

Additional Update from CDO:

*“I have asked for confirmation that dental care can continue as valid reason for travel as part of essential healthcare. Of course, we expect that practices and services to continue to prioritise urgent over routine and follow Amber SOP – adjusting high or low for their local area circumstances. However, where there is capacity in a practice or service, and urgent/delayed treatment backlog cleared, routine assessment can be provided and continue. I hope we receive that clarification. If not today [before Friday](#) in FAQ on WG website. I am already receiving queries and no doubt you will also but I do not envisage a return to red alert as I said in last CDO letter.”*

**Please see below appendix for the full transcript from the First Minister press conference dated 12.00 19/10/2020**

## **FM press conference – October 19**

- Prynhawn da
  
- On Friday, I explained we are facing a very serious situation in Wales and said that once again we need your help to bring the virus under control.
  
- I also said I would report to you about the discussions we have held over the weekend.
  
- These discussions have shown that, once again, there are no easy choices in front of us.
  
- The virus is spreading rapidly in every part of Wales.
  
- If we do not act now, it will continue to accelerate and there is a very real risk our NHS will be overwhelmed.
  - The number of people being taken to hospital with coronavirus symptoms is growing every day.
  - Our critical care units are already full.
  - We are asking our health and care staff, who have already done so much, to work even harder.
  
- If we do not act, the NHS will not be able to look after the increasing number of people who will fall seriously ill in the coming weeks, even with the extra 5,000 beds we have available.
  
- And even more people will die.
  
- If this happens, we would have to take even more extreme measures to bring the virus under control – we would be looking at an open-ended national

lockdown, like the one we had in March.

- Over the weekend, the Cabinet met to continue our discussions about a time-limited “fire-break” – a short, sharp, shock to turn back the clock, slow down the virus and buy us more time.
- We met again this morning and have reached the difficult decision to introduce a two-week fire-break, starting at 6pm on Friday this week.
- It will include the half-term holiday and cover two weeks, ending on Monday November 9.
- The fire-break is the shortest we can make it, but that means it will have to be sharp and deep to have the maximum impact on the virus.
- Between Friday October 23 and November 9, everyone in Wales will be required to stay at home.
  - This means working from home wherever possible.
  - The only exceptions will be critical workers and jobs where working from home is simply not possible.
- All non-essential retail, leisure, hospitality and tourism businesses will close. This is the same as during the March lockdown.
- Community centres, libraries and recycling centres will close. Places of worship will be closed for normal services, except for funerals or wedding ceremonies.
- As the virus has taken hold, we have said repeatedly that children would be our top priority if further restrictions are needed and that education must continue.
  - As a result, childcare will stay open.
  - Primary and special schools will re-open as normal after half-term.

- Secondary schools will re-open after the half-term for children in years seven and eight. Pupils will be able to come in to take exams but other pupils will continue their learning from home for an extra week.
- Universities will continue to provide a blend of in person and online learning.
  - In the same way we are asking everyone to stay at home, if students have reading weeks or half-term they will also need to stay at home in their university accommodation.

[PAUSE]

- Coronavirus spreads when people are in close contact with each other, especially indoors.
- To help break the cycle of transmission, there will be no gatherings with people you do not live with either indoors or outdoors during the two-week period.
  - There will be an exception for adults living alone and single parents who will be able to join with one other household for support.

[PAUSE]

- I want to turn next to the package of financial support to help businesses through this period.
  - We will make sure more details about the full package are available through this week.
- I can today confirm we created an enhanced Economic Resilience Fund of almost £300m.
  - We have put an extra £150m into phase three of the ERF to support to businesses affected by the firebreak
  - Every business covered by the small business rates relief will get a £1,000 payment.

- Small and medium-sized retail, leisure and hospitality businesses which have to close will receive a one-off payment of up to £5,000.
  - There will also be additional discretionary grants and support for smaller businesses, which are struggling.
- Beyond that, the £80m fund we announced last week to help businesses develop in the longer term, will be increased to £100m, which includes £20m ring-fenced for tourism and hospitality.
- We know businesses will need support quickly. The funds will open in the first week of the fire-break and we will work to get the money allocated as quickly as we can.
- All businesses required to close should also be able to access the support available from the UK Government – through the existing Job Retention Scheme or the new expanded Job Support Scheme.
- However, we understand the real challenge this presents for businesses.
- I have written to the Chancellor to ask him to give Welsh businesses early access to the new expanded Job Support Scheme from Friday.
- This would remove the need for businesses to juggle the Job Retention Scheme and the Job Support Scheme during this fire-break period.
- Given the urgency, we have offered to pay the extra costs to help businesses retain staff.
- Only the UK Government has the financial firepower to guarantee the levels of income support workers need.
  - We need more generous payments to help workers through this crisis.

[PAUSE]

- It is with a heavy heart that I once again ask everyone to stay at home and businesses to shut.
- We are all tired of coronavirus and the many rules and regulations we all have to live with.
- We all want to see an end to this pandemic and our lives returned to us.
- Unfortunately, we do not yet have a vaccine, which will allow us to do that.
- So this is our best chance of regaining control of the virus and avoiding a much-longer – and damaging – national lockdown.
- We have a small window of opportunity to act.
- To be successful, we need everyone's help. Here in Wales, this is the moment to come together; to play our part in a common endeavour to once again protect the NHS and save lives.
- If we can do this, our health service will be able to care for people with coronavirus and everyone who needs emergency treatment as well as providing more routine care this winter.
- And, most importantly, it will save lives.
- This will not be easy but we will do it together.
- If you need support, you can contact our CALL mental health helpline on 0800 132 737 or text 81066.
- Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi gyd.

- I will now take questions from journalists – all the answers will be broadcast live on our social media channels.