

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, 29th April 2021

AVEA welcomes reopening of visitor attractions from May 10th

The [Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions \(AVEA\)](#) has today (29.04.21) welcomed the Cabinet's decision to allow visitor attractions to reopen to the public from 10th May.

Commenting, Chair of AVEA, Sean Connick said: "Today's commitment to re-open indoor visitor attractions is another welcome step which offers a much-needed boost to Irish visitors to reconnect with Ireland's cultural and heritage experiences and those working in the industry. Visitor attractions have proven that they are safe, controlled environments. Our members have made significant investment to ensure the safety of staff and visitors, including the operation of online booking systems, the professional management of people flow, full contact tracing systems and the provision of hand sanitising stations throughout venues. Having timely notice to prepare for re-opening is hugely important for those who can open and ensures that they can plan to reengage staff and make all necessary preparation needed."

The welcome announcement allowing re-opening may not however translate into all attractions having the ability to re-open. Several significant challenges which remain include:

- Reduced demand due to the dependence of the domestic market providing a shorter than normal season.
- Reduced demand due to no *inbound international tourism*.
- Covid capacity restrictions, further reducing visitor numbers.

Mr Connick said: "Many businesses will simply be unable to trade viably by re-opening to a domestic only market and if they do, they will continue to lose money. The decision to re-open will be contingent on the continuation of existing government supports for the rest of this year including the EWSS, CRSS and additional business continuity grant-aid support until such time as both the demand and capacity restrictions on tourism are lifted and the tourism sector moves to a viable level of recovery.

"Opening in May and June will allow AVEA members to bring back and retrain staff in preparation for the return of potentially greater numbers of domestic tourists when school holidays commence and tourism and hospitality is fully re-opened. However, with no international visitors to the sector – representing a 75 per cent loss of business in rural areas and 90 per cent loss in Dublin in 2020 - there is no expectation of improvement for 2021. On that basis many visitor experience and attraction businesses have difficult decisions to make regarding re-opening or only being able to do so on a limited basis this season. Survival therefore continues to be the greatest challenge facing the sector with continuation of government supports through to 2022 being critical."

Mr Connick added: "We appreciate how difficult the decisions are for Government to balance the protection of public health and re-opening of the economy and society. The VEA sector has an important role in maintaining public morale and emotional wellbeing throughout this trying time. We will continue to play our part in providing safe environments for Irish citizens to return to some normality this season."

To find out more about the Association of Visitor Attractions and Experiences (AVEA), visit: www.avea.ie.

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Notes to editors:

- Chair of AVEA, Sean Connick is available for interview upon request.
- Follow AVEA on social media:
 - Twitter: [@avea ireland](https://twitter.com/avea_ireland)

About AVEA

AVEA is the national representative association for the Visitor Experience and Attractions (VEA) industry in Ireland. Formed in 2017, AVEA provides advocacy and a forum for its members to network. Its aim is to build greater awareness of this vital tourism sector, to promote professional competence through learning and development, and represent members in national tourism strategy and decision-making.

AVEA assists with the exchange of knowledge, information, and advice between members, and provides external support and professional insight to support members in the delivery of best practice in customer care, interpretation and service standards. The association encourages the highest standards of professionalism within the industry and promotes the development of the core skills and competencies required to drive the growth and continued success of the VEA sector. In addition, the association conduct research for the VEA sector, and gathers data on performance, in order to inform future planning, strategy, and case-making.