



# Press release

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## 586th edition of the Striezelmarkt cancelled

Lord Mayor Hilbert: The current situation leaves us with no other option

Following the advice issued by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and the state Minister-Presidents at the start of the week, the verdict is clear: there will be no Striezelmarkt this year. 'Although no concrete decisions have as yet been made, it means that we, at a local level, need to make a very difficult decision', says Lord Mayor Dirk Hilbert. 'As there is no prospect of the coronavirus restrictions being eased – indeed on the contrary – and a new roadmap is not expected until at least next week, holding the Striezelmarkt is no longer a realistic option. I regret this immensely, but can see that the partial lockdown so far has not had the effect we had hoped for the Advent period. The number of infections in Dresden, but also in the surrounding districts, has left us with no other choice.'

### **Why can't the city council wait a bit longer in case the situation improves?**

'We don't want to keep leaving our partners in the dark. Many traders shared our hope and helped us in a bid to run the Striezelmarkt. But, like us, the traders also need to plan, buy goods and hire staff. The risks are now becoming far too great for everyone', says Dr Robert Franke, head of the Economic Development Office. 'The setup time involved meant a decision would have had to be made this week if the market were to be ready for the first week of December.'

### **Why can't there be any 'Striezelmarkt Lite', e.g. without the mulled-wine stalls?**

'The coronavirus situation is still very dynamic', says Hilbert. 'It's looking as though the German federal government and Saxon state government will be continuing or even further increasing the existing regulations. Under these conditions, we don't want to unnecessarily create any sites where the virus could spread.'

**Why did the city wait so long to cancel the market?**

'There will of course now be some self-proclaimed experts complaining that we should have cancelled the market long ago. But I find this very short-sighted and inappropriate', says Dresden's Lord Mayor. 'We had developed a good plan to protect the health of market-goers as much as possible. As Germany's oldest Christmas market, the Striezelmarkt has such a long tradition and such an important role in the community that it was only right to fight for it until the end. This is not just about a market and consumption; it's also about getting into the pre-Christmas spirit, lighting up a dark time of year, and giving children of all ages a reason to smile.'

**What costs will the city incur?**

'Keeping the prospect of a Striezelmarkt open, and for as long as possible, has naturally resulted in costs', says Franke. 'These include planning for the expansion onto the Terrassenufer riverside area, with all the necessary hygiene, transport and security measures. To minimise the cost risks, no setup work was commenced apart from the decorations. A precise breakdown is currently being created.'

**What will happen to the themed Christmas markets?**

Franke: 'We have advised the franchisees of the markets, such as those at Neumarkt, Prager Strasse and Hauptstrasse, about the Striezelmarkt decision, and are in talks with them.'

**Why are there still stalls around the city selling Christmas items?**

There is a difference between areas governed by market statutes, and public spaces assigned for special purposes. Plus, there are private areas, such as those in shopping centres. Hilbert: 'We hope the federal government and Saxon state government will provide us with a clear, uniform roadmap for December.'

**Note for radio and television:**

Dr Franke is available for original sound material and interviews. To book a time, please call the Economic Development Office on 0351 / 488 8705.