

## Communities rally in face of coronavirus

- Numerous events on hold
- Panic buying across Waterford
- Charities adversely impacted

Eoghan Dalton

The coronavirus pandemic continues to impact on all of society in Waterford and beyond.

Pubs were asked to close ahead of St Patrick's Day celebrations in an attempt to slow the spread of the infection, with Retail Ireland calling it the "hardest and most challenging day in our industry's history".

In a statement to members, the body said: "There have been lots of store closures. You have had to lay off so many wonderful colleagues.

"For most of you this is the first time ever that you have had to do anything like this. Be reminded you have done the right thing.

"You are protecting your company and guaranteeing that when this is over your great people have a job to return to."

The effectiveness of the social distancing guidelines in other parts of the hospitality and leisure industry such as in restaurants and cinemas will be kept under review over the coming days.

Supermarkets have also been responding to concerns that the elderly and the vulnerable may lose out as others 'panic buy'.

Dunnes Stores in City Square has designated a checkout in their grocery department to OAPs and customers with vulnerabilities so they can shop their groceries more comfortably.

Lidl has also announced similar.

A spokesperson said: "We ask that the public respect this time period to allow more vulnerable customers to pick up the food and supplies they need.

"Starting March 17, the mornings will run from 9-11am every day and will include prioritised queuing and additional assistance for our older customers."

Staff will also be available to assist customers with carrying their groceries to their car, taxi or bus stop if required.

People are again being reminded to wash their hands numerous times daily with soap or sanitizer and to abide by social distancing guidelines, allowing up to 2m between themselves and others.

They are also being advised to observe good hygiene by coughing or sneezing into their elbow.

The Munster Express spoke to people affected by Covid-19 across the city and county, from businesses to charities to farmers.