

Official Sensitive: Advice to Ministers

From: Catherine Calderwood, CMO
03 March 2020

First Minister

6 NATIONS RUGBY MATCH EDINBURGH

Purpose

1. To provide advice not to cancel the 6 Nations Rugby Match (Scotland v France) to be hosted in Edinburgh on Sunday 8th March 2020.

Priority

2. Immediate

Advice

3. HPS advise that on the basis of Public Health grounds there is no scientific recommendation to postpone the event. In reaching this conclusion HPS have considered:
 - a) the current epidemiology across the UK and the current situation in France.
 - b) SPI-M discussion on mass gatherings and limited evidence of risk posed by open air events
 - c) Recognition that individuals from France or elsewhere, would come to Edinburgh anyway, even if the match is cancelled and therefore would mix with the Scottish population.
4. Officials have requested that Transport Scotland work with Edinburgh airport and public transport providers to increase the visibility of Public Health Messaging for fans travelling for the game and to provide hand sanitisers.
5. HPS has advised that posters advising spectators to stay away if they are unwell should be displayed at Murrayfield.
6. Officials from Active Scotland have been in contact with Scottish Rugby since 22nd February when Scotland played Italy in Rome. It is estimated that Scottish Rugby would face a loss of £4-5 million and Edinburgh's local economy, through hospitality and accommodation and businesses, would suffer lost revenue of £15 million.
7. Although some of the costs can be recouped with the match being played at a later date, there would be some lost income due to potential reduced interest from sponsors and TV Coverage. It is not yet clear whether the Irish Government provided compensation to Irish Rugby to cover lost income.
8. Despite the match already being cancelled, the Irish Rugby Union are still anticipating Italian spectators to arrive in Dublin for the weekend. This is due to flights and accommodation being booked months in advance.

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- 9. With the Scotland match being sold out, Scottish Rugby are taking a similar stance in assuming that there is the potential for a number of French supporters will still travel to Edinburgh for the weekend.
- 10. The Rugby Unions who compete in the Six Nations have discussed the on-going situation and currently the remaining fixtures will continue as planned, including England's match against Italy in Rome on 14 March.
- 11. Scottish Rugby have already taken some pro-active steps to try and reduce the possible exposure to the virus entering Murrayfield. They have taken the decision to cancel stadium tours and some conferences and events which were due to take place this week, including an event being hosted by a French business. Movement in and out of Murrayfield is now restricted to minimal staff who are vital for the match taking place.
- 12. The medical team at Scottish Rugby, led by Dr Andrew Murray and Dr James Robson are implementing strict procedures. On match day, Scottish Rugby will have an isolation zone for any spectators who become unwell during the match. On arrival at the entrance to the ground, medics will be on hand to speak to any spectator who have concerns over their health. Scottish Rugby have also purchased large quantities of hand sanitizer to give out free to spectators.
- 13. Scottish Rugby have published a proactive statement for spectators with advice before they arrive for the game and have also directed spectators via mailshot to the NHS webpages on COVID-19. They are keen to do more pro-active health messaging and officials will make contact with them about this. The team players are very positive about being involved in active PH messaging.

Conclusion

- 14. On the basis that there is no clear scientific evidence that cancelling the event would lessen the risk of exposure to coronavirus, my advice is that the event be allowed to proceed, with the mitigating measures being put in place across public transport and positive public health messages being worked on with the SRU.

Catherine Calderwood
Chief Medical Officer

Irrelevant &

03 March 2020

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
First Minister	X				

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Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport			X		
Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and Sport			X		
Minister for Mental Health					X

Malcolm Wright
Health Protection Policy Team
SGCoronavirus@gov.scot
Davie Hutchison
Communications Healthier

NR

Derek Grieve
Richard Foggo
Gregor Smith

NR

