

# opinion

## Freedom Day delayed by four weeks, but don't despair

At 6pm on Monday, we were given the inevitable news that current lockdown restrictions are due to be extended for another month.

Dubbed 'Freedom Day' by the press, people up and down England were eagerly counting down the days until Monday, June 21, earmarked by the government as the date remaining restrictions and social distancing would lift.

A rise in the number of cases, paired with the recent spread of the Delta variant, has pushed those plans back a month, with the next big date in sight looking to be Monday, July 19.

And quite frankly, I agree with this latest move.

Don't get me wrong, I am in no way a fan of this government and its overall handling of the pandemic at all, amongst other things, but it's only an extra month. A few weeks.

As it stands, I am quite happy with how things are. If it means we get some sense of freedom without the risk of another full lockdown further down the line, I'm all for it.

Currently, indoor and outdoor dining are in full swing (albeit with table service), people have slowly been filtering back to the office where it's safe to do so (myself included), cinemas have reopened, and we can even hug our loved ones once again.

While my heart does go out to those sectors that unfortunately haven't been given the green light yet, we do need to wait until more people are vaccinated, or else we risk another full lockdown later in the year - which I'm sure we can all agree would be disastrous for both the economy and our

These next four weeks are crucial to our long-term freedom, says **Danielle Lett**



mental wellbeing.

Many people, myself included, struggled with the lockdown back in winter. Restrictions were tougher, days were shorter, and it was an overall depressing time. But at the moment, I think we should try looking at the positives, and the things we can do, as opposed to what we can't.

Monday's announcement brought one silver lining for the wedding industry, which was told the limit on guest numbers is to be scrapped, and services with more 30 attendees able to take place. This is brilliant news for the tens of thousands of couples waiting in limbo, as well as the businesses within the wedding sector.

And currently, the live music industry is undergoing a number of government-approved pilot schemes in order to see how gigs and festivals can conduct themselves going forwards.

Back in May, a handful of carefully-monitored events took place in Liverpool, to see how the virus spreads in a non-socially distanced setting. These included an outdoor day festival and two indoor nightclub events.

The results came in three weeks ago, and found no detectable spread of the virus. That's huge



Social distancing measures are still in place for another month, following Monday's announcement from the government

Picture: SARAH LUCY BROWN

news, and puts us in a way better place than we were in last summer.

While I am a little baffled why nightclubs and live music haven't been given the go-ahead just yet considering the test results, it's always best to play it safe and listen to the advice of the medical advisers who have been guiding us through this entire pandemic.

I myself will be attending this weekend's Download Festival pilot event - in which 10,000 ticketholders will descend upon Donington Park for three days of

live music and camping, with no masks, no social distancing and plenty of moshing.

If all goes to plan and the results are a success akin to the Liverpool events, that paired with even more vaccine uptake will hopefully see us head towards that final stretch to normality.

I just think after all the lockdowns we've been through, it makes sense to proceed with extra caution so close to the finish line if it means freedom in the latter half of 2021 and beyond.

'Slow and steady wins the race',

as the old adage goes. If we can hang on for another month while we vaccinate even more people, we'll be at less risk of a full lockdown come autumn, and for me, that is an ideal compromise.

So if you haven't already, get your vaccine booked in, keep wearing your mask, and enjoy the sunshine for the time being.

Freedom Day is just around the corner. It's four weeks to go, we can do this. And when we do get there, it will have been worth the wait.