

# IMPACTS FOR A GLAMPING BUSINESS DURING CORONAVIRUS

**Coronavirus – a dark cloud or a silver lining for the glamping and camping industry? John Maddy from our trusted partner Canopy gives an update.**

It's no surprise that everyone's been impacted by Coronavirus this year and unless you're making face masks or hand sanitiser, you're going to have felt the pinch.

For many businesses, including the glamping and camping industry, the situation has been increasingly difficult. Complex national and regional legislation, lack of clarity and conflicting information have left businesses navigating a minefield. For some business owners this has proved too much and they have made the decision to keep their doors firmly shut for the foreseeable future.

The lockdown posed a big challenge to our businesses. A number of sites were contacting us to ask for guidance and support on reopening, during a time when there wasn't much correct information or support available in the public domain. On top of this, I was operating on little sleep as my partner and I had just had a baby boy!

Over the weeks and months that followed Canopy engaged with sites and industry partners such as NFU Mutual, and began creating some clear guidance for our industry.

Taking on this new challenge to make our businesses Covid secure has been difficult for some.



The layout of some campsites alone has created a whole host of access issues that weren't there before. Ultimately, the biggest costs for our industry have been those hidden by the invisible threat we continue to face.

Here are just some of the experiences of our glamping and hospitality partners so far:

### **BELT AND BRACES**

'How clean is clean?' is a question on many business owner's lips and the extra effort we are all putting in doesn't come without extra cost. On average staff are spending an additional 1.5 - 2 hours per day cleaning the same areas which means we are buying more cleaning chemicals and paying more staff wages.

Further costs have also been incurred as a result of low stock availability of cheaper items, after stockpiling had left just the most expensive brands on the shelves. Poor or insufficient advice has also led to the wasteful purchase of products that are often too strong for their application. In addition extra time has been spent on administration for creating vital Health and Safety risk assessments and action plans.

### **THE COST OF WASTE**

Waste companies have been offering different services during the pandemic. Some have switched from smaller recycling bins to larger single skips. This has led to customers throwing away a lot more, resulting in higher waste collection costs for the campsite owner. For some campsites their waste costs have nearly tripled during the pandemic.

### **NEW TO CAMPING**

Campsites and glampsites have reported a lot of lost time 'hand-holding' a new demographic of customer this year, following travel restrictions to popular overseas destinations. It's fair to say this type of customer has not come without issues. Owners and staff have found these guests to have had little if any experience of camping, glamping or the great outdoors!

### **REDUCED CAPACITY**

Owners have been forced to re-evaluate their sites from a safety point of view. For some, this means they must continue at a reduced capacity to decrease bottlenecks in communal facilities and to give customers more space to 'breathe'.



## STAFFING DILEMMAS

Staffing during this time has been stressful for some. Some owners with multi-generations of family living onsite have needed to protect elderly or vulnerable family members. Normally these family members would have been actively involved in the day-to-day running of the business but instead have had to shield. With a subsequent hole in staffing to fill, it has forced some businesses to just pick up the slack themselves or be faced with the added cost of recruiting and training new staff, which for some is just too expensive or time consuming.

## A SILVER LINING

It's not all doom and gloom. There have been lots of positives that have come out of this pandemic. Sites have reported a huge rise in trade and many have been running at 100% occupancy since the lockdowns have eased.

Shop sales on sites have increased with some sites having to restrict sale of some items each day.

New ventures on some locations have been tried and tested. 'Pop up' pizza and fish and chip suppers have been a huge success, giving rise to more investment for next year.

The level of quality on sites has on the whole improved. Customer feedback has highlighted 'clean' and 'safe' facilities and some sites have reported that staff have been much more efficient and thorough with their cleaning regimes. For some, the methodical approach to cleaning has provided helpful structure to younger or inexperienced staff.

Finally, early reports from owners confirm a welcome rise in bookings for next year already with some never having had revenue this early on. This points to a positive future for glamping and camping experiences in the UK we can all celebrate.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### JOHN MADDY – CANOPY, AND CO-FOUNDER OF LONG VALLEY YURTS

Having worked in the industry since 2001, John has been described as a trailblazer in the glamping industry. Along with his business partner Richard, he has co-founded Long Valley Yurts, introduced new innovations, and more recently established Canopy, the association for the glamping and camping industry.

Canopy, supported by NFU Mutual, offers consultancy, training, accreditation, auditing and qualifications to the camping and glamping industry. Their aim is to support this exciting industry and raise the bar for quality, safety and service.

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