

Response by T&R Theakston Ltd to the APPBG Call for Evidence on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on sales of cask ale, and the pressures the sector faces as UK pubs reopen over the coming months,

The impact of Covid across the industry is well-known as lockdown regulations have forced licensed premises to be closed for long periods of time. The impact on beer production planning and logistics is profound across all beer types but particularly cask ale because of the nature of the product that has a shelf life typically of 30 days as opposed to other draught drinks of at least 90 and in some cases longer.

Judging now on how much cask ale to brew requires an educated guess on how many cask pubs are likely to open on the after the 12<sup>th</sup> April, 17<sup>th</sup> May and / or the 21<sup>st</sup> June. It is a totally unprecedented and impossibly difficult task to accurately predict the correct amount. As a consequence of this, brewers are likely to limit the variety of cask beers brewed, licensees are likely to limit the variety and quantity of cask beer ordered from the supplier and wholesalers are equally likely to limit choice in order to minimise the risk of beer not being sold and running out of shelf life. It will therefore be some time before a pattern of trade will lead to confidence for brewers to extend the range and quantity, for licensees to do the same as also, wholesalers. During the time of limited range and uncertain throughputs it is quite probable that consumers will be more confident about purchasing keg products with reassuringly longer shelf life. As a possible consequence, long-term consumption of cask ale may decline.

Uniquely, cask ale is the only type of beer in the world that does not leave the brewery in a ready to drink state. Cask beer requires at least two to three days to condition, un-disturbed in the cellar of the pub in which it is sold to consumers. It means that only in On trade outlets can cask ale be consumed and therefore underlines the mutual dependency of cask ale and pubs. For cask pubs this factor allows them to promote and market cask beers and the skill required to present them. A thriving pub population is vital for a thriving cask ale market.

We would support a move to reduce duty on cask beer and for the government through local tourism initiatives to invest behind a national pub support campaign.

The comments above are completely separate from and additional to T&RT's submission to HMT regarding the review of Small Brewers' Relief

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