



Elmore Court

ENGLAND

Wednesday, 8 April 2020

Dear

I am hoping you might be able to help.

I run a successful and highly regarded wedding and events business with great benefits for people, heritage, the local economy and increasingly the environment. Like everyone in hospitality we are being badly affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of the business is weddings and we have been looking to postpone as many of them as we can to a later time when hopefully this pandemic has passed. For the most part, so far, we have been successful. Postponement is critical for our survival and I know that throughout this sector it is the same for most, if not all.

The issue that I, and I think in turn everyone who does this, will have is that postponement currently might not be possible with civil ceremonies at licensed venues such as Elmore Court.

To explain. Brides and grooms need to 'give notice'. See below extract from the government website:

You must sign a legal statement at your local register office to say you intend to get married or form a civil partnership. This is known as 'giving notice'.

You must give notice at least 29 days before your ceremony.

For example, if you give notice on 1 May, the earliest date you can get married or form a civil partnership is 30 May.

You must hold your ceremony within 12 months of 'giving notice'.

This means there is a risk that in the course of postponement the new date is beyond the 12 month window that the ceremony should be held in. Without this in place and in such circumstances the marriage cannot legally occur.

This would probably be less of an issue if couples were able to give notice again. However, they cannot as all registration offices are now not taking any requests for couples to give notice. Only deaths are being registered. As long as this is in place, we as a sector are in serious trouble.

I spoke to our local registration office in Gloucestershire and from them there was the clear desire to help this situation from the registrars. The necessity of this 'notification' I was told was simply a legal requirement. A tick box. They would be happy to conduct the ceremony if they could, but this issue was a dead end with no solution.

It seems to me that whilst registry offices are unable to accept new notifications then perhaps there could be some sort of emergency legislation to say the marriages could go ahead without this or better perhaps that any existing legal statement to this effect could be extended so that ceremonies could occur in a longer period than 12 months?

I am of course concerned for my own business, but I do think that the wedding industry as a whole (worth about £10 billion annually to the UK economy) could be impacted even more than it already is by what is essentially red tape.

I am hoping that you might be able to get someone somewhere to look into whether this is a tweak that could be made in the existing law to avoid more hardship to us all. It's not just wedding venues... it's all the suppliers; photographers, florists, wedding dress makers, caterers and so on.

Many thanks for your time

Anselm Guise