



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

11 June 2020

I am writing to ask about the UK Government's intentions for communication with the devolved governments about the response to Covid and the recovery phase.

COBRA last met on 10th May and heard from the Prime Minister on Thursday 28 May, when he said that you would follow up later that week. There was no subsequent communication, and in a call with the Secretary of State for Wales on 3 June I asked about the UK Government's intentions in respect of the COBRA machinery. Through official channels we learn that COBRA has been stood down, and that there are plans to scale back the SAGE arrangements.

There have been a series of very significant announcements this week with minimal or no prior communication, including;

- Thursday 4 June mandatory face coverings on public transport
- Friday 5 June on face masks in NHS facilities
- last evening on bubbling for single person households

These changes have big practical implications for Wales, directly or indirectly.

To be clear, I am not arguing that the COBRA machinery should continue. The formal machinery for inter-governmental communication is the JMC which has not met in plenary form since the general election.

For the foreseeable future there will continue to be decisions where sharing our plans makes practical sense and builds confidence in the Union. The absence of communication gives the impression that the UKG has given up on a four nations approach.

I have called repeatedly for a predictable rhythm of engagement. We need regular discussion so that we can make mutually informed decisions, demonstrate a collaborative approach, and plan for the cross-border implications.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Without this it is not credible for me to continue to defend the four-nations approach as I have done consistently till now. I would welcome clarity on your intentions for the inter-governmental dialogue that continues in my view to be essential.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales.

MARK DRAKEFORD

