

A message to Team Ballyhass in the current COVID -19 situation

Team Ballyhass,

April 2nd 2020

apologies you have not heard from me sooner since the onset of COVID -19 and the impact it has had on the whole country. Elaine and I were on annual leave when the first round of restrictions took place and have been self-isolating since we have gotten back per government recommendation. Since we have been home changes made day to day have been staggering and resulted in the delay in this message.

We have come back to a situation that no one could have seen coming but now, without doubt, we are in the most challenging situation the outdoor education and tourism industry as seen since the last economic crash if not ever. A lot of you might not remember that period but, Ballyhass Adventure group was conceived, developed and marketed in that very difficult environment. That time, I think, has given our company the resilience to survive and build into the company that you are part of today.

The situation with COVID -19 will cause the same issues and more. It is clear now that this will have an enormous impact on this season and several seasons into the future. As it stands both centres are operationally closed and will be until advised otherwise by the Government. We are currently working under the assumption that schools will not return until September. That will wipe out up to 50% of our turnover which usually comes from the May & June School tour season.

We don't know when and how quickly we will get back to the highs of the 2018 & 19 seasons. This will put a major strain on the amount and consistency of staff hours available this season. We know that we will have to alter our existing products, react to customer demands both high and low and be vastly more flexible than we ever have been before. No matter when and how our customers are willing to come back to a Ballyhass Centre we will be ready and waiting to provide an outdoor experience, no matter the time or product. To do this we will be asking you to be more flexible, versatile and accommodating than ever.

We have invested heavily in staff training and procedures over the past few seasons. This will continue to be a priority, we want you to be working in a safe and healthy environment. We want a safe and healthy environment for our customers and our community.

I am currently working 7 days a week with the management team to prepare our operations to ensure that this environment is created for you. We are currently working on courses that can be run online to ensure that the training continues in this down period so when the season does start, Team Ballyhass will be ready for what comes our way.

While there is huge uncertainty throughout the country at the moment we know one thing for sure. People will always want to get outdoors. People will always need to be active for their physical and mental health. We know people will be nervous about travelling abroad and will start to explore more of what is on their doorstep. The work you have done over the history of this company means the community will be confident that Ballyhass will deliver an exciting, rewarding and safe product now more than ever.

We have an opportunity as a company to be part of an industry that will give confidence back to the population. Not only that, but we will be able to continue to foster the strong community and family bonds that has and is continuing to be formed throughout this time. We will be centres where people can meet family and friends for the first time in months. An industry that will be more important than ever when this crisis is over. People now realise that they can not take the outdoors for granted.

There has been so much talk about the fantastic work our frontline workers have been doing in the midst of this crisis. Shop keepers, Delivery drivers, Nurses and doctors. They are the frontline staff at the start of this situation. YOU are the frontline workers waiting in the wings, ready to rebuild peoples confidence and relationships when the country is at its most fragile.

We need you when we are ready to open. I know that you have the capability, skill and personalities to be the next round of front line workers. To be the ones to help get this country back on its feet. Team building and outdoor shared experiences I am 100% sure will play a huge part in this. You will be the ones delivering these sessions. We want you to look after yourselves so you are ready. We want to be here to support you if there is any way we can help with this.

I am looking forward to our first staff night of the season more than ever. I think it will be one we will remember for a long time.

Before that please reach out to myself or any of the management team if you have any concerns, questions or just want a digital catch up. We are working remotely and in two teams to protect ourselves and ensure that as a management team we are also ready to go.

There have been some great government supports announced and enacted over the last 4 or 5 days. If you have any queries please contact Eddie or me directly.

Taran and David will be in touch regarding upcoming online training opportunities in the next ten days. Prior to opening, we will be running everyone through an online course covering our new COVID-19 operational measures that will come into play.

If there are new ideas or opportunities you may see for the company we are here to listen and take action in order to ensure the survival and thriving success of the company going forward. Please reach out to us.

We are thinking of you all at this time. We hope you, your family, friends and community are all staying safe and I have no doubt at this point you are doing your part in this battle.

I look forward to seeing you as soon as possible in Mallow and Coachford. We will send regular shorter updates in the next few weeks as changes arise.

Eoghan.

Eddie, Elaine, Tim, David, Taran, Tom.

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