

Use the power of the pub to level up, Localis report urges



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Failure to support the nation's pubs return from lockdown risks imperilling the government's levelling up agenda for economic and social renewal, the think-tank Localis has warned today.

In a report issued today entitled 'The Power of Pubs – protecting social infrastructure and laying the groundwork for levelling up' Localis argued it was vital that the lockdown roadmap is not allowed to slip back further for pubs, and that the commitment to end all trading restrictions by 21 June must be delivered to return all pubs to viable trading.

Without such assurances and medium-term support to help place the pub sector at the foundations of a strong recovery, the authors warned local economies and community resilience in left-behind parts of the country – including 'blue wall' former industrial heartlands, rural and coastal areas – would be particularly hit.

Among key recommendations, the report authors urged central government to further reduce the tax burden on the pub sector to aid the recovery and called for an extension to the Business and Planning Act 2020.

Local councils should be directed to help pubs by issuing licence fee refunds – paid for by the Treasury – for the six months to June 2021, through business support grants, the study advised. Additionally, where premises have been put to new community purposes during the pandemic, councils should offer a diversification grant to pubs looking to retain or expand the services they provided during lockdown.

Localis chief executive, Jonathan Werran, said: "The case for

treating Britain's pubs with fair consideration in exiting lockdown measures is, at core, as simple as it is heartfelt. Where there's a pub, there's a community.

"As one of the biggest contributors to the UK economy, the sector has a vital role to play in the recovery and levelling up journey of the country as well as in maintaining community cohesion and social resilience well beyond the pandemic."

Emma McClarkin, chief executive, British Beer and Pub Association, said: "The Pandemic has fractured our communities economic environment and frayed our social ties.

"The pub is a powerful embodiment and symbol of both, woven into the fabric of our society and it is one we need to support and strengthen as we rebuild our trade as well as reconnect our communities."

Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism. We carry out innovative research, hold events and facilitate an ever growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

The British Beer & Pub Association is the leading body representing Britain's brewers and pub companies. The Association is more than a century old and was originally founded as the Brewers' Society in 1904. Our members account for some 90 per cent of beer brewed in Britain today, and own around 20,000 of the nation's pubs.

The research undertaken for this report indicates the need for policy recommendations, for the short, medium and longer term.

Following reopening, some extra, medium-term measures may be needed to help place the pub sector at the foundations of a strong recovery, support local economies and shore up community resilience.

Looking ahead to the longer-term, as we move into the recovery phase, central government should support the pub sector through reducing the tax burden on the sector to aid

this recovery and build resilience.

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