

01 May 2020



Hi Pride

So here we are, lockdown has supposedly ended but we are now apparently still imprisoned by a number, 4 in this case. Evidently, for tourism, numbers 3 and 2 will still have firm shackles.

To date I have praised the government for its decisive action. I have admired our president for displaying strong leadership. I heralded the handling of the TERS system. I felt good about our country uniting against a common enemy. I complied with the lockdown rules, even the ones that made no sense, to show support. I was very proud of our country.

This goodwill has been somewhat eroded by the shambolic, ill-conceived “risk adjusted” approach recently announced, which effectively appears to extend lockdown almost indefinitely. I think that our political leaders are operating with sincere and genuine concern, but sadly it appears to have escaped them that, in trying to protect the common good, there are elements of arrogance, draconian decision making and fatuous additions that have crept in to new regulations.

Making people exercise in the same limited time window is the exact opposite of social distancing. This morning set a new record for the number of people I have seen out at the same time in the normally deserted streets of my small lockdown village abode. Madness!

I’m not a smoker and I don’t like smoking. It is, however, a fundamental right of a individual to make his or her own health choices. There is no justifiable reason for a democratic government to remove this choice. Don’t get me started on booze. I not only appreciate a single malt, those that know me understand that I have been inducted into the Whisky Hall of Fame. To deny my personal choice to have a quiet civilized dram under the greater umbrella of the public good may have some spurious logic in diminishing overall statistics, but this thinking only belongs in the arena of socialist dictatorships.

These are annoyances. They matter, just as any invasion of civil liberty and democracy matter, but they are not the crux of the problem. The real central issue is that the only viable validation for lockdown was to buy time to enable us to better prepare for the pandemic. The word “pandemic” is key. This thing can’t be avoided. we have to face it head on. Barring a miracle cure it is here to stay. Delaying the inevitable is not going to achieve anything. Destroying our economy while we do this does not add up. The government does not generate money, it relieves its citizens and business of some of the money they earn to spend on the common good. It does not have the R500bn for a bailout programme. We need the economy to generate the money. I do have a degree in economics, but in this instance I don’t need it - this is just common sense!

We are in grave danger of the cure being worse than the illness. Don’t get me wrong, this is a very difficult problem. I sympathize with our political leaders, this is a horrible, horrible situation. They are trying their best. The weight of this must be almost intolerable. But please, leaders, do not treat your voters as children. Be transparent and communicate. Remember servant leadership. Gather information by consultation. Garner support by encouragement and trust. This is what we do as a company. Do not sit in ivory towers and issue questionable rules. Do not pay lip service to consultation. Please listen, really listen. Common good can only be found by a common approach.

We need to mobilize the economy now. We need to strictly monitor social distancing practices and sanitization in the work place. We need to isolate the vulnerable and continue to build medical capacity. This is where funds need to be deployed, not in a short-lived attempt to assist businesses not

to earn revenue. We need to open all commerce where possible except for high risk public gatherings. We need to employ our citizens. We need to put food on everyone's table. I know this is going to have negative consequences, but we have no choice. We cannot kill the proverbial goose that lays the golden egg. We need some logic here. How is one person in a hotel room in an establishment practicing safety measures worse than a 70% full minibus taxi?

So, I am not yet happy with our planned measures. We need more consultation and more genuine influence being put into effect from business minds in regulations. I call on all of you who agree with me to lobby. Lobby on social platforms. Call on friends to lobby. Let's make our collective voice heard. We support our leadership, but this is not the answer. I agreed with "stay at home" but now it's time for "back to work (carefully)". If you don't agree with me, bring over a bottle of whisky and we can talk about it (from 2m appropriate distancing.)

Let's have more communication , respect and transparency. Talk to business, work with us. Let us know the reasons behind your decisions. Together we can get through this.

On a positive note, I had so many greetings and smiles on my walk this morning it felt I had time travelled back to the 50's! To a gentler age. One with more humanity. More community. More compassion. Let's hold on to this strange side effect of the pandemic. It works. It feels good.

Stay safe, stay positive, be kind

All the best

Kevin