

PE1848/G

Petitioner submission of 4 March 2021

In response to the Scottish Government submission of 17th February 2021

I would like to thank Jeane Freeman MSP, Cabinet Secretary of the Scottish Government for the response and in particular the acknowledgement that the points that I made in relation to the comparison with other non-contact sports and the further information provided on the operation of snooker and pool halls.

It is also very positive that the points will be considered in a further review of the strategic framework.

With recent news that the Scottish Government will be using the strategic framework for its exit out of the Covid-19 lockdown it is crucial for our sport & industry that snooker and pool halls are placed in the correct tier to give us every chance of survival.

Snooker and pool halls have now been closed for over 300 days since the lockdown began, any grants, furlough of staff and rate relief has been greatly received, however this is not sustainable with no income and the reoccurring costs involved.

With all submissions been presented it seems reasonable to assess from what has been put forward that snooker played in the venues are no less safe than any other non-contact indoor sport and indeed with the lack of physical effort required it could be argued that snooker is safer than the non-contact indoor sports that reopen in tier 3. In relation to lounge/bar and eating areas within these venues it would also be reasonable to assume that they are equally as safe as cafe's, bars and restaurants with the same or similar licencing legislation that reopen in tier 3.

Should the committee acknowledge that I do have a fair and balanced case for reopening in tier 3 it could save these very important family businesses that have a place in the community and do provide a facility that helps mental health & wellbeing particularly for our elderly customers who feel safer in a snooker hall than a crowded bar or restaurant. As well as our customers, our staff are keen to get back to working in a safe environment.

The cost savings for furloughed staff going back to work would be around 2k – 3k per venue per week plus whatever grants being released. With the potential costs associated with opening in tier 1 as to opposed to tier 3 It would be fair to say that this could mean a closure of a further 12 week or more, costing the treasury at least £40,000 per venue. It is important that a solution is found to open rather than blanket closure for our industry.

With the recent UK budget offering 130% tax relief on capital asset expenditure it would be prudent for our industry or any hospitality should the requirement arise to invest in upgrading or renewing any mechanical air flow systems giving a required air change per hour in line with any future legislation that may help us reopen earlier, saving all concerned money and providing a safer environment for the customers.

In summary I believe that 2 people playing snooker around a 12ft x 6ft table is far safer than anyone going to the gym, hairdresser, café, bar or restaurant. Snooker & pool venues could operate without the consumption of alcohol indoors until the legislation allows in other hospitality venues, this would be a solution.

I ask that serious consideration is taken to allow snooker and pool venues to reopen in tier 3.