

Ministers ‘napping’ over fuel crisis, pubs boss says as firms issue warnings

Leisure firm chiefs today joined industry in issuing warnings over the [petrol](#) crisis, with one [pubs](#) boss demanding ministers “get a grip” on the situation.

Patrick Dardis, chief executive of 190-year-old group Young’s, told the Standard he fears running out of some items on the menu “if the [fuel](#) shortage continues beyond this week”.

He said: “There will be a reduction in the products we offer, if [CO2](#) and fuel shortages continue.

“The Government were caught napping again. They need to get a grip. What else can be thrown at business and the economy? It is the perfect storm.”

The fuel shortage, put down to a lack of HGV drivers due to Brexit and a Covid-era driving test backlog, has compounded labour shortfalls across hospitality alongside disruption to food-grade CO2 production due to soaring wholesale gas prices.

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The comments came as Irn Bru maker AG Barr revealed it is

struggling to make drinks deliveries due to the HGV and supply chain issues.

The company said it continues to “monitor closely” the situation and is hopeful the issues can be resolved soon.

Updating the stock market, bosses said: “In recent weeks we have seen increased challenges across the UK road haulage fleet, associated in part with the Covid-19 pandemic, impacting customer deliveries and inbound materials.”

The firm added: “In addition, the risks associated with the wider labour pool and the current Covid-19 pandemic response are areas we continue to monitor closely.”

Dardis said: “They [ministers] have to open up the job market permanently to our EU colleagues. We need, as do the NHS, and many many other sectors, a much bigger pool of workers, prepared to work. The economy will be loser if they don’t.”

It follows a call last week from his fellow pub boss, Clive Watson of City Pub Group, for an Australia-style, two-to-three- year working visa scheme for EU workers to help tackle the ongoing hospitality staffing crisis.

Wetherspoons’ founder Tim Martin – a vocal pro-Brexiteer – has also backed Watson’s VISA scheme call.