

Hello and Season's greetings to all shareholders and supporters of The Bell

This is the first of what we hope will become a series: a Blog or Bulletin [whatever!] that comes *jointly* from Nick, Dom and your Management Committee. We aim to entertain, inform, and generally spin plates (lol) in an attempt to hold everything and everyone together as we *all* plough on towards -

The Light At The End Of The Tunnel.

First, may we bend your ear a little? Tier 2 means no mixing of households in pubs. Some folk have been asking Dom and Nick to accept bookings for bigger numbers – twisting and turning to try and get round the rule. We're sure *no-one in Yarpole* would dream of doing this, but in case you know of anyone who has been on the receiving end of a refusal to accept a booking, it is The Bell's absolute policy to adhere to the rules. The consequences of breaking them could be a business-busting fine or the spreading of the virus – both devastating.

Now, we know, and sympathise with, the disappointment that some people feel that The Bell is currently closed, and feel it is worth sharing a bit of insight. First, not everyone would go to the pub even if it were open. Many residents have expressed caution about being indoors with other people – even if at well-spaced tables. We see this reflected in footfall at other pubs.. for although you may hear, and see, that other pubs are open, you may not know that they are often so quiet that the revenue doesn't cover the cost of being open. The extra staff needed to temperature check, sanitise, and carefully serve everyone at table are a top-heavy expense given the reduced number of customers. Multiply that over a few months and the outlook for the business would be bleak indeed.

You've heard that the government will review the Tiers on 16th December. Sadly, businesses don't get informed any sooner than anyone else, so if we are lucky enough to go down to Tier 1, there'd still be several days delay whilst stocks arrive – and the cask ale settles! It's simply not economic to gamble and order ahead because of the risk of wastage.

So, what can be done? Trust us – we're all working on it! Nick and Dom are hatching plans to enable those who would like to come into the pub (safely) to do so, whilst also being able to know that the business will not be losing money. For example: pre-booked 'Special Events Nights' where the number of bookings needed is advertised in advance, and comes with the caveat that the event will only take place if the threshold is reached. This reminds us of the fund-raising events the Committee and the community ran last winter: they were all sold out within days so we're sure that such a plan would be a success. We hope to let you know about a new event in the next few days – and meanwhile may we remind you that the Christmas Eve Dinner is already filling up fast so if you would like to come (as a single household!) do get in touch soon.

There are plenty of other ideas in the melting pot, and our planned series of 'B's (see first para) will keep you up to speed, and there's always the website, www.thebellatypole.co.uk We know that everyone who has supported the community's efforts to keep a pub in the village will want it to survive this awful year intact. Please let us know you agree by continuing to have faith, don't be despondent, we have overcome big challenges before and we intend to win this one too!

Nick, Dom, and The Management Committee

PS – IMPORTANT: As these 'B's may in future be emailed by either the committee or by Dom, your permission is needed for the tenants to have your email address. Please would you let the committee (themortimerCBS@gmail.com) know quickly if you would rather this didn't happen? Thank you.