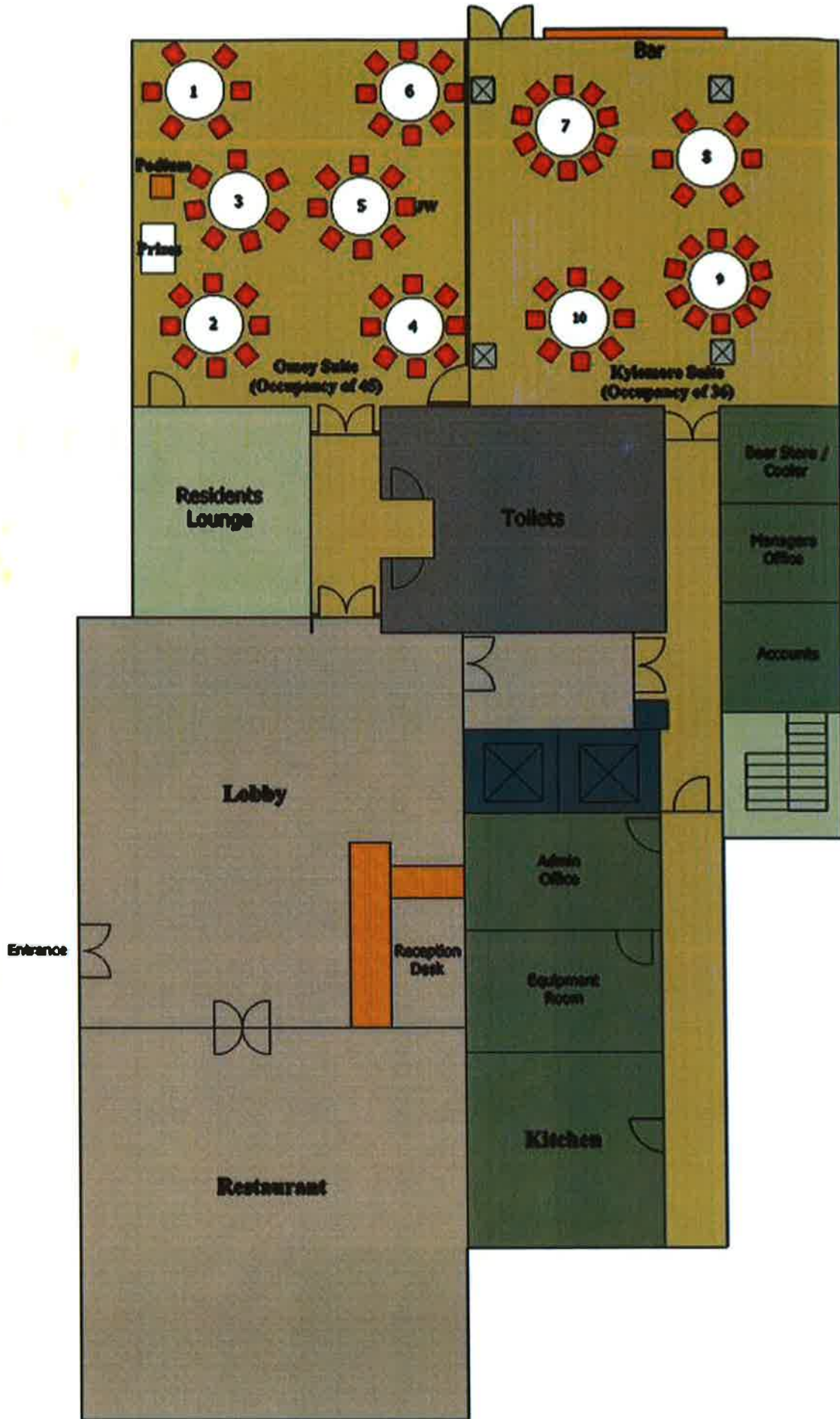
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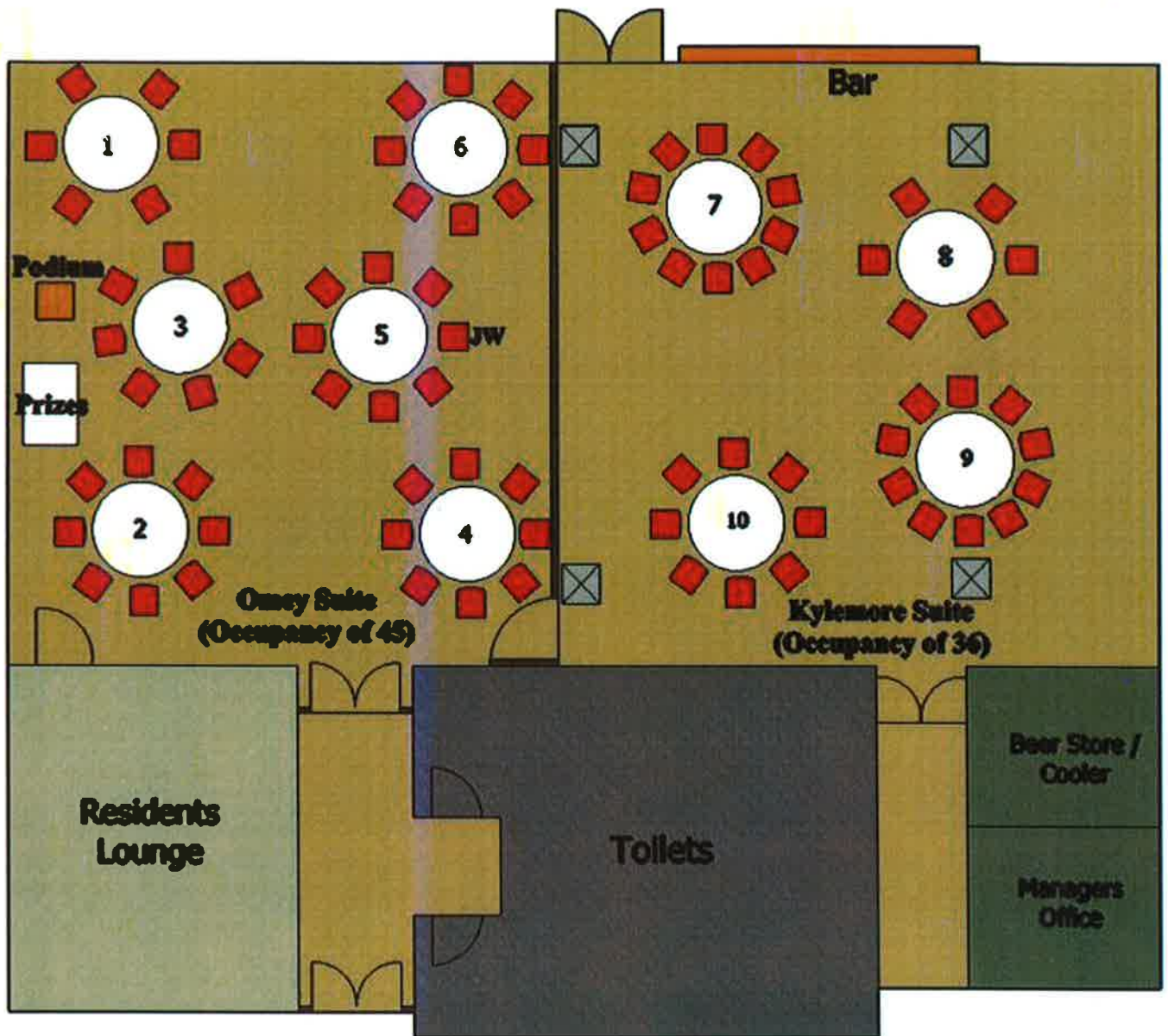
  
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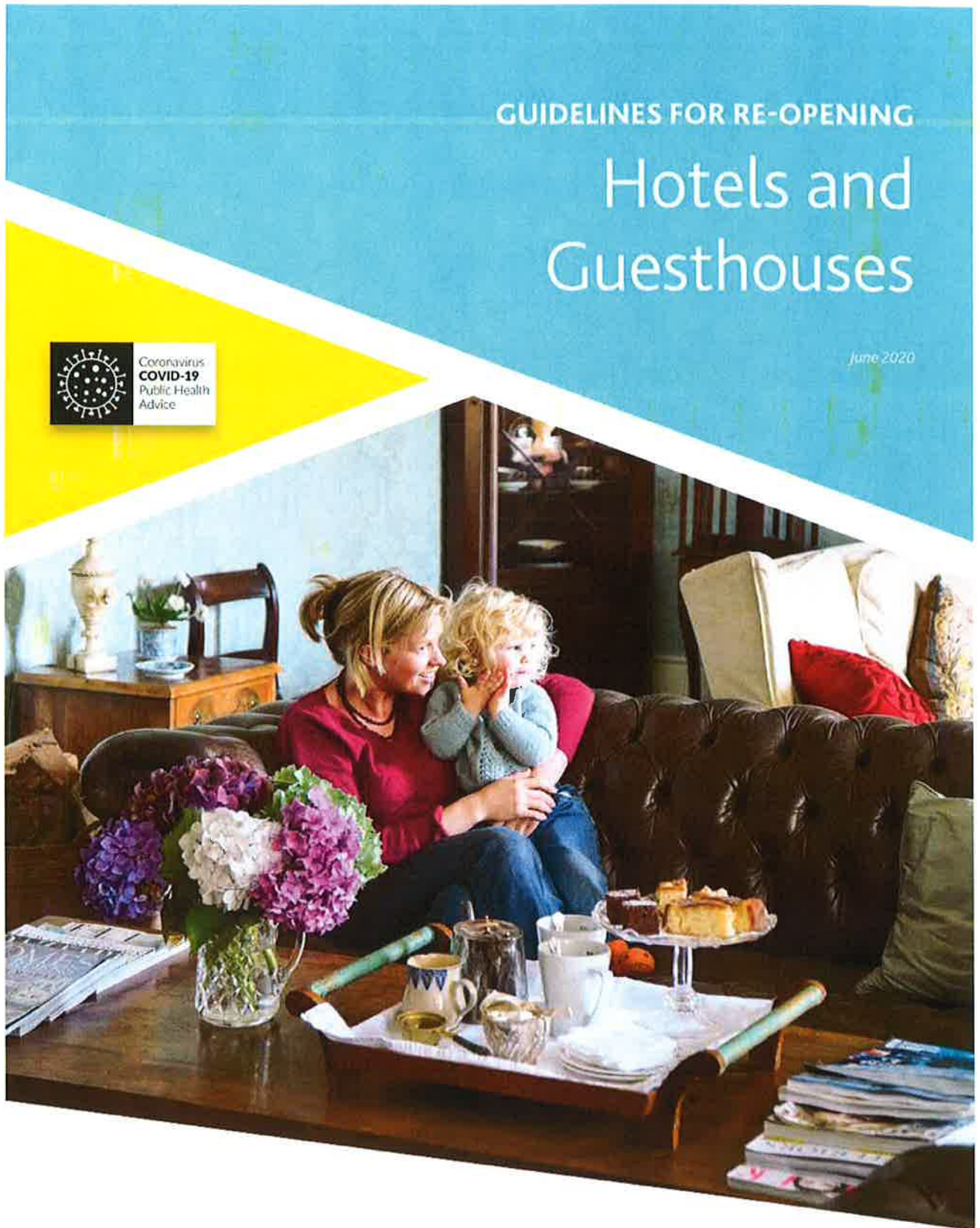
# Appendix A – Floor Layout Plans







## Appendix B – Fáilte Ireland & IHF Guidelines (Extracts)



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Fáilte Ireland  
National Tourism Development Authority



## Note:

This is a living document which means as Government restrictions and Public Health guidelines evolve, this document will also evolve to reflect new Government advice and changes to protocols when they emerge. All sectoral guidelines have been developed in line with the Government's Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business and the Return to Work Safely Protocol, based on the latest health guidance available from the Department of Health and the HSE. The links to latest guidelines will be included throughout the document.

## Disclaimer

The information contained within these operational re-opening guidelines can change from time to time. It must not by itself be relied upon in determining obligations or other decisions. Users of this document must independently verify any information on which they wish to rely. It is expected that all business owners and management will have familiarised themselves with the Return to Work Safely Protocol prior to re-opening and implemented all relevant requirements.

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## Revision history:

Version	Date	Changes	Changes from previous version
1.1	09/06/2020		
1.2	10/06/2020		Section 15
2.1	23/06/2020		Additions from HPSC COVID-19: Guidance for Food Service Businesses v0.3 15.06.2020 and reordering of content.
2.2	06/07/2020		Updates to Appendix 1 of COVID-19: Guidance for Food Service Businesses (HPSC) V1.1
2.3	24/08/2020		Updated in line with Government Public Health advice

\* Current physical distancing guidance is in line with Public Health advice. This document will evolve to reflect new Public Health advice and changes to protocols as and when they emerge

## 5. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is very important to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This is achieved by minimising contact between potentially infected individuals and healthy individuals. In a [controlled environment](#), such as hotel bars and hotel restaurants physical distancing of at least 2 metres\* is required between tables, unless the requirements outlined in [Appendix 1](#) have been met, in which case a minimum of 1 metre\* is sufficient.

The property owner or management needs to meet Public Health advice on maintaining current physical distancing guidance between people at all times.

### Queuing

Any area where guests or employees queue must be clearly marked for the recommended physical distancing. This includes drop-off areas, check-in, check-out, reception, elevator lobbies, public areas, dining areas, serving counters, tills and Back of House.

Use floor markings inside the premises to facilitate compliance with the physical distancing advice of 2 metres\*, particularly in the most crowded areas. Use vertical signage to direct customers to facilitate movement within the premises while maintaining 2 metre\* distance.

### Front Desk & Concierge

As far as reasonably possible, a distance of 2 metres\* and a minimum of 1 metre\* should be maintained between employees. Where 2 metres\* is not possible all other measures to protect employees should be in place.

Physical barriers such as sneeze guards/plexiglass and partitions can be useful, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain apart. These physical barriers need to be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

Employees should have a self-sufficient workstation where possible, with an individual computer, telephone and all ancillary equipment.

### Hotel Restaurant & Bars

Physical distancing of 2 metres\* should be maintained between tables. However, if this is not possible, this can be reduced to 1 metre\* in controlled environments if the other risk mitigation requirements outlined in [Appendix 1](#) have been met.

If all risk mitigation requirements have been met, and physical distancing is reduced to 1 metre\*, pre-booked time limited slots must be in place for customers, which are a maximum of 105 minutes duration plus 15 minutes to allow for adequate cleaning.

Pre-booking and time limited slots of 105 minutes duration are not a requirement if physical distancing of 2 metres\* is strictly maintained.

Following updated Government Public Health measures, businesses must ensure that there should be a maximum of 6 people from no more than 3 households allowed at a table. This is applicable to pre-bookings and walk-in customers.

No formal or informal events or parties should be organised within the restaurant or bar areas as Government Public Health measures state that events, parties or gatherings of more than 6 people indoors or 15 people outdoors are not allowed in these settings.

Seating capacities to be reduced in hotel restaurant and bar areas to meet the current physical distancing guidance outlined by HPSC between each seated group of customers.

It is the responsibility of supervisors and managers to ensure that customers do not congregate in groups. Customers should be seated at a table except when using the toilet, paying, and departing.

### Self-Serve Buffet Style/Carvery

This style of service must only be provided where physical distancing and other Public Health advice can be followed.

Physical distancing guidance must be followed while queuing. See [Queuing](#) section above to ensure appropriate risk mitigation measures are in place. Customer access to carvery/buffet/open food display should be staggered and a one-way system introduced.

### Back of House

Physical distancing protocols that follow the Governments Public Health advice must be observed in the shared office spaces, employee locker rooms, store rooms, delivery areas, stock rooms, IT areas, bar support areas such as cold/keg rooms, kitchens and other areas where employees gather and work.

As far as reasonably possible, a distance of 2 metres\* and a minimum of 1 metre\* should be maintained between employees. Where 2 metres\* is not possible all other measures to protect employees should be in place.

Where the food service environment makes it difficult to physically distance, employers need to consider what measures to put in place to protect employees.

\* Current physical distancing guidance is in line with Public Health advice. This document will evolve to reflect new Public Health advice and changes to protocols as and when they emerge

## 15. Food & Beverage

Management must aim to follow the Government's Public Health advice throughout all food & beverage areas including hotel restaurant and hotel bar and lounge areas, etc. To achieve this, the following steps must be taken:

- Businesses must follow updated Public Health advice to ensure that all customers using Restaurant and Bar facilities leave these areas by 11.30pm. This includes both hotel residents and non-residents.
- Public Health advice states that the restaurant and bar must be cleared of all customers by 11.30pm. However this does not include staff members who will carry out closing procedures.
- Where possible, guests must be directed to enter and exit through separate doors. These should be propped open if fire regulations allow.
- Hand sanitisers (including touchless dispensers where possible) must be readily available at each access point. Consider providing hand sanitiser on each table. Signage must encourage all guests to use this when they enter and leave.
- Prominent signage must explain current physical distancing practices. This must be accompanied by clear and visible markings that illustrate the safe distancing protocol throughout food and beverage areas. This includes elevators, entrances to bar and lounge areas, toilets, function rooms, smoking areas, etc.
- When a group arrives and needs to queue, only one member should do so. The others should adhere to physical distancing until the group can be seated.
- New SOPs that comply with best practice must guide employees in how to 'Meet, Greet and Seat'. For example, a friendly verbal greeting must replace a physical greeting.
- Dining tables, stools, chairs and seating
- Trays
- Bill/tip trays, pens and any other reusable items that guests come into contact with.

### Physical Distancing Protocol

- Physical distancing of 2 metres\* should be maintained between tables. However, if this is not possible, this can be reduced to 1 metre\* in [controlled environments](#) if the other risk mitigation requirements outlined in [Appendix 1](#) have been met.
- If all risk mitigation requirements have been met, and physical distancing is reduced to 1 metre\*, pre-booked time limited slots must be in place for customers, which are a maximum of 105 minutes duration plus 15 minutes to allow for adequate cleaning.
- Pre-booking and time limited slots of 105 minutes duration are not a requirement if physical distancing of 2 metres\* is strictly maintained.
- In a [controlled environment](#) physical distancing of at least 1 metre\* should be maintained between people seated at tables. Physical distancing is required between individuals who are not from the same household. It is not required between members of the same household.
- Management is responsible for minimising the number of arrival and departure points for guests. Managers and supervisors must always monitor and manage physical distancing between people and groups rather than simply rely on signage.
- Peak-period queuing procedures must be implemented if guests can't be seated immediately. If queuing isn't possible, a table reservation system must be considered.
- The amount of seating and stools must be reduced and guests must order from their seat wherever possible to reduce queues.
- Physical distancing at a table does not apply within members of a household.

### Cleaning & Disinfection Protocol

The frequency of cleaning and disinfecting the following key areas and items must be at a minimum twice daily and as required:

- Entry/exit doors
- Greeting podiums
- Service stations
- Countertops and bar tops
- Handrails
- Smoking areas
- Exterior seating/benches
- Exterior of refuse bins
- Toilets, etc.

The following items must be cleaned and disinfected regularly during the day:

### Contact Tracing

Businesses do not have to keep records of every person in a party, they will be required to have the name and contact details of one person in each party e.g. the person who books the table. This includes solo diners. That person should be advised to keep a record of who is their party in case it is required for contact tracing in the future. Details must be retained for one month. The name and contact details of one person in each party must be recorded for both walk-ins and pre-bookings.

\* Current physical distancing guidance is in line with Public Health advice. This document will evolve to reflect new Public Health advice and changes to protocols as and when they emerge

## Bookings

Encourage bookings rather than walk-ins and allocate specific times people will spend in the restaurant. Doing so will assist physical distancing, contact tracing and maximise revenue.

Following updated Government Public Health measures, businesses should ensure that there should be a maximum of 6 people from no more than 3 households allowed at a table. This is applicable to pre-bookings and walk-in customers.

No formal or informal events or parties should be organised on these premises as Government Public Health measures state that events, parties or gatherings of more than 6 people indoors or 15 people outdoors are not allowed in these settings.

If the risk mitigation requirements for a [controlled environment](#), as outlined in HPSC COVID-19: Guidance for Food Businesses, have been met the distance between tables can be reduced to 1 metre\*. In this case pre-booked time limited slots should be in place for customers, which are a maximum of 105 minutes duration plus 15 minutes to allow for cleaning.

Pre-booking and time limited slots of 105 minutes duration are not a requirement if physical distancing of 2 metres\* is strictly maintained. See [Appendix 1](#).

Hotel Restaurants and Bars must follow updated Public Health advice to ensure that all customers leave the restaurant and bar areas by 11:30pm.

## Self-Service Carvery or Buffet

- This style of service must only be provided where physical distancing and other Public Health advice can be followed.
- Physical distancing guidance must also be followed while queuing. See [Queuing section](#) above to ensure appropriate risk mitigation measures are in place. Customer access to buffet/carvery/open food display should be staggered and a one-way system introduced.
- It is important to maintain good hygiene practices if this style of service is offered. Both customers and employees should strictly observe good personal hygiene practices at all times around open food areas. Attention must be paid to hand and respiratory hygiene.
- All foods in the bain-marie or hotplate must be shielded from guests. Employees must serve up and plate food to limit shared use of utensils at open food areas.
- All trays used by guests must be cleaned between uses.
- All goods/foods, visual displays, etc. must be covered and only handled by appointed employees.
- Where food is served buffet-style, all items displayed for guest use must be individually wrapped or be a single serve item. Common tongs or ladles must not be used.

## Table Service

- There must be adequate spacing between customers at each table in accordance with Government physical distancing guidelines and HPSC COVID-19: Guidance for Food Service Businesses
- Front of House personnel allocated to serve individual tables for service adhere to physical distancing where possible.
- There must be minimal handling of glassware when serving drinks or clearing glasses. Front of House personnel must handle glasses by the stem or base.
- Tableside cooking must be suspended if physical distancing cannot be adhered to.
- Before serving a table and after clearing a table, all employees must wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds or use sanitiser if hands are visibly clean.
- Face coverings should be worn by staff during the service of the meal

## Order Taking

- Menus must be single use or made of a material that can easily be cleaned. Menu boards are an alternative. Menus on apps should also be considered.
- It may be possible to verbally recommend food and drinks to guests. If so, this should be done.
- Where offered, sharing plates can be served per table, they are not to be served as catering platters to larger groups.
- Attention must be paid to hand and respiratory hygiene during order taking and service. Orders should be taken in a time-efficient manner and at a suitable distance to minimise time spent in close contact with guests. Close contact can mean spending more than 15 minutes in face-to-face contact within 2 metres\* of an infected person. For more information see [HERE](#).
- Face coverings should be worn by staff in customer facing roles where no other protective measures are in place e.g. protective screens and where physical distancing of 2 metres\* is not possible.
- It's recommended to use individual pens, pads or electronic devices.

## Bar(s)

- Employees must maintain the recommended physical distance from each other behind the bar. To help achieve this:
  - Limit the number of employees behind the bar at one time.
  - Keep a record of who is on duty and when.
  - Divide the bar into areas/zones (where possible) and allocate a zone to each employee to safeguard against cross-over. Minimise movement between these areas.

\* Current physical distancing guidance is in line with Public Health advice. This document will evolve to reflect new Public Health advice and changes to protocols as and when they emerge

## 17. Room Service

### Cleaning & Disinfection Protocol

- All equipment (e.g. trolleys, trays, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected after use.
- All food and beverage items must be appropriately covered during transport.
- Follow your in-house procedure regarding room service.

### Physical Distancing Protocol

- Set food on a tray or trolley in the hallway and notify the guest when the trolley is outside of their room (keeping the food covering in place). The guest can then retrieve their own food/drinks.
- Face coverings should be worn by employees in customer facing roles where no other protective measures are in place e.g. protective screens and where physical distancing of 2 metres\* is not possible.

- If an employee is required to enter the room, ensure physical distancing is adhered to.
- Ask guests to place their tray or trolley outside their room when they finish their meal and then notify the relevant employee to retrieve it.

### Guest Considerations

- Housekeeping services must clean and disinfect laminated room service menus.
- Consider other menu delivery options e.g. feature the menu on the in-house TV channel.
- Minibars must have all loose product removed and the bar then be locked. Items can be made available upon request from Room Service.

## 18. Meetings & Events

### Cleaning & Disinfection Protocol

- Hand sanitiser (touchless where possible) must be readily available at each access point. Consider providing hand sanitiser on each table. Signage must encourage all customers to use this when they enter and leave
- All shared equipment and meeting amenities must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. If this isn't possible, they must be replaced by single-use alternatives.
- Replace linen after each use.
- Clean and soiled linens must be transported in tied single use plastic bags into and out of the meeting rooms.
- After each group use, clean and disinfect conference room doors, tables, chairs, light switches and other equipment.

### Physical Distancing Protocol

- Following updated Government Public Health advice, the number of people allowed to gather in a venue at one time is 6 people indoors or 15 people outdoors.
- Multiple gatherings in venue facilities are only permitted if they are in separate defined spaces and there are systems to prevent intermingling in common spaces (e.g. entrances, exits and toilet facilities).
- Businesses must ensure that there should be a maximum of 6 people from no more than 3 households allowed at a table.
- Seating capacities and floor plans to be reviewed on an event-by-event basis to ensure the recommended physical distancing. Develop examples of physically distanced floor plans for Event Management use.
- Businesses must follow updated Public Health advice to ensure that all customers leave the property by 11.30pm. Public Health advice states that the building should be cleared of all public by 11.30pm however this does not include staff members who will carry out closing procedures.

\*Current physical distancing guidance is in line with Public Health advice. This document will evolve to reflect new Public Health advice and changes to protocols as and when they emerge

\*\* Government Public Health Advice on gatherings on 19-6-2020 advised that service personnel should be included in the capacity limits.

## Appendix C – IHF Emails and Media Statement



Donie Cassidy <doniecassidy7@gmail.com>

### Covid-19 Update | Clarification pending on new Covid-19 Measures announced yesterday

3 messages

Irish Hotels Federation <ihf@circulator.com>

Wed, Aug 19, 2020 at 11:13 A

Reply-To: info@ihf.ie

to: doniecassidy7@gmail.com

Irish Hotels Federation has sent you this email, [click here to view in browser](#) »



### Covid-19 Update | Clarification pending on new Covid-19 Measures announced yesterday

Dear Member,

Further to the Government announcement yesterday in relation to further Covid-19 restrictions, the Department of Tourism has not yet received any guidance on the changes as of this morning. Therefore, the status quo remains in terms of current operational procedures for hotels until further notice.

We will provide you with an additional update when detailed guidance is received, including any changes in policy affecting hotels and the timeframe for implementation.

Kind regards,

**Tim Fenn**  
Chief Executive

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13 Northbrook Road, Dublin 6

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## Covid-19 Update | Operational Guidance for Hotels & Guesthouses

1 message

Irish Hotels Federation <ihf@circulator.com>

Fri, Aug 21, 2020 at 7:09 PM

Reply-To: info@ihf.ie

To: doniecassidy7@gmail.com

Irish Hotels Federation has sent you this email, [click here to view in browser](#) »



### Covid-19 Update | Operational Guidance for Hotels & Guesthouses

Dear Member,

In light of the public health measures announced by the Government earlier this week, Fáilte Ireland are in the process of updating the relevant guidelines which are expected to be available early next week. In the meantime, they have now confirmed the following key measures for implementation by businesses within our sector:

#### **Businesses serving food**

- Must ensure that all customers leave the property by 11.30pm. Draft Regulations state that the building is cleared of all public by 11.30pm. This does not include staff members who will carry out closing procedures
- Face coverings must be worn by staff in customer facing roles where no other protective measures are in place e.g. protective screens and where physical distancing of 2 metres is not possible. They must also be worn by customers when arriving to and leaving their table
- Hand sanitiser to be placed on all tables
- Businesses should keep contact details of the lead at a table or a solo customer to help with contact tracing should a customer be confirmed as having COVID-19
- There should be a maximum of six people from no more than 3 households allowed at a table
- No formal or informal events or parties should be organised on the premises



**Gatherings:**

- Gatherings are restricted to maximum of 6 people indoors and 15 people outdoors
- Weddings of up to a max of 50 people including staff are exempt

Please note, some of these measures are of a general nature and we are seeking urgent clarification in relation hotels and guesthouses. We urge all members to implement these measures immediately.

If you have any queries in relation to these measures, please email us at [support@ihf.ie](mailto:support@ihf.ie) and we will revert as soon as possible.

Kind regards

**Tim Fenn**  
Chief Executive

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## Covid-19 Update | Public Health Guidelines for Hotels

3 messages

Irish Hotels Federation <ihf@circulator.com>

Fri, Aug 21, 2020 at 11:41

Reply-To: info@ihf.ie

To: donlecassidy7@gmail.com

Irish Hotels Federation has sent you this email. [Click here to view in browser »](#)



### Covid-19 Update | Public Health Guidelines for Hotels

Dear Member,

Further to the public health measures announced by the Government earlier this week, we are seeking additional guidance from the Department of Tourism in relation to changes to current Covid-19 guidelines for hotels. We will provide a further update in due course.

If you receive any media queries in relation to this, we would ask you to contact us first on 01 497 6459 / [info@ihf.ie](mailto:info@ihf.ie) before commenting.

Kind regards,

**Tim Fenn**  
Chief Executive

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Donle Cassidy <donlecassidy7@gmail.com>

Fri, Aug 21, 2020 at 12:31 F



## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Clarification re Issues Raised by Oireachtas Golf Society Event

Dear Member,

Please see statement below issued by the IHF to media further clarifying issues raised in relation to the recent Oireachtas Golf Society event. An online version is available via our @IHFCOMMS Twitter feed [HERE](#).

#### **MEDIA STATEMENT FROM THE IRISH HOTELS FEDERATION Clarification re Issues Raised by Oireachtas Golf Society Event**

- The IHF provides general advice and had no role in organising or providing clearance for this event
- At all times we encourage hotels and guesthouses to comply with the required guidelines
- There is an established process in place with the Department of Tourism for when changes are announced – as outlined below

**Sunday, 23rd August 2020:** Media reports and details of the recent event held by the Oireachtas Golf Society raise a number of important questions and serious issues which require further clarification as set out below by the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF).

As the representative body for hotels and guesthouses, we have worked closely with the Government throughout this pandemic to ensure robust operational procedures and industry guidelines are in place and effectively communicated in order to safeguard public health in line with evolving Government advice. This is of paramount importance to the IHF and our members throughout the country.

We are in ongoing contact with the Department of Tourism – the lead Government Department for our sector – as well as Fáilte Ireland in order to inform hotels and guesthouses about their public health responsibilities, including all updates and changes as they become available.

**NOTE:** The IHF provides general guidance, and at all times we encourage hotels and guesthouses to comply with the required guidelines. We do not have any role in enforcing, monitoring or approving the implementation of this guidance or operational guidelines.

We would like to stress that we see first-hand the enormous and essential work done by both the Department of Tourism and Fáilte Ireland in equipping our sector with the required guidance and advice necessary to operate safely in line with public health advice.

However, throughout this time we have also experienced first-hand the challenges for businesses in relation to wider Government communications around public health advice, e.g. central Government press conferences announcing changes to public health advice in the absence of updated operational guidelines for businesses.

**Agreed Process with Department of Tourism:** As a result of this time-lag, there is an established process in place with the Department of Tourism for when changes are announced in that the status quo remains in place until updated guidance is issued by the Department. This means that the new advice does not come into effect for tourism businesses until updated guidance is developed and communicated through the Department. This time-lag can create significant challenges, given public expectations around newly announced Government advice.

The issues raised this week show the limitations in relation to current official communications around changes to public health advice to industry.

**Timeline:**

- **Tuesday evening (18th August):** the Government held a press conference in which additional public health measures affecting food businesses were announced.
- **Wednesday morning (19th August):** The IHF received a follow-up query from the organiser of the Oireachtas Golf Society in relation to the guidelines for indoor gatherings. We indicated that we had no update from the Department of Tourism on the Guidelines.
- **Wednesday morning (19th August):** In response to queries in relation to Tuesday's announcement, the Department of Tourism informed the IHF that the status quo (existing guidance) remained until clarification was received (in consultation with the Department of Health).
- **Friday afternoon (21st August):** The IHF received interim guidance from Fáilte Ireland in relation to gatherings and businesses serving food, including the restriction of gatherings to six people indoors and 15 people outdoors with weddings for up to 50 people including staff exempt.

**NOTE:** Fáilte Ireland has informed us that they are in the process of updating the relevant guidelines and that these will be available early next week.

Health and safety is of paramount importance to the Irish Hotels Federation and our members, and we continue to work closely with the Government to ensure public health advice and latest guidance is effectively communicated to our industry.

**Irish Hotels Federation**

www.ihf.ie | info@ihf.ie | tel. 01 4976459