

Luke Pollard MP, Facebookpost at 20:58 on 23.06.20

Hello #Plymouth – Today the Prime Minister has announced an easing of some of the lockdown measures. Over 40,000 people have died from Covid-19 across Britain and in easing these measures I want us all to do all we can to slow the spread of the virus. We cannot risk a second peak that would kill many more people.

The measures announced today mean that from 4 July social distancing guidelines will drop from 2m to "1m plus", meaning that if you can stay two meters apart you should, but if you can't then you should stay one metre apart. It also means pubs will open again, as will hairdressers and places of worship will reopen for services.

It also means tourists will be coming to the South West again with hotels, B&Bs, holiday homes and campsites re-opening as long as they can prove they are "covid-secure". Restaurants, cafés and workplace canteens, as well as pubs and bars, will re-open but with some new rules around social distancing. Nightclubs will not be re-opening yet. Outdoor play areas and outdoor gyms will be re-opening but indoor gyms will not.

Having lobbied hard to protect our brilliant and important National Marine Aquariums, I am also pleased that Aquariums will also be reopening. Cinema and Bingo will be back as will museums and galleries but theatres and concert halls will not reopen.

While I welcome the careful and slow re-opening of many of these businesses in Plymouth, I want everyone to be safe and careful. The virus has not gone – it is still out there and it is still killing people.

For those businesses that cannot yet reopen we need extra government support. The Theatre Royal has today announced a large number of redundancies. They will not be able to reopen and they are facing a very bleak future unless more help can be secured, or unless theatres can re-open soon. I have spoken to the Chief Executive of TRP, Adrian Vinken, earlier today to discuss what help his theatre needs and how I can help.

I have been making the case for emergency support for theatres and backing efforts by my Shadow Culture team colleagues, Tracy Brabin and Jo Stevens, for more support for theatres. Put simply, if more support does not come soon we are at risk of losing not just a few theatres, but whole swathes of our performing arts sector. The Theatre Royal is one of the jewels in the crown of the south west. It has not just a superb local reputation, it is nationally significant and the work done at TR2 at Cattedown supports productions right around the world for some of the biggest names in entertainment. They are too important to fail and I will do all I can to support them.

So, today I have written again to the Government asking them to bring forward emergency support for theatres and the performing arts. As the Co-Chair of the All Party Group for Dance I have been supporting efforts to back the whole spread of creative arts over the past few

months as the extend of the economic consequences of lockdown and the virus became clear. Ministers need to bring forward a package of support now. There is a debate within Government about the timing and extent of any support, whether it can wait for the next budget, whether support should be loans or grants. The simple truth is that the sector cannot afford any further delays: announce a support package and make it good enough and accessible that theatres big and small can access it.

I have been contacted by a lot of people who work at the Theatre Royal today and I will do all I can to support the Theatre and hopefully see them return to jobs there soon. We cannot afford to let the Theatre Royal go bust. It is such an important part of our city, does such superb work and is a catalyst for so much good. I will continue lobbying. In the meantime, please keep safe and well. If you want to help the Theatre, there's a fundraising support page on their website where you can pledge your support, or where you can buy tickets for future performances. Please do all you can to keep this theatre alive.

As usual #Plymouth, please let me know your thoughts.