

London, UK - Tuesday, 20 October 2020

James Andrew International Thoughts - COVID-19

Dear clients, colleagues and friends

And so we're back...., it feels like from outer space but it could be suspended animation. Central London no longer looks like the set of a disaster movie, but without the tourists and majority of workers, it is unsustainably quiet.

The schools are back and with that we were assured the people would return to their desks. The announcement by Boris Johnson on 22 September has certainly slowed this. Government departments and many banks, even those with substantial state ownership, will be reluctant to ask staff to return. This is not good for London or town centres across the country. We have little doubt the Government's task has been challenging and they have done many good things, the job retention scheme, dine out to help out, tax breaks and loan guarantees have been extremely helpful. Unfortunately, the testing regime and 'world leading' track and trace have so far been an unmitigated failure.

The restrictions and local lock downs are confusing and inconsistent and it would seem the 'experts' advising the Government failed to consider the consequences that a return to 'normal' would have on the younger members of the population or indeed foreign travel to 'safe' locations. The net result is numbers of infections are rising and whilst initially this was in the younger generations hospital admissions are beginning to rise. The best analogy we have heard is a lockdown has the same effect as squeezing a balloon. Immediately you release it the air (virus) returns. We don't profess to have the answer to this problem.

It is difficult to see how the work force of central London and those across the country can return until we in the UK and nations around the world accept that Pandora's box has been opened and we cannot eradicate this virus and must learn to live with it. A vaccine is coming but how long it will take to inoculate the population of the UK in the face of competition for the vaccine from Europe, the US and Asia.

With luck, in the near future, the politicians will accede and change their stance on controlling the inevitable. We as individuals must be in control of our own future. Some will err on the side of caution, others wish to live their lives, do business and travel to see our friends, business partners and clients around the world. We want to see our theatres, restaurants, clubs, bars and gyms open again. Not only do they provide tens of thousands of jobs, but they are the heart and soul of our towns and cities. As humans we are social creatures, we are not designed to be isolated working from home, only able to communicate with colleagues by telephone or video link. We need interaction.

We fear the Government are split on how to manage this and are trying to balance the health of the nation against the economy but in our opinion they need to put some positive spin on outcome to date and encourage people to return to the city centres.

The good news however is we at James Andrew International are back and all divisions are doing business.

Please keep in touch.

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Notes to Editors

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