



14th April 2020

Tony Thorpe
ROI Billiards & Snooker Association

Dear Tony,

Few would have imagined when we rang in the New Year just over three months ago that we would be in our current situation, with sports facilities closed countrywide, fixtures called off at every level and the best laid plans for 2020 thrown into turmoil. It is understandable to be feeling doubt and even fear for the future but we shall overcome the current crisis. Throughout all of this, the government has acted on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and the National Public Health Emergency Team. Whilst some progress is being made, we must all continue to play our part to encourage physical distancing and to look after our physical and mental health.

The role and importance of sport to people's physical and mental health lives has come into sharp focus in these most trying of times. I, and my Government colleagues, have been greatly heartened to see the efforts being made by so many across the sports community. I am writing to you and to all other NGBs at this point to say a sincere THANK YOU for these efforts. The sport sector has set an amazing example, from club volunteers delivering essential goods to those in need, to athletes using social media to post training videos which can be employed by people in their homes, to sportsgrounds becoming HSE test centres. I am also glad that communication between officials in my Department, Sport Ireland, the Federation of Irish Sport and the NGBs has been open and constructive.

The Government is determined to ensure that everything possible is done to support those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A range of supports has been put in place, details of which are provided below. My officials and I are available if you have any queries with regard to any of these schemes. I would also encourage you to stay in close contact with Sport Ireland as they have assured me of their willingness and openness to address specific circumstances and difficulties arising.

I've heard so many people say just how much sport matters to them. That message augers well for the future. For now, we must still concentrate our minds and maintain the discipline of staying at home in accordance with the public health advice. Normality will return, however gradually, and sport will be there for us to enjoy when it does.

Yours sincerely,

Brendan Griffin
Minister of State for Tourism and Sport



COVID-19 Government Funding and Supports

Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme: The scheme enables employees, whose employers are affected by the pandemic, to receive significant supports directly from their employer. Employers who pay their employees during the pandemic, will be refunded up to 70% of an employee's wages by the state - up to a level of €410.

COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment: Unemployment payments have been increased to €350 per week for up to 6 weeks.

Short Term Work Support: This is a form of Jobseeker's Benefit and is an income support payment for employees aged under 66 who have been temporarily placed on a shorter working week. The payment is made in respect of their regular salary for the days that they are no longer working however they must work 3 or less days per week.

Illness Benefit for COVID-19 Illness: To receive the enhanced payment, employees must be absent from work and not be getting paid by their employer and be either: 1) Self-isolating on the instruction of a doctor or other medical professional – payment lasts 2 weeks or 2) Diagnosed with COVID-19 – payment is paid for the duration of illness.

Working Capital Loan Scheme: A €200m Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) Working Capital scheme for eligible businesses impacted by COVID-19. Loans of up to €1.5m will be available at reduced rates (the maximum interest rate will be 4%), with up to the first €500,000 unsecured. Maximum interest rate of 4% loan terms ranges from 1 year to 3 years. Loans are available through the Pillar Banks (AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank). Eligible if turnover/profitability has been negatively impacted by a minimum of 15%. Optional interest-only repayments may be available at the start of the loans.

Enterprise Support Scheme: A €200m package for Enterprise Supports including a Rescue and Restructuring Scheme is available under Enterprise Ireland's COVID-19 Business Response Plan for vulnerable but viable firms that need to restructure or transform their business.

State Credit Guarantee Scheme: This will be available from the state to COVID-19 impacted firms through the Pillar Banks (AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank). Loan facilities of up to €1m will be available at terms of up to 7 years. The scheme aims to assist viable SMEs, which under normal lending criteria are unable to borrow from their bank, in accessing credit. The scheme operates by providing an 80% guarantee to participating finance providers on qualifying loans to SMEs. Minimum loan is €10,000. Loan facilities can be term loans, demand loans or performance bonds.

Increased Micro-Finance Loans: The maximum loan available from MicroFinance Ireland has increased from €25,000 to €50,000. Interest rates of between 6.8% and 7.8% apply. Available to eligible microenterprises (businesses with less than 10 employees and with up to €2m annual turnover) that are currently trading. Loans may be used for working capital and required business changes as a result of COVID-19. Loan terms typically last up to 3 years and are interest and repayment free for the first 6 months.



Support from Banks: Following a meeting between representatives of the pillar banks and the Minister for Finance, the banks are adopting a customer focused approach with a wide variety of tailored supports including simplified access to a wide range of credit, cash flow, working capital, trade finance and supply chain supports. Other supports include payment breaks on loans, extensions of credit lines, risk guarantees and deferment of court proceedings.

Local Authority Rates Deferral: The Government has agreed with local authorities to defer rates payments due from the most immediately impacted businesses - primarily in the retail, hospitality, leisure and childcare sectors, for three months, until the end of May. This measure will be implemented by each local authority in its own area.

Tax Reliefs for Employers & Employees: The Revenue Commissioners has suspended the application of interest on late payments of VAT and employers PAYE (tax) liabilities to assist businesses that are experiencing trading difficulties. Debt enforcement activity is also suspended. Tax clearance status will remain in place for all businesses over the coming months. Revenue has also provided information, advice and support for taxpayers experiencing difficulties caused by the impacts of COVID-19.

Grant supports: A range of Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Local Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Office and Údarás na Gaeltachta grant supports are available to firms to help with strategies to innovate, diversify markets and supply chains and to improve competitiveness.

Business Continuity Voucher: The Local Enterprise Office *Business Continuity Voucher* is designed for businesses across every sector that employ up to 50 people. The voucher is worth up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs and can be used by companies and sole traders to develop short-term and long-term strategies to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Filing of annual returns: The Companies Registration Office has introduced changes to annual filing obligations for companies to assist companies during the COVID-19 crisis.

Employment Permits System Contingency Arrangements: The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has implemented a contingency plan to ensure that the Employment Permits system will continue to operate in all scenarios.

Useful Links:

www.hse.ie

www.merrionstreet.ie

www.revenue.ie

<https://sbci.gov.ie/>