



Professional Association of Self-Caterers UK
COVID GUIDELINES NEWSLETTER
19 February 2021
Issue 46

22 February Lockdown Announcement Newsletter

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SHORT NEWSLETTER THIS WEEK

On Monday at around 5pm the Prime Minister will lay out the Road Map to re-opening in England. This will force a flurry of follow up announcements from Scotland and Wales. The Commentary below will give you some idea of what we might expect, but nothing is certain until the announcement itself.

We have kept this week's newsletter as short as possible, there are no new grant announcements or new guidelines to cover and interpret. Announcements on these will follow the Road Map.

To this end we ask that you keep your eyes on Facebook during next week, where we will publish all the information on the Road Map, links to the Guidelines that will inevitably follow as they go live. We will then consolidate the information in next Fridays newsletter.

Newsletter's going back several weeks are posted on the PASC UK website and information on grants etc can be found in those.

PASC UK SOCIAL MEDIA

Please follow PASC on Twitter @PascUK
Please on Facebook @pascukltd

This is where the factual updated information will be posted next week as the road Map and the consequences in England, Scotland and Wales become clear.

COMMENTARY

On Monday we should get a steer as to what the Road Map might look like. We have been repeatedly warned that this will be a data led, not date led announcement.

What is likely?

- We think that England will come out of Lockdown together, not in a myriad of different Tiers, with the reserve option of locking down areas that spike.
- We think that the Rule of Six (or in country equivalent) is more likely than one or two households in the first instance.
- We are not banking on meeting indoors for Easter, earliest for those perhaps mid-April – Early May.
- Any dates announced will be subject to change.
- The headlines will come on Monday, the details will trickle out during the week.
- The weekend newspapers, media, and social media will be full of speculation.

So, what do we all need to do?

Over the weekend we all need to think about how we are going to communicate with our guests.

Many of you will have good Easter bookings, many of those may be roll-overs from last year.

We will though have a clearer idea of what dates bookings are more likely to go ahead and what the group shape can be. This will inevitably lead to many cancellations. The Rule of Six when announced on the 11th September last year cost the sector 40% of the bookings.

We'll need to go through booking by booking and give each customer their options as soon after the announcement as possible, contacting them before they can contact you will put you in a much better position.

Those whose holidays cannot take place because they fall in the period of the lockdown, or the groups size is not allowed, will doubtless be asking for their money back. Have a look at the Cancellations Policies paper on the website as this may help give you a steer.

If guests are happy to move their holiday forward, this may be for the second time, and if they are not prepared to pay more for an Easter week next year than when they originally booked for 2020 you may consider it a better policy to refund and sell those dates to someone else at 2022 prices.

If the group size is an issue, the guests may still want to come in reduced numbers, and may ask for discount, you'll need to balance this against getting a new compliant booking at a better price.

What is certain is that once the doors are open, we will be pretty full from the opening day to beyond October half term if we have the mix of pricing, booking partners and photographs well aligned.

None of us enjoy giving back money. There is really good evidence that those that make the process of cancellations and re-booking clear and smooth get substantially increased loyalty and re-bookings. Bear in mind every customer can be an armchair lawyer armed with the CMA Guidelines, and the Which? Guide to Chargebacks. (If you missed the chargebacks webinar, the link to the recording is below). Multiple chargebacks can lead to credit card audits

Write a basic standard email, offering the options to your guests clearly and simply. Get it ready to tweak, and a list of bookings that you might need to contact so that on Monday night. You can then individually tailor each one to that customers booking and send it before they ring you.

This will be a frantic couple of days, demand will be high and despair amongst guests losing perhaps a second Easter holiday will mean that feelings will be running high. So have your policies clear.

PASC UK continues to lobby on your behalf and the repeated requests to you to give us feedback on how many of you are able to source Grants support have clearly shown that they are just not getting through to so many. We are working with the ASSC (Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers) to carry out a Survey in England, Scotland and Wales to see just how many have and have not received Grant support. (Readers in Wales please read dedicated Wales Section below on this).

This hard data will be used to prove to the various Governments that grants are not getting through, they are far worse on the discretionary side where it is emerging that Councils have been refusing Grants to the sector but have not even come close to spending the money given to them, by Government, to support the hospitality sector. See here:

[Risk to businesses as councils fail to pay £1.3bn of emergency grants](#)

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/councils-fail-to-pay-1-3bn-of-emergency-covid-business-grants-889clghfw?shareToken=67cb214cf7384dad3842676f6b150ec5>

We will launch this survey next week on Facebook and follow up in the newsletter. When you see it, please take part, you'll only need to put your basic details in and tick which Grants you got and which ones you didn't. Thanks.

On the subject of surveys, we are putting out a last call for the National Owners Survey below, we have 'almost' enough data, so please if you haven't, help us help you by filling it in.

A much shorter newsletter this week so that you can focus on getting your guest messaging post the announcement ready.

Next week we will cover full details of what the much-vaunted 22 February announcement means, plus thoughts on the following weeks all important Budget. Never has a Budget been more important for a sector than this one. We will also reveal some new Members Only Benefits, and how the new website is coming on.

We wish each and every one of you the very best over what promises to be a really hectic week, it is at least a step towards re-opening.

PASC UK SELF-CATERING WEBINARS

Free webinar on "Pros and Cons of Self-catering Agents or Going Direct?"

Firm date now: Wednesday 24 February 2021

Time: 1500 -1630

Register here:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/6316136548784/WN_i-XMDTKtSvK8Rb6rgOlgtQ

This webinar will feature the pros and cons of both the self-catering agency route and of taking your bookings direct. The webinar will be recorded.

Speakers will include:

- Joby Mussell, CCO of Travel Chapter. <https://www.travelchapter.com> Who will present pros and cons of the agency route.
- Beth Bailey, owner of Kernock Cottages, www.kernockcottages.com will present the pros and cons of the direct booking route.
- Robert Kennedy, Director SuperControl, www.supercontrol.co.uk will provide insights on his overview of how both models work (he has cottages on mixed platforms) www.orroland.com and can interact though a booking platform.
- Alistair Handyside, Chair PASCUK and owner of Higher Wiscombe www.higherwiscombe.com will chair the webinar, and direct participants questions during the Q and A.

Last week's Free Webinar on Chargebacks

Recording can now be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/OhR2Q3Dbxes>

Wednesday 17 February 2021

Time: 1500 -1630

Hosted by SuperControl

Avoid them (why they occur, how to minimise the probability).
Understand what they are, the variants, and what to expect.
Be competent and efficient at dealing with them.
Put a good case together to win a dispute.

Future Webinars

Free Webinar on 'Self-catering Futures"

Date: TBA

Time: TBA

We are poised to have a really busy summer this year, as most will not be able, or perhaps willing, to go abroad. What can we do with our businesses to win over these new customers long term? How can we increase our repeat customers as we head towards a really competitive landscape in 2022/2023 when the international markets open up?

Free Webinar on the Accessibility market

Date: TBA

Time: TBA

Market worth £3.2 billion in overnight stays
Make up 15% of overnight stays
These guests spend more per night and stay longer

THE UK NATIONAL SELF-CATERING SURVEY



ASSC

Supporting self-catering in Scotland

LAST CALL. IF YOU HAVE NOT FILLED THIS IN PLEASE DO SO THIS WEEKEND THANKS 😊

Four weeks ago, we launched the National Self-Catering Report 2021. We are working on this with the ASSC (Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers) and sponsored by SuperControl.

Thanks to those that have already filled in the survey and this is a follow up plea to those that have not so far.

The first stage in preparing the Report above is to gather data about the Self-Catering Businesses. To do that we need all of you to take part, to make the survey as meaningful as possible.

This is a Self-Catering only survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/pascasscoperators>

Thank you in advance for your participation.

GRANTS INFORMATION IN WALES FOR SURVEY PLEASE

As covered in the Commentary we are working with various group to distribute a survey across Wales to understand how many of you have received which Grants, and how many have not. This is an important piece of data, especially in Wales, as we have been assured that there is not a problem. The PASC UK inbox suggest otherwise on an increasing scale.

We have had a really good response to help distribute this survey in Wales, so thanks to all those who have stepped up so far. You will be on the list for distribution.

Please can all readers of this newsletter in Wales please tell me the following urgently.

1/ Can you help distribute the survey when completed? If so just drop me a note saying so to chair@pascuk.co.uk

2/ For those on Council Tax. Can you provide us with the names of the Grants that you tried to apply for, the period that they were available, your County and whether you were successful or reason for refusal?

3/ For those of you on Business Rates. Can you provide us with the names of the Grants that you tried to apply for, the period that they were available, your County and whether you were successful or reason for refusal?

We need as much information as possible on the above to ensure that the survey is correctly constructed in Wales as much of the information about last year is no longer on the Gov.Wales website.

Any useful links on this subject that you have come across would also be useful.

Please send to chair@pascuk.co.uk

SHORT TERM LETS LEGISLATION IN SCOTLAND

Some good news here. This poorly thought through legislation has been withdrawn and will no longer be put before the Scottish Parliament before the Elections in Scotland. This is due in no small part to the extensive lobbying by the ASSC (Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers).

Why any Government would rush legislation of this kind during a lockdown of the sector does beggar belief. There is now going to be a period of reflection and consultation, that we hope will make the final legislation fit for purpose.

Here is the ASSC's statement:

The CEO of the Association of Self-Caterers Fiona Campbell said:

“The Association of Scotland’s Self-Caterers welcomes the withdrawal of the Licensing Order by the Scottish Government. We consistently warned that the proposed legislation was not fit for purpose, would entail unintended consequences for our vital tourism industry and would heap costs on small businesses at a time when they could least afford it.”

“The ASSC commits to working constructively with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders through the new Working Group to ensure that anything that is taken forward in June – whatever the electoral outcome – is measured and proportionate, and also works to support the recovery of Scottish tourism in these challenging times.”

BUSINESS RATES PAPER FINALLY UPDATED (REPEAT)

Many of you have been waiting for me to finish updating the Business Rates paper that enables you to make a self ‘check’ on your Business Rates Bill.

I have now finished updating it and will be working through responding to each of you with this.

Please bear in mind:

- The Business Rates Papers are only available to paid up Members.
- The reduced rates negotiated by PASC UK only apply to England and Wales
- The reduced rates negotiated by PASC UK for self-catering are only currently available to Businesses that have 3+ units on one hereditament.
- It will take a while to work through the backlog as each Members needs to have a run through, before applying their “Check”.
- We will be in touch directly to arrange these short sessions.

Our apologies that this has taken longer than anticipated.

NEW PASC UK WEBSITE + DOWNLOAD ISSUES

The work is now well underway on the new PASC UK website. The current one has taken a beating during 2020 and some of you, with high levels of security, particularly if you use AVAST security software, are finding downloads difficult. This will be resolved by the new website.

If you cannot download anything, just drop us an email in the interim, saying what you need, and we will email it to you. Send to chair@pascuk.co.uk

There will be changes made, to reflect what PASC UK is in 2021, so there will be a Members only area so that we can provide additional value to those that pay Membership fees. We anticipate the launch being in early March

COMPLYING WITH FHL OCCUPANCY RULES

Lots of questions about HMRC strict interpretation of the FHL letting rules during Covid. We doubt very much that HMRC would penalise any business that could not get to the magic 70 number during the crisis, and there is a section in the legislation that can be used to allow for this. See below. Of course, if any of you are treated differently, let us know.

You may genuinely intend to meet the letting condition, but were unable to. If this happens, you may be able to make a period of grace election that allows the property to qualify as a FHL as long as the pattern of occupation and availability conditions were met.

To make an election, you must be able to show that you had a genuine intention to let the property in the year. For example, where you have marketed a property to the same or a greater level than in successful years, or where the lettings are cancelled due to **unforeseen circumstances**, including extreme adverse weather.

We would imagine that HMRC would consider Covid restrictions as unforeseen circumstances

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/furnished-holiday-lettings-hs253-self-assessment-helpsheet/hs253-furnished-holiday-lettings-2020#period-of-grace-election>

QUALITY IN TOURISM REST (Responsible, Ethical & Sustainable Tourism) INITIATIVE



PASC would like to draw your attention to a Quality in Tourism initiative; they have developed a modern-day version of a green accreditation/award called REST, Responsible, Ethical and Sustainable Tourism. The scheme goes beyond sustainability and recognises limitations in areas such as heritage buildings, whilst driving operators on a continuous improvement journey. QiT are keen to push the Responsible message. The accreditation includes the basic operating obligations of the post pandemic operator, including an underlying Safe, Clean & Legal™ accreditation. It is the antithesis of green wash or clean wash, and we anticipate will be the future of buying criteria for consumers. Prices start (and include SC&L) from £250 plus VAT.

We have just completed with our own business, Higher Wiscombe and are just awaiting the result as to what level we have achieved. Certainly worth looking at and there will be more on the green side of self-catering in future newsletter.

You can enquire through: <https://www.qit.uk.com/pasc/rest.html>

TOUCHSTAY OFFER



For those of you that are not familiar with Touch Stay, it's a digital guest book that efficiently replaces the cottages guides and leaflets of the past. One of the outstanding products to come to the fore during Covid now is the time, whilst we're closed, to look at products like this. Check it out at <https://touchstay.com>

Touch Stay have created a white glove service, exclusive to PASC customers who purchase an annual subscription before the end of March. In short, they'll create a lot of the guidebook for you.

None of us have oodles of time on our hands, so this offer of doing lots of the work for PASC members is a fantastic initiative. They'll create and set up the basics of your property guidebook for you. If you have more than 1 property you will need to do the others yourself, but the system will automatically copy the first one, from which you can then tweak things.

I use the system myself for Higher Wiscombe, so I know it's simple and straightforward to use. But there is an upfront time commitment that this white glove service addresses. I hasten to add that it won't cover everything, but it's a massive leg up, especially at this time of the year.

The white glove set up service includes the following:

- Creating your account
- Adding your arrival information
- Adding your WiFi information
- Adding some of the home instructions (heating, cooling, rubbish and recycling, etc)
- Adding a few local recommendations
- Adding your departure instructions

They will then provide you with a short video overview of what's been done so that you know exactly what to do next. As I said, I have used the system, so I know it's relatively

straightforward. The only catch is that you must commit to an annual subscription of £75 at current rates. That's fair enough given that they'll be investing their own time in helping to set things up for you. And £75 a year (much less for each subsequent unit) is, in my opinion, excellent value.

To sweeten this Andy McNulty at TouchStay is offering PASC UK Members a 10% discount by using PASC10.

Just head to <https://touchstay.com/setup> which has a form for you to complete. Andy has also done a video intro so that you know how the process will work

KEY LOBBYING OBJECTIVES

Every week in every meeting that we have with officials from Central or Local Governments we ask for continuing support for the Self-catering sector.

We may not mention each and every one of these agenda points in each meeting, that depends on the priorities and time available.

By linking with other associations, such as the Tourism Alliance, The Wales Tourism Alliance, the ASSC and UK Hospitality we can also make sure that these are 'common' asks giving them more weight.

Our current 10 main asks remain as follows:

- A support package for those that have not yet been able to access HMG support
- An extension to VAT reduction period to 31st December 2021
- An extension to the Business Rates Holiday to March 2022
- Three weeks' notice of re-opening
- Financial support for businesses that will still be restricted coming out of lockdown, due to single household or rule of six rules
- Allow FHL claims to be made under SEISS
- Remove punitive eligibility criteria on grant applications in Wales
- Stop the Postcode lottery for grant support
- Review of the Tier system, and restrictions of households mixing for reopening
- Common rules across the four nations

FCA BUSINESS INTERRUPTION POLICY CHECKER AND FAQ (REPEAT)

Following the Supreme Court test case on a range of business Interruption insurance policies, the FCA has produced a Policy Checker which takes businesses through a process whereby they can check to see whether their insurance policy covers business interruption losses due to coronavirus. It should be noted that each claim will still need to be individually considered to determine whether the policy provides cover for the effects of coronavirus.

Policyholders will need to check:

- the extent of their cover including how long it covers them for (length of their indemnity period)
- what losses are included - such as loss of profit, fixed costs or increased costs of working

<https://www.fca.org.uk/decision-tree/business-interruption-insurance-policy-checker>

In addition to the Policy Checker, the FCA have also developed a FAQs which gives business further information on:

- How to make a claim
- The disease clauses in policies
- What to do if they have already made a claim or complaint
- What they can claim for.

<https://www.fca.org.uk/firms/business-interruption-insurance-policy-checker/general-faqs-policyholders>

CANCELLATIONS POLICY PAPER

The Cancellations Paper (Draft 1) is now complete and can be downloaded from the website at <https://www.pascuk.co.uk/covid-19>

(Just a note, if you have the Avast anti-spam system it does not like the PASC UK website. We can assure you that the site is not insecure, but to make it as easy as possible for you, and you have the Avast system, please email chair@pascuk.co.uk and put Cancellations in the subject line and we'll email you a copy).

Please have a read and let us have your feedback on it, we will then update the paper, and republish. There is a link to the Webinar on Cancellations Policies above.

Once again huge thanks to Beth Bailey and Nick Clayson at Premier Cottages, Robert Kennedy at SuperControl for their contributions and Lorna Handyside and Linda Winstanley the ace proof-readers. 😊

UPDATED PROTOCOLS

The work to update the Cleaning Protocols is complete. These are available on the website at <https://www.pascuk.co.uk/standards>

(Just a note, if you have the Avast anti-spam system it does not like the PASC UK website. We can assure you that the site is not insecure, but to make it as easy as possible for you, and you have the Avast system, please email chair@pascuk.co.uk and put Protocols in the subject line and we'll email you a copy).

The revision has a short section at the beginning of the main protocols in green that highlights changes.

If you have any questions arising from these, or have any suggestions for future changes, please let us know by contacting chair@pascuk.co.uk

ONLINE TOOLS FOR FINDING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT (UPDATED)

Summary of Existing Financial Support

HM Treasury has published a summary of all the support that is available, this is a really useful summary and has links to all the separate support mechanisms under the following categories:

- Employees

- Businesses
- Unemployed
- Low income families
- Local Authorities
- Devolved Administrations

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-of-existing-economic-support/summary-of-existing-economic-support>

The online tool for finding out what support is available for your businesses has been updated to reflect recent changes:

<https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>

PASC UK MEMBERS LOGO



Please only display if you are a fully paid up Member. You can get a copy by sending an email to admin@pascuk.co.uk Thanks.

PASC UK AWARDS

There will be a further delay in finalising these. We haven't had any time to look at this this week. Further nominations welcome. We will try to do this asap as a bit of fun. Goodness knows we need some, further suggestions to chair@pascuk.co.uk

SUPPORT LOBBYING BY JOINING PASC UK

There is a huge amount of work and lobbying to do to help support you all in the self-catering sector. We haven't directly asked before, however if we are to fight on so many fronts, we simply need more funds. There are thousands of you that have had the benefit of this newsletter and the lobbying done on behalf of the sector.

We are now asking that as many of you as possible join PASC UK. The fight is on so many fronts, and we get much better results when we engage proper legal advice, proper PR firms to assist with campaigns such as the #justpayit (which we will shortly need to run again, more on that later) and Memberships to other organisations that provide common lobbying, information feeds and support.

Membership fees are as follows: All per annum.

- Single cottage £70
- 2 – 4 Units £125
- 5 – 10 Units £200

- 11 + Units £300

For companies like cleaning firms, or industry support companies, Associate Membership is £200.

Members get telephone support and priority email support.

You can join here, simple form, takes 2 mins, and we'll send an invoice, payable by BACS.

<https://www.pascuk.co.uk/copy-of-become-a-member-1>

MEMBER RENEWALS

Huge favour to ask of regulars, when you get your renewal through please pay it. The logistics of chasing waste hugely valuable time that could be spent doing far more useful things for all. If you don't want to renew, all you have to do is say so.

PASC UK CLOSING AT WEEKENDS

PASC UK is now closed at the weekends for phone and email. We have a self-catering business as well to run and manage through all the same issues that you all have. Many thanks.

ABOUT PASC UK

PASC UK was formed three years ago. It had three principle objectives at that time. The overriding purpose of PASC UK is to help make your business more profitable.

- 1/ Reduce Business Rates for self-catering
- 2/ Lobby for a 'level playing field', where all accommodation providers had to operate under the same rules, (think the 350,000 AirBnB properties). So that all have the same proportionate costs and regulations to operate under.
- 3/ Recover the right to Inheritance Tax Relief for legitimate business operating under FHL (Furnished Holiday Lettings rules).

And more.... See www.pascuk.co.uk

In January 2019, PASC UK succeeded in negotiating a reduction in Business Rates of up to 35% for most self-caterers in England and Wales. Despite a tortuous year with getting the Valuation Office to apply the new system, in January 2020 they switched the system to manual for Self-Caterers, (SCAT-131) and we now hear daily of Members getting great reductions and refunds. Guides on how to Check your Business Rates are available to Members.

After years of lobbying, giving evidence to all Party Parliamentary Groups and working with all the other major accommodation associations in the UK, we had finally got HMG to agree to a roundtable on how to regulate the short-term accommodation sector. Our approach has been one of keeping the sector 'safe and legal'. This meeting has been delayed by the COVID-19 outbreak but will be high on the agenda post the virus restrictions being lifted.

We were also making good progress in our representations to HMG about the reinstatement of Inheritance Tax Relief to FHL businesses provided they complied with a basic business criteria. This is also on hold whilst we all deal with the COVID-19 challenge but will be picked up as soon as practicable.

And much more....

Wishing each and every one of you all the best during these trying times, and please Stay Safe.

Best regards

Alistair Handyside MBE

Executive Chair

The Professional Association of Self-Caterers UK

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DISCLAIMER

We are in completely uncharted territory here, and any suggestions that we make are merely that and you should carefully consider your own business policies, and if necessary, consult with your Professional Advisors. PASC is your lobbying Association, not a legal service. In addition, please be very wary of some of the advice given on internet communities, blogs and social media. There appear to be thousands of experts out there where my understanding is that there are very few.

To that end, any information you get from any source you must double check. I will always try and put the actual link to the information in the newsletters so that you can read and assess yourselves. These are unprecedented times, please take exceptional care.

