



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
and Minister for the Cabinet Office
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London
SW1A 2AS

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AC/MS
First Minister of Wales

Our reference: MC2020/05752

By email: PS.FirstMinister@gov.wales

21

May 2020

Ps Mark,

I would like to start by reiterating the UK government's commitment to a UK-wide approach in our response to COVID-19.

I agree that there is more in common with our approaches than media reports would suggest. I would like to work together to make that point and realign public perceptions of our approach. Social distancing will be at its most effective if there is a clear message and policy that applies to everyone. Where there is divergence, particularly on the timing of lifting measures, we should focus on the scientific evidence that justifies that divergence and ensure this is part of our collective public messaging. As we look ahead it is important we continue to work together to support decisions that work for all parts of the UK.

To do this it is essential that we not only continue to share information and perspectives on our response to the coronavirus, but that there is more that we can do together, both ahead of the next review of the coronavirus regulations and to continue discussions on the longer term approach to changes to social distancing measures.

Going forward, I hope we can each share our emerging strategic thinking as early as possible so we have the opportunity to align approaches ahead of announcements. It will also be particularly important that we continue to cooperate on the programmes that will be critical to allowing us to monitor the spread of the virus more effectively as we move out of 'lockdown' and to the next stage of our response. Cooperation on programmes such as the Joint Biosecurity Centre, and Test and Trace, will be important to ensuring an effective UK-wide response.

I can reaffirm my commitment to engage regularly as we go forward and I agree that we should hold weekly discussions initially. These will allow us to reflect on progress and to maintain our UK-wide approach, albeit moving at different speeds where the science shows that we should.