

Witness Name: Andrew Slade

Statement No: 1

Exhibits: 257

Dated:

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANDREW SLADE

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 26 January 2023 and referenced M2B-CSTD-01.

I, Andrew Slade, will say as follows: -

Preface

1. The Covid-19 pandemic was unprecedented for all of us, with impacts on lives, livelihoods, and our very way of living. On behalf of my team and myself, I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to all those who were affected, and particularly to those who lost loved ones or have suffered lasting health impacts.
2. Decisions taken during the pandemic by public authorities in order to safeguard the population had direct and immediate implications for businesses, communities, and individuals. As members of the Welsh Government and the civil service, we were motivated by the wish to protect and support the people of Wales, and I would like to put on record my thanks to colleagues and all our partners for their commitment and dedication during this extraordinary period.
3. In the context of this specific statement, I wish to offer particular thanks to Culture, Sport and Tourism Directorate (CSTD) colleagues for everything they did through the

Covid emergency. CSTD played a pivotal role in liaising with a large number of partners and stakeholders across a range of sectors that were directly and significantly affected by (and throughout) the pandemic.

Introduction

4. I joined the Welsh Government in 2012, initially working on EU programmes, and then as Director of Agriculture, Food and Marine. Having subsequently held the positions of Lead Director for Environment and Rural Affairs and the Welsh Government's Head of Policy Profession, in January 2018 I became Director General of Economy Skills and Natural Resources. I led the Economy, Skills, and Natural Resources Group until April 2022, when I became Director General of Economy, Treasury and Constitution, also within the Welsh Government.
5. The Culture, Sport and Tourism Directorate was part of Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group, and is now part of my Economy, Treasury and Constitution Group.
6. Before coming to Wales, I worked for the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), where I led the establishment of their new national rural development services.
7. Between 2006 and 2011, I worked in south-west England in roles including Deputy Regional Director at the Government Office responsible for sustainable development and Whitehall lead engagement with Somerset, Dorset, Bournemouth, and Poole, and then later as Executive Director of Programmes (including infrastructure) and Partnerships at the SW Regional Development Agency. My earlier career was with the UK Government in London, where I held several posts, including Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
8. I understand that the period of particular importance is that between 21 January 2020, which is the date on which the WHO published its "Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation Report – 1", and 30 May 2022 which is when the remaining Covid-19 restrictions were lifted in Wales.
9. In preparing this statement I have relied on advice and information from several members of my senior civil service team, including:
 - Jason Thomas, Director, Culture Sport, and Tourism.

- Gerwyn Evans, Deputy Director, Creative Wales.
- Rob Holt, Deputy Director, Event Wales.
- Gwilym Hughes, Deputy Director, Cadw.
- Steffan Roberts, Deputy Director, Tourism Development and Sport; and
- Nicky Guy, Deputy Director, Culture and Sport.

The Welsh Government – Relevant Ministers in respect of culture, sport and tourism

10. Given the broad and diverse nature of the Directorate's work it has fallen within the remit of different Ministerial (and Deputy Ministerial) portfolios in recent years.
11. At the beginning of the specified period in January 2020, the relevant Ministers were Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, and Dafydd Elis Thomas MS who was the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport, and Tourism. Both Ministers retained portfolio responsibility for the policy areas covered by the Culture, Sport, and Tourism Directorate until the Senedd election in May 2021. Eluned Morgan's portfolio responsibilities changed when she became the Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing, and the Welsh Language in October 2020, but her responsibilities in relation to CSTD were unchanged.
12. From May 2021 to date Dawn Bowden MS has been the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport, and Chief Whip, with responsibilities for matters covered by CSTD.
13. Details of the organisational structure of the Welsh Government including Ministerial portfolios and senior official responsibilities, between 2019 and 2022, are set out in organograms which were exhibited in Andrew Goodall's statement in respect of M2B-WG01. Exhibits **AGM2BWG01/3-INQ000001384**, **AGM2BWG01/4-INQ000001385**, **AGM2BWG01/5-INQ000001386**, **AGM2BWG01/6-INQ-000001387**, **AGM2BWG01/7-INQ-000066139**, **AGM2BWG01/8-INQ000066140**, **AGM2BWG01/9-INQ000066141**, and **AGM2BWG01/10-INQ-000066053** refer. These describe at all material points between 2019 and 2022, the portfolio responsibilities of the First Minister, the Welsh Ministers, and Deputy Welsh Ministers.

Senior officials within the Directorate

14. I have set out below a non-exhaustive list of senior officials and special advisers who had particular involvement in the culture, sport, and tourism response to Covid-19.

- I, Andrew Slade, was Director General of Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group until March 2022, and am now Director General of Economy, Treasury and Constitution Group.
- Jason Thomas is the Director of the Culture, Sport, and Tourism Directorate. He has been in that post since July 2017.
- Gwilym Hughes is the Deputy Director with responsibility for Cadw.
- Rob Holt was Deputy Director with responsibility for tourism development, including Events and Hospitality between January 2020 and May 2021.
- Nicky Guy was Deputy Director with responsibility for Culture and Sport between January and April 2020 and from May 2021.
- Steffan Roberts was the Deputy Director with responsibility for Sport from April 2020. From April 2020 until May 2021, he also had responsibility for Culture. From May 2021 he had responsibility for Tourism Development and Hospitality; responsibility for Sport was added in October 2021.
- Mari Stevens was Deputy Director with responsibility for Tourism Marketing between January 2020 and December 2020 when she left the Welsh Government.
- Claire Chappell was responsible for Tourism Marketing as interim Deputy Director from December 2020 to June 2021
- Steffan Roberts was Deputy Director with responsibility for Visit Wales (Tourism Development and Tourism Marketing) from June to September 2021
- Heledd Owen thereafter was the Deputy Director with responsibility for Tourism Marketing.
- Gerwyn Evans was the Deputy Director with responsibility for Creative Wales and the Cultural Recovery Fund.

15. I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/01-INQ000271931** an organisational chart identifying the senior positions within the Group.

The Directorate and its work

16. The purpose of the Culture, Sport and Tourism Directorate is to provide policy advice to Ministers, and to work to support, develop and promote Wales's economy and culture, improving people's quality of life through access to the arts, heritage, events, creative industries, sport, and physical activity.

17. The Directorate also markets Wales domestically and to the world, under the banner of Visit Wales. Cadw is Welsh Government's heritage and historic environment service, which includes the direct management and running of castles, monuments and other sites across Wales.

18. The Directorate is organised into distinct divisions, namely:

- Culture,
- Cadw,
- Event Wales,
- Marketing / Visit Wales,
- Tourism Development & Sport; and,
- Creative Wales.

19. Whilst they are part of the Culture, Sport, and Tourism Directorate within the Welsh Government, Cadw and Visit Wales are branded separately. They are not arms-length bodies, even though they may appear to be so in terms of public perception. More information is provided about these teams and their role in decision making in response to the pandemic in the section headed 'Sector specific teams' later in this statement.

20. The Directorate also funds and supports the following Welsh Government sponsored bodies:

- Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
- The National Library of Wales
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
- Sport Wales and,
- Arts Council of Wales.

21. The Directorate works with its direct counterparts within the UK Government, namely the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport ("DCMS"). It has and continues to have

a good and close working relationship at official level and has strong links to counterparts in the other devolved governments.

22. Given the breadth of policy and delivery functions within the ESNR group and in line with my role as Additional Accounting Officer, responsibilities were passed to Directors under delegation arrangements to manage affairs within their respective Directorates. There were established group committees which were used to manage our collective corporate responsibilities. The ESNR Covid-19 Coordination function was stood up formally during week commencing 16 March 2020, when an initial dashboard was developed to keep track of Covid-19 related issues and risks emerging from across the ESNR Group. This built on existing structures in place to prepare for a possible no-deal Brexit and evolved into daily stocktake meetings. The function, in turn, fed into the central Covid-19 project team. Each Director led and managed the Covid-19 response in their respective areas, feeding into central/cross cutting work and escalating issues as required.
23. The Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating impact upon the visitor economy of Wales. The Wales and industry specific Tourism Barometer (Coronavirus (COVID-19) impact survey): wave 2 2020 published on 9 April 2020 and exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/02-INQ000271945** shows the impact on those employed in the sector. A further publication in the series, wave 6 2021 published on 18 March 2021 and exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/03-INQ000271944** shows the impact of the ongoing uncertainty at the time – for example, 67% of businesses reported advance bookings were down on normal levels.
24. The Directorate was at the frontline of the response to Covid-19 in terms of supporting sectors that were the first to close, and on the whole, last to reopen. This support included:
- Producing sectoral guidance.
 - Implementing and delivering three rounds of the Cultural Recovery Fund 2020-2022; Spectator Sports Survival Fund and Freelancer Fund.
 - Contributing, via Visit Wales, to domestic (UK audiences) and Wales-wide communications in respect of restrictions and supporting the “Stay Local” campaigns.

- Establishing sector engagement, including with some sectors where relationships may not have been in place prior to Covid-19 e.g., night-time economy, wider hospitality sector.

25. Decisions which impacted upon the Directorate and its work were taken by Welsh Government's Cabinet. The Directorate provided information to inform the 21-day review process. The Director of CST and I attended relevant 21-day review meetings and Cabinet to provide feedback and insights into the decision-making process.

Functions of the Welsh Government

26. I understand the nature of devolved functions and the Senedd's legislative competence are dealt with in detail in other statements, notably Andrew Goodall and Helen Lentle's corporate statements for M2B/WG/01.

27. Section 60 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 ("GoWA") sets out the Welsh Ministers may do anything which they consider appropriate to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic or social well-being of Wales.

28. That power may be exercised in relation to or for the benefit of the whole or any part of Wales, or all or any person's resident or present in Wales. That power extends to a power to do anything in relation to or for the benefit of any area outside Wales, or all or any person's resident or present anywhere outside Wales, if the Welsh Ministers consider that it is likely to promote the objectives identified above.

29. GoWA expressly states that the above includes the power to:

- enter into arrangements or agreements with any person,
- co-operate with, or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of, any person,
- exercise on behalf of any person any functions of that person, and
- provide staff, goods, services, or accommodation to any person.

30. Section 61 of GoWA provides that the Welsh Ministers may do anything which they consider appropriate to support:

- archaeological remains in Wales,

- ancient monuments in Wales,
- buildings and places of historical or architectural interest in Wales,
- historic wrecks in Wales,
- arts and crafts relating to Wales,
- museums and galleries in Wales,
- libraries in Wales,
- archives and historical records relating to Wales,
- cultural activities and projects relating to Wales,
- sport and recreational activities relating to Wales, and
- the Welsh language.

31. The Senedd has broad legislative competence in respect of the Directorate's subject matters. The relevant reserved matters are set out in Schedule 7A of GoWA. The reservations are narrow and are limited in terms of scope. They relate to broadcasting and the BBC, and the safety of sports grounds.

Boards, bodies, taskforces, and groups

32. The Directorate has historically had a close working relationship with stakeholders. That is in part due to the nature of the sector and the significant direct involvement that the Welsh Government has had both directly and indirectly through its arms-length bodies.

33. During the pandemic, a number of sector-specific representative entities were created. I set each out below. Again, these were not decision-making bodies as such but rather stakeholder groups which drew together expertise and provided a forum for discussion and feedback. A number of these were established following a cross sector meeting hosted by CSTD on 30 April, Co-chaired by the Director CST and the Deputy Minister and involving key stakeholders, it was a forum for confidential discussions on the implications of the Covid restrictions. Chairs/CEOs of stakeholder organisations were given the opportunity to provide a brief read-out of issues facing them. The meeting helped establish CST as the conduit into the Welsh Government for all covid-related issues in relation to CST's sectors and provided the opportunity for sharing information. Attendees included a wide range of stakeholders from across the CST sectors. I exhibit a note of the meeting with a list of attendees at **ASM2BCSTD/04-**

INQ000271938. It was the first time the Directorate had held a cross-sectoral meeting of this magnitude and proved useful in demonstrating the need to work on a sector-by-sector basis; this helped pave the way for several of the groups the Directorate went on to establish.

Tourism Taskforce

34. The Tourism Taskforce was set up by CSTD officials in March 2020, and met for the first time on 27 March 2020. I summarise below the content of its meetings during the first three months of the pandemic, to illustrate the work of the group. Its aim was to bring together Welsh Government officials and stakeholders to provide direct feedback and advice from the sector across Wales about the impact of the pandemic, to enable the views and priorities of the industry to inform action taken by officials. The stated objectives of the group were to:

- Provide a better understanding of the immediate threats facing the sector, by liaising with the Welsh Government/Visit Wales and stakeholder groups to ensure that priorities were aligned and that the delivery arrangements at all levels were effectively managed.
- Provide advice on strategic communications for the short-, medium- and long-term future.
- Encourage partnership and collaboration between all sectors of the tourism Industry at a local, regional, and national level.
- Advise on interventions and policies that impact on tourism development and marketing and consider more innovative approaches to support the tourism sector.
- Monitor, scrutinise and evaluate the effectiveness of the support packages available and report to the Welsh Government/Visit Wales, as necessary.
- In the medium to long term advise on any proposed Tourism recovery plan
- Consider the need for and membership of any sub-groups to look in more detail at specific issues as required.

35. The Taskforce was set up by Welsh Government officials who attended each meeting together with Ministers and Deputy Ministers on occasion. A sample list of attendees included representatives from:

- Visit Britain;
- Welsh Local Government Association;
- Local/Regional Forums;
- UK Hospitality Cymru.

36. I exhibit the minutes of the first meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/05-INQ000271804**, and I exhibit the agreed Terms of Reference at **ASM2BCSTD/06-INQ000271808**.

35. In essence, at that first meeting, the Deputy Minister thanked those who had attended for their cross-sector co-operation. He indicated that he had been pleased to see that visitors had left Wales when asked to do so and referred to the new legal powers which existed to stop new visits. Jason Thomas set out some of the work that the Welsh Government was doing to assist with the challenges of the pandemic. There was an update provided by regional and industry body representations before the meeting was closed.

36. The Taskforce met again on 3 April. I exhibit minutes of the meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/07-INQ000271801**. At the meeting, the Deputy Minister discussed the £100million Development Bank Wales loan fund which had gone live that week, and which I describe in my statement in response to M2B-BRD-01. A thousand applications were received in less than a week. There was no breakdown by sector available, but members of the Taskforce made significant efforts to publicise the loan fund to ensure its potential benefits were maximised.

37. There was a further meeting of the Tourism Taskforce on 9 April, with the minutes exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/08-INQ000271800**. Discussions centred on economic support and messaging. Officials from Visit Wales discussed the co-ordinated measures being taken, complementing Public Health and Transport messages, of "Visit Wales. Later." Taskforce members were thanked for their input which was informing the Welsh Government's communication strategy.

38. The Taskforce met again on 17 April with minutes exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/09-INQ000271815**. In addition to the impact upon the sector, economic support and restrictions, the meeting discussed the mental health support that was available.

39. At its meeting on 24 April (minutes exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/10-INQ000271767**) the Taskforce covered funding pressures and gaps in economic assistance, and the First Minister's framework for recovery.
40. A further meeting of the Tourism Taskforce was held on 1 May. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/11-INQ000271760**. The Taskforce discussed the possible lifting of restrictions, the need for PPE to be in place for public-facing roles, and the need for clear regulations and guidance.
41. On 7 May the Taskforce met again. The minutes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/12-INQ000271803**. The focus of that meeting included safer working guidelines, and the potential implications for the sector of what might be announced by the First Minister later that week; as well as any impact of UKG announcements expected over the weekend.
42. The 15 May meeting of the Taskforce was attended by the Deputy Minister. The minutes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/13-INQ000271928**. Jason Thomas provided an update to the Taskforce and explained that the First Minister would be outlining his roadmap to "unlocking our society and economy" shortly. The group was thanked for assisting throughout the crisis and for providing officials with the sector's views. The Deputy Minister explained that he had raised the plight of the tourism, hospitality and events sector with the Senedd Culture Committee, notwithstanding that it did not fall within its direct remit, to highlight the significance of the sector. An update on the Economic Recovery Fund was also provided.
43. The Taskforce next met on 22 May. Both the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, and the Deputy Minister attended. The minutes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/14-INQ000271790**. Regional updates were provided, and Welsh Government officials confirmed that sector specific guidance was being developed.
44. The Taskforce met again on 5 June. The minutes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/15-INQ000271759**. The Deputy Minister welcomed attendees and confirmed that the sector was clearly recognised by the First Minister in their ongoing discussions. It was also confirmed that there continued to be good working relations with UKG and Welsh Government officials. Jason Thomas updated the Taskforce about sector guidance.

45. On 12 June, the minutes of which are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/16-INQ000271761**, the Deputy Minister confirmed the First Minister would be attending the next Taskforce meeting. Regional and industry representatives provided detailed feedback on the current situation. The Deputy Minister stated that the Taskforce members were essential to the industry response for tourism and was grateful for all that they did in support.
46. On 18 June 2020 the First Minister attended the Taskforce meeting together with the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh language and the Deputy Minister. The minutes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/17-INQ000271788**.
47. Taskforce members raised issues and questions of the First Minister. The meeting was well received: it was a genuine opportunity for the First Minister to discuss issues with industry stakeholders and for feedback on the economic and public health measures to be provided.
48. Its final meeting took place on 26 June. It was attended by the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, and the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism. Discussion focused upon the announcement made by the First Minister the previous week, on 19 June, in which it was explained that non-essential retail could open and that outdoor sports (excluding contact and team sports) could resume. The Minister thanked those in attendance for their hard work and assistance. It was noted that the Welsh Government was continuing to look at allowing a return for tourist caravans and camping with guidance to be issued later on that day. There was an ongoing rapid review of the hospitality sector which included a review of licensing, planning, and enforcement. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/18-INQ000271791**.
49. The Taskforce continued to meet throughout 2020 and 2021, transitioning into a '21-day review stakeholder meeting' and from December 2021 into a Visitor Economy Stakeholder Group.

Tourism Industry Council

50. The Tourism Industry Council was a pre-existing joint industry and UK Government led board composed of employers, small businesses and representative organisations from the leisure and tourism industry, jointly chaired by the UK Minister for Sport, Tourism and Civil Society and a representative from the sector invited by the Minister.

The Council acts as a sounding board and point of dialogue between ministers and industry, providing a forum for the sector to advise the government on issues affecting tourism, and focuses on improving the tourism sector and the visitor economy as a whole, and generally meets 2-3 times per year. The Council convened more frequently during the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic, its membership was expanded to include a wide range of representatives of the devolved governments and businesses from across the tourism industry who met regularly. Current membership includes Airlines UK, Hospitality Cymru, Hilton Hotels, the GMB trade union, the Local Government Association, and the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions. The Wales Tourism Alliance attended, along with Rob Holt or an appropriate substitute for the Welsh Government.

Global Travel Taskforce

51. The UK Government announced the launch of a Global Travel Taskforce on 7 October 2020. The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) and VisitBritain hosted an online session on 22nd October 2020 to gather views and develop options for consideration by the taskforce around what non-testing measures could be taken to facilitate business and tourist travel. Claire Chappell, who was formerly the head of Visit Wales attended this workshop and subsequent calls to discuss the reopening of international travel - alongside other nations and UK regions, leading travel industry players, and key associations such as Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), UK inbound and European Tour Operators Association. The taskforce published its report on 9 April 2021, setting out a framework for a safe and sustainable return to international travel. The report and annexes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/19-INQ000271941** and **ASM2BCSTD/20-INQ000271942**.
52. Welsh Government officials were also in regular contact with ABTA outside these meetings and joined Lee Waters, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change for a meeting with the Chief Executive of ABTA about international travel on 10 June 2021. A copy of the follow up letter to the meeting is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/21-INQ000271671**.

Event Wales Industry Advisory Group

53. The Event Wales Industry Advisory Group (EWIAG) was set up by CSTD officials in May 2020. Initially called the Event Wales Recovery Planning Meeting, its role is ongoing but, post-Covid, has changed to focus on wider support and engagement with

the industry and implementation of the new events strategy that was launched in July 2022. Its purpose during the pandemic was to provide high level representation for the events sector in relation to the response to and the recovery from the pandemic. I exhibit the Terms of Reference at **ASM2BCSTD/22-INQ000271936**.

54. Beneath EWIAG there were and remain several sub-groups including Business, Sports, and Live events. A diagram showing this is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/23-INQ000271948**. The chairs of each sub-group would attend the EWIAG group and feed in relevant views. More information about EWIAG is provided later in my statement, in the section headed Visitor Economy.

Stakeholder Groups

55. The Culture, Sport and Tourism Directorate established several stakeholder groups to provide forums for discussing the impact of the pandemic on different sectors.

Creative sectors

56. Creative Wales is a Welsh Government internal agency established in January 2020 to champion and support the development of the fast-growing, sustainable creative industry in Wales. Its mission is to nurture home-grown talent and attract international creative projects through funding, specialist services and signposting to the huge choice of facilities, skilled crew and talent that exists across Wales.
57. From the outset the intention was to set up stakeholder groups to discuss key issues within each of the priority sectors. The groups set up to provide support throughout the pandemic were morphed into these stakeholder groups which are still in place to this day, although the membership is being reviewed.
58. The Creative Wales decision established a Music Support Group which met for the first time on 7 May 2020, and met regularly – generally about every 3-4 weeks. Its purpose was to discuss key issues that arose for the music sector, focusing on support and advice required through the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, matters discussed by this group included:
- Drive in gigs and the Reopen Every Venue Safely document (21 May 2020) – note of meeting exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/24-INQ000271793**.

- Funding, guidance, and reopening venues (6 July 2020) – note of meeting exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/25-INQ000271794**.

59. The Music Support Group continued to meet throughout 2020, meeting for the last time in that format on 16 December 2020.
60. The group was then re-established as a Music Stakeholder Group, the first meeting of which took place on 23 February 2021. Membership included Welsh Government officials from Creative Wales and from the Department of Health and Social Services, representatives of the music sector such as the Association of Independent Promoters and the Musicians Union, media organisations such as BBC Wales, and the Arts Council of Wales. I exhibit the minutes of the 23 February meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/26-INQ000271795**. The Music Stakeholder Group continues to meet quarterly.
61. As I note above, the development of the Music Support Group into the Music Stakeholder Group reflected the fact that the Creative Wales division had only been established in January 2020 and had intended to establish stakeholder groups for consultation and engagement with their priority sectors, so groups such as the Music Support Group which were established specifically in response to the pandemic then ‘morphed’ into the Music Stakeholder Group. A similar development took place in relation to the Screen and Digital Groups, which I describe below. The purpose of the new groups was to aid information sharing, develop and strengthen new working relationships, and fostering collaborative working.
62. Creative Wales also established a Screen Support Group, to discuss key issues arising out of the pandemic for the television and film sector, and which met for the first time on 20 May 2020, and continued to meet approximately monthly until March 2021. I exhibit the minute of the first meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/27-INQ000271764**. Membership included a range of stakeholders from across the television and film sector, including broadcasters and film and television production companies.
63. It developed into a Screen Stakeholder Group which met for the first time on 20 May 2021, and continues to meet. The group is a network established to encourage knowledge sharing and support the continued growth of Wales’s television and film sector. I exhibit the note of the first meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/28-INQ000271926**.

64. Creative Wales also established a Digital Support Group, which met for the first time on 6 May 2020. It continued to meet until December 2020, before developing into the Digital Stakeholder Group which met for the first time on 15 March 2021 (note exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/29-INQ000271930**) and continues to meet. The purpose of the Digital Support Group was initially, as a response to Covid, to bring stakeholders together. Since the pandemic the Group has developed to support the long-term sustainable growth of the creative digital sector, including games, animation, immersive, createch, digital marketing and advertising industries. It exists to support creative industries and professionals using technology as their delivery media.

Meetings of the CEOs of Local Authorities and the National Park Authorities (NPAs)

65. These meetings took place from May 2020, initially weekly and then monthly and were convened, on behalf of Visit Wales and stakeholders, by Ceredigion County Council. The group included local authorities of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Ynys Mon and Gwynedd and the National Park Authorities of Pembrokeshire, Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons. These were local authorities in Wales which typically had the greater tourism destination focus including predominance of second homes. The group was attended, where relevant, by other bodies such as Hywel Dda University Health Board and Dyfed Powys Police. These were brief, informal keep-in-touch meetings, that were not minuted.

National Sport Group

66. The Group was established by Sport Wales and first met in November 2020 and sat until February 2022. The purpose of the National Sport Group was to manage the elite status designation process for a measured and gradual return to competitive sport. The aim was to ensure that a safe return to competitive sport was balanced with a responsible contribution to keeping people safe and protecting the NHS. I describe the role of the Group in more detail, including its membership and the circumstances which led to its establishment, later in my statement, at paragraphs 296-300 in the section headed 'Sport.'

Historic Environment Group (HEG)

67. This group was operational before the Covid-19 pandemic and continues in its work to this day. It is a multi-user group advising the Welsh Government on action to benefit

and promote the historic environment of Wales representing organisations across the Heritage and cultural sectors. It has a wide-ranging membership, set out in full in its current Terms of Reference exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/30-INQ000271937**, but including Natural Resources Wales, Historic Houses Association, Country Landowners Association, Canal and River Trust in Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, The Architectural Heritage Fund, National Trust Wales, and the Welsh Local Government Association. The group met on the 5 May 2020 and 7 July 2020 specifically to discuss Covid-19 and the impact on the sector. The notes of these meetings are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/31-INQ000271774** and **ASM2BCSTD/32-INQ000271786**. In the meetings thereafter the impact of Covid-19 was integrated into the wider agenda. The HEG is discussed further in the section headed 'Cadw' below.

Communications Lead Group

68. The Communications Lead Group was convened by Visit Wales in May 2020. It coordinated a communication working group that met weekly to discuss on-the-ground issues so that communications across all partners, could be coordinated, in response to challenges of additional visitor pressures at hot spots such as coastal areas. Records of these meetings were not made; they were swift, round table discussions of issues that required immediate attention and coordination, and these were dealt with by action bullets, shared on Microsoft Teams at the meeting.
69. The Communications Group proved invaluable and although the meetings are now every six weeks the group still meets due to the invaluable nature of the information exchanged and coordinated messaging it facilitates.

Weddings Group

70. The Weddings Group was initially convened by CST Directorate in July 2020 to discuss the impact of Covid-19 and the coronavirus regulations on holding weddings, and the impact on faith buildings and wedding venues. It met on an ad hoc but regular basis. **NR** was the lead Welsh Government official, who reported to Alyson Francis the then Deputy Director of Communities Division. Though primary responsibility for faith matters lay with the Communities and Tackling Poverty Directorate, due to the issues facing hospitality venues there was significant cross-over with the Directorate's work and responsibilities. For CSTD, the group was attended by Rob Holt, Deputy Director with responsibility for tourism, including events and hospitality. A note of the February 2021 meeting is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/33-INQ000271773**.

71. Key issues for the group included the policy position in respect of solemnisation of marriage and civil partnership ceremonies being allowed to take place: that was an issue for the Communities and Tackling Poverty Directorate not for this directorate. However, other licensed venues in the hospitality sector were required to remain closed for anything other than self-contained accommodation which meant ceremonies could not take place. As restrictions lifted in respect of such venues, they could resume their activities as licensed venues for weddings.

Creative / Trade Union Meetings

72. There were further “creative” sector meetings held with representative from various unions including TUC, UNITE, Unison, PCS, GMB, USDAW, and BFAW. There were also representatives of the wider hospitality industry present. These meetings were held on an ad-hoc basis but at key points when union input was requested.
73. The meetings were first convened by the Welsh Government in 2020 with further meetings held in 2021. They were chaired by Jason Thomas. On 26 May 2021, the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport attended a meeting where the ongoing restrictions were discussed together with support for the industry more generally. A note of this meeting is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/34-INQ000271923**. Meetings also took place on 21 April 2021 and 29 June 2021 and notes of the meetings are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/35-INQ000271922** and **ASM2BCSTD/36-INQ000271924**, respectively.

Other groups

74. The Hospitality Group was created by the Culture, Sport and Tourism Directorate in May 2020 and ran until May 2022. Its membership included key sector leads from across the hospitality industry in Wales, and its purpose was to discuss the impact on the sector of the coronavirus restrictions. Representatives from Public Health Wales attended on an ad hoc basis at key points to give updates on themes such as, spread of Covid, infection rates and guidance on NPIs, and also to listen to concerns of the group. A note from the July 2021 meeting of this group is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/37-INQ000271789**.
75. In early 2021 the Directorate also established an informal Night-time Economy Group was also formed consisting of representatives from Nightclubs, bars, and evening

entertainment premises, and was a means of feeding into the wider Hospitality Stakeholder Group on specific night-time economy issues, given the specific impacts of some of the regulations on this sector, e.g., curfew in clubs. A note of the 15 February 2021 meeting of this group is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/38-INQ000271614**, an informal note circulated via email as per many of the issues dealt with by this group were.

76. The Restarting Coach and Group Business to Wales Stakeholder Group was initiated and led by the Marketing (tourism) Division to gather key relevant stakeholders to consider and address issues relating to the safe re-starting of coach tour operator and group leisure travel into Wales (not general transport). The group first met in July 2020 with meetings continuing until April 2022. The group met on a three-weekly basis looking specifically at issues relevant to this sector and supporting the development of guidance for safe operation. A note of the July 2020 meeting is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/39-INQ000271772**.
77. In 2021 the group expanded to have a wider Travel Trade Stakeholder Group to sit alongside. The purpose of the group was to focus on the specific challenges, issues and potential opportunities facing businesses and organisations working with the domestic and international leisure travel trade and other intermediaries to reach markets and provide a specific forum as a channel for information, insights and feedback to the Welsh Government and other key groups. The terms of reference for this group are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/40-INQ000271947**.

Webinars and meetings

78. The Directorate were involved in various ad hoc webinars and meetings with the hospitality sector in Wales from May 2020 through to May 2022. Many of these were organised by external organisations, so there are no minutes or specific dates held for these meetings. The meetings were an opportunity for the Welsh Government to provide an insight into upcoming decisions and provide information to the sector. For example, one such meeting involved the self-catered accommodation sector to discuss issues around the closure of caravan parks, and displaced residents at risk of homelessness were discussed.

Response to the Pandemic

79. Before setting out the Welsh Government and Welsh Minister's response I note that Andrew Goodall provided a narrative of the Ministerial Advice and decision-making process in his statement (AGM2BWG01 paragraphs 69-72). That process is reflected in the reference to Ministerial Advice, below.
80. Decisions were taken by the Cabinet and the First Minister in respect of restrictions which impacted upon the work of the Directorate. The Directorate fed in to the 21-day review process that was established early in the pandemic. I describe the mechanisms through which information was fed in below, later in this statement. CTSD also shared information and guidance with stakeholders and sought to answer queries which arose. Again, more information is provided about the mechanisms by which guidance was produced and updated is set out later in my statement, in the section headed 'Restrictions and Guidance.'
81. The Directorate worked closely with their counterparts in other directorates of the Welsh Government for example, the Housing Directorate on matters relating to the rules for staying in caravans/static homes, or with Transport Directorate on matters relating to cross-border travel and licensing.
82. There were also regular meetings with counterparts in UKG and the Directors of Culture across all devolved governments. The Director of Culture meetings took place quarterly, with each government taking turns to host the meeting. The four Culture Ministers met pre-pandemic, and calls continued to take place during the pandemic.
83. I also note that an important element of the tourism response related to travel and borders (both internal and international), which is covered in my witness statement in respect of transport M2B/WTG/01.

The pre-restriction period

84. The Directorate has particularly close international ties that flow from the subject matter of its policy and operational. It also has an international presence with officers and offices located overseas in the USA alongside our Welsh Government International Relations and Trade teams.
85. In mid/late December 2019, officials started to get updates and feedback from our industry network, including UKinbound and VisitBritain, as Covid-19 was being talked about specifically in terms of the potential impact of loss of the China inbound

(international visits) market to the UK. As a result, Visit Wales centrally (including US staff members) was horizon scanning and monitoring WHO advice and that of the UNWTO (World Tourism Organisation) from late 2019. This information was being shared regularly, in the form of Tourism Industry Emergency Response (TIER) group bulletins. Visit Wales sat on the TIER group, which was chaired by VisitBritain. The TIER group, convened by VisitBritain, met in early January 2020 and the UKinbound conference in early February 2020. CSTD officials attended the UKinbound Convention where the focus was on the impact of the loss of the China inbound market.

86. Visit Wales also monitored, and subsequently shared internally, WHO and UNWTO updates from organisations such as UKinbound and the European Tour Operators Association with whom we were in regular contact.
87. To reiterate, the above monitoring ran throughout the total timeline of the pandemic and was first in place from December 2019 when Covid was gathering pace.
88. Two US-based Visit Wales team members were involved in communications and monitoring and in addition to information exchange and dissemination relating to WHO and WTO advice and updates, the US lead also attended virtual meetings with representatives of other nations to look at responses and activity in the wider tourism marketing context that also informed Visit Wales at this time. I exhibit one such exchange at **ASM2BCSTD/41-INQ000271540**.
89. VisitBritain produced regular reports on those responses, and I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/42-INQ000271758** the first of these from March 2020 as an example.
90. I should note that the above points were in relation to informing tourism policy and not public health more broadly.

Mass spectator events March 2020

91. I understand that on 1 March 2020 the Private Secretary to the Chief Medical Officer for England (CMO-E) sent to the Chief Medical Officer for Wales (CMO) a copy of guidance for leisure and community settings that was to be “signed off” by close of play on 2 March 2020. The exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/43-INQ000271437** shows the thread that was circulated to the Directorate. At that stage the guidance was to be published by the UKG and the CMO-E. On 3 March 2020 **Name Redacted** of the Welsh Government’s Public Health Division confirmed that there would be Wales-specific

guidance in due course to deal with Welsh procedural matters but that the intention was to follow the Public Health England (“PHE”) wording as closely as possible to ensure consistency of messaging.

92. Cabinet met on 4 March 2020. As part of its discussion in respect of the emerging pandemic the Minutes (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/44-INQ000227853**) noted that: *“2.12 There were concerns about the economic impact on sporting and cultural events, such as the Urdd Eisteddfod and the Hay Festival, and it was noted that the science behind the spread of the virus would have to drive decisions on whether they went ahead.”*
93. On 9 March 2022 the First Minister’s Private Secretary wrote to Rob Holt, Deputy Director, Event Wales, asking about the implications of coronavirus for major events supported by the Welsh Government. I exhibit the email exchanges at **ASM2BCSTD/45-INQ000271444**. At that stage the advice was that there was no reason to cancel such events and that the public ought to refer to the PHW website. In response on 11 March 2022 a technical briefing paper was provided. I exhibit this paper at **ASM2BCSTD/46-INQ000271443**.
94. The technical briefing paper included this advice:
- “Modelling evidence suggests that some interventions such as the restriction of mass gatherings (which includes closure of sporting fixtures, bars, restaurants, cinemas) whilst assumed to be effective, are not supported by evidence. Only a modest reduction in the infection related deaths (2%) is predicted for restricting mass gatherings. This is due to the limited exposure time (5.3% of total time), even if the transmission risk is weighted higher. Other measures that impact other more common activities, such as work and home (e.g. self-isolation of symptomatic individuals) have a greater impact on reduction of deaths (11%).”
95. In the email exchange exhibited above, on 11 March 2022 the Chief Scientific Adviser-Health, Rob Orford said that “The risk of becoming infected from mass gatherings, such as sports events or visiting the cinema, is low. Advice on good hand hygiene, avoiding handshaking and promoting “catch-it, bin-it, kill-it” is sensible. As with flu, if you are unwell best stay at home.”

96. Following internal discussions, the following was added to that statement by public health colleagues: "We [the Welsh Government] are not recommending the cancellations of sporting events or other mass gatherings at this stage as the scientific evidence does not support this approach." I attach the relevant email exchange at **ASM2BCSTD/47-INQ000271445**.
97. Further on 11 March 2020 the Covid-19 Core Group met. The minutes of that meeting (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/48-INQ000216471**) record the following:
- 2. The policy across the UK was still containment, but it would be for COBR, which was meeting that afternoon to decide whether to move towards the delay phase.*
- [...]*
- 9. Ministers agreed that there would be a need for further discussions about the policy on mass gatherings, such as sporting and cultural events. The science suggested that such bans would reduce mortality rates by 2%, but there was a need to consider the social impact, the size of events, and whether they were outdoor or enclosed. There were also questions about mass transport hubs. However, it would be difficult to justify not cancelling events, particularly when the Government was advising households to go into quarantine.*
- 10. Whatever the decision, it would need to be applied consistently and the sooner that venues were advised the less costs would be incurred. There was some concern about whether insurance policies recognised COVID 19.*
98. On 14 March 2020 the Welsh men's rugby team were due to play Scotland in their Six Nations Championship match, to be held at the Principality stadium. There were no restrictions on travel in place at the time either within Wales nor from Scotland, or indeed elsewhere, to Wales and to Cardiff in particular. There were no restrictions upon events nor upon the tourism or hospitality sector generally, although some organisations decided to suspend activities voluntarily. For example, the Football Association of Wales announced on 13 March that it was suspending all football in Wales until 4 April. See reference in email exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD01/49-INQ000271611**.

99. The Welsh Government did not deal with matters on an event-by-event basis. The approach was to look at the science and other critical evidence and consider policy in the light of the same. It did not, neither at that stage nor at any stage during the pandemic, take specific decisions on restrictions in respect of individual events or venues. No restrictions had been introduced in the United Kingdom at that time. The advice was to encourage good hand hygiene and reasonable precautions on an individual basis.
100. On 12 March, the Minister for Health and Social Services confirmed during a press conference that at that stage, the Wales v Scotland game was due to go ahead. Around 13 March 2022 the Welsh Government was aware of a significant amount of discussion on social media around the decision to proceed with mass events such as the Six Nations. It was decided that a communications strategy be adopted to share the science behind that decision in “plain English”. I attach the email exchange at **ASM2BCSTD01/50-INQ000271446**, along with a document entitled ‘COVID-19 - The science on delay phase – schools and mass gatherings’ at **ASM2BCSTD/51-INQ000271447**. The public health advice at that stage was that there was no reason to cancel any such events. That was the position of all four Chief Medical officers at that time.
101. Acting upon a request from the First Minister, Jason Thomas contacted the WRU by telephone to outline the Welsh Government’s concerns regarding the fixture. It was agreed that the roof would be kept open for air circulation.
102. Though internally there were discussions within the Directorate which included comment that it would be common sense to postpone the rugby match, as above, the Welsh Government did not determine matters on a case-by-case basis. In any event it was unclear what, if any powers, the Welsh Government would have to prohibit or postpone a specific event. Jason Thomas suggested in an email exchange that legislation might not be necessary as such and that a caveated statement from the Welsh Government would likely have the same effect. Jason Thomas also said that ‘It is extremely challenging for us all in front line with stakeholders to hold the line that we are “not supporting restrictions on mass gatherings”. We will of course do this, but it is getting met with incredulity.’ Email thread exhibited earlier at **ASM2BCSTD01/49-INQ000271611**.

103. On 13 March 2020 the WRU itself cancelled the match. The announcement was made by the WRU at 14.07 on 13 March; I exhibit the WRU's statement at **ASM2BCSTD/52-INQ000271949**. The statement said that the WRU had "maintained an open dialogue with, and continued to seek advice and direction from, the Welsh Government and other stakeholders, including the Six Nations, on this fast-moving issue."
104. On 14 and 15 March 2020 the Welsh rock band Stereophonics were due to perform at the Cardiff Motorpoint Arena. There were no restrictions in place at that time. The Welsh Government did not have any direct communication with the Stereophonics, their management, the event organisers, or the venue.
105. On 16 March 2020, Jason Thomas, Director of CSTD, took the operational decision to close all our staffed Cadw sites from 17 March. I exhibit the email thread at **ASM2BCSTD/53-INQ000271453**. On 17 March 2020, the Welsh Government advised its own staff to work from home. Unstaffed Cadw sites remained open until 23 March before closing.
106. On 23 March 2020, the 'stay home' communication was issued across the United Kingdom by the Prime Minister.

Restrictions and Guidance

107. I set out below a chronology of the coronavirus restrictions and the 21-day review process, focusing on those decisions which were of particular significance to the sectors for which CSTD had policy responsibilities. I understand that a chronology of the coronavirus restrictions was exhibited with the statement made by Andrew Goodall in response to M2B-WG-01.

Drafting Guidance

108. As identified above, from March 2020 onwards the Directorate produced sector specific guidance for the sectors covered by the Culture, Sport and Tourism Directorate. All guidance was produced through close co-operation between the Directorate's officials, who had specific knowledge of the issues facing the sector, public health colleagues, and Legal Services. The guidance produced by the Directorate built upon the general guidance produced by the Welsh Government,

reflecting the restrictions in place at that time and dealing with sector specific issues. Officials also helped other teams within Welsh Government who were producing that general advice.

109. The method initially adopted was for officials to consider the best advice available at a UK and Wales level, applying that as appropriate to the specific circumstances of our sectors to produce draft guidance. Where other advice was not already available, officials produced initial draft guidance in consultation with Public Health and Legal colleagues. From the outset officials also worked very closely with the sectors affected, to ensure draft guidance was fit for purpose and addressed key issues where sector guidance was needed. This draft guidance was then sent for clearance. Any errors or corrections identified would be remedied at that stage, before a final draft was approved.
110. The close working with sector partners also allowed officials to make informed recommendations as to the level of detail appropriate for inclusion in Welsh Government guidance for the sectors, and where sector organisations holding specific expertise (e.g. sport governing bodies) could be empowered to produce additional, bespoke guidance for their individual settings. Where Public Health and Legal colleagues were content for this proceed, Directorate officials maintained a dialogue with sector bodies and our Local Authorities, to ensure that any additional, sector-produced guidance was consistent with legislation, restrictions and public-health messages in Welsh Government guidance, and that it supported decision making by Local Authority enforcement teams.
111. The approach to drafting guidance was informed by the Directorate's experience over time. As more guidance was published the methodology developed in the light of internal learning and also to reflect feedback from the sector. By 2021 the Directorate had adopted an approach in which the core guidance, which was drafted by Legal and Health colleagues, was provided to officials to produce nuanced action cards and explanations/Q&As for our specific sectors/industry.

March – August 2020

112. On 26 March 2020 the First Minister signed The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020. The regulations imposed restrictions on individuals and businesses until a direction was given by the Welsh Ministers. The

Regulations required Ministers to keep the need for the restrictions under review every 21-days.

113. On 3 April 2020, the “Stay Active, Stay Healthy, Stay Local” guidance was published by the Welsh Government. It encouraged people not to travel, not to undertake new or risky activities and to follow the Countryside Code. It is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/54-INQ000080951**.
114. On 7 April 2020 Guidance note for local authorities: holiday accommodation and the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 was published. I exhibit the guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/55- INQ000080973**. This was non statutory guidance to local authorities in relation to providers of holiday accommodation who were required to cease carrying on their business under the provisions of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020
115. On 14 April 2020 the First Minister agreed to retain the full package of restrictions, following the submission of MA/FM/1287/20 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/56-INQ000145553**.
116. On 24 April 2020, the Welsh Government published “Leaving Home to Exercise: Guidance”. I exhibit that at **ASM2BCSTD/57- INQ000081047**. It set out the “basic legal requirement” from the regulations as then in force, that a person should not leave home (the place where you live) without a “reasonable excuse” for doing so and provided advice about what might be considered to be “reasonable.”
117. On 28 May 2020 the First Minister received advice (MA/FM/1722/20) in respect of the 21-day review which was due that day. The First Minister agreed that the ‘stay at home’ provisions would be replaced by ‘stay local’ provisions, to allow for outdoor activity within a person’s local area. The First Minister also agreed to allow weddings and civil partnerships to take place if the bride or groom were terminally ill. I exhibit the MA at **ASM2BCSTD/58-INQ000176849**.
118. Following the change from ‘stay at home’ to ‘stay local,’ “Coronavirus (COVID-19) Stay Local” guidance was subsequently published in an easy read format on 10 June. That confirmed the position in Wales remained that events including weddings and baptisms

were still not permitted, pubs and cinemas, hotels, hostels, bed, and breakfasts etc were closed. It is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/59- INQ000271543**.

119. On 4 June, the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/1809/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/60-INQ000198590**) to the making and laying of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020, which introduced new requirements requiring require travellers entering Wales from a country outside the Common Travel Area (UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) to provide prescribed information and to self-isolate for a period of up to 14 days. The regulations came into force on 8 June 2020. In the light of that decision, on 7 June 2020 the “Coronavirus (COVID-19): travellers exempt from Welsh border rules” guidance was published. That is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/61- INQ000081185**. The exemptions to the general prohibition on travel were set out including the rules relating to elite sports people and support staff.
120. On 15 May 2020, the Welsh Government published ‘Unlocking our Society and Economy’, setting out the specific steps it would consider in determining how and when restrictions might be lifted. It set out a red-amber-green approach to the lifting of restrictions, and described in broad terms what this would look like across a range of sectors including exercise and sports, relaxing and special occasions, and working and running a business. I exhibit the document at **ASM2BCSTD/62- INQ000271777**.
121. In the light of the publication of ‘Unlocking our Society and Economy’ and reflecting the restrictions which remained in place at that time, several sector specific guidance documents were published by the Welsh Government, to provide assistance to the sectors in understanding the regulations in place, and how to comply with them. These included:
- ‘Sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a phased return.’ This was sector specific guidance published on 15 June for people working in sport, recreation, and leisure. It is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/63-INQ000081221**. It set out a detailed overview of the rules then in place together with identifying relevant matters needed for a phased return. It identified principles to prepare for the safe management of facilities including protection for staff, managing bookings and ventilation.
 - ‘Creative industries: Guidance for a phased return.’ Published on 19 June, it provided guidance on working within the regulations, and included sections on

Screen, Digital, Music, and Publishing. I exhibit the guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/64-INQ000081228**.

122. On 18 June 2020, the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/1937/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/65-INQ000227453**) further changes to the coronavirus restrictions, including the removal of restrictions on outdoor sports courts, and allowing private prayer in places of worship where social distancing was maintained, and gatherings did not take place. The First Minister also agreed to provide forward guidance about priority areas for future easements, which included preparations for the reopening the visitor economy, and discussions about options for reopening the hospitality sector.
123. On 19 June, the First Minister received further advice (MA/FM/1954/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/66-INQ000271553**) which, in the light of his agreement to MA/FM/1937/20, sought his agreement to a series of amendments to the regulations, reflecting the continued decrease in the number of new infections since April 2020. This included several changes of relevance to CSTD:
- Permitting certain premises to be open for the training of elite athletes,
 - Permitting marriage ceremonies and civil partnerships to take place in places of worship (subject to physical distancing requirements) and to allow people to attend these,
 - Permitting places of worship to open for private prayer.
124. In the light of these changes, and the steer on priorities for further easements, further guidance documents were issued by the Welsh Government, all of which were intended to assist sectors in understanding the requirements of the regulations in place at that time:
- 'Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus.' This was published on 23 June and provided specific guidance for religious communities on the rules then in place and what permitted uses were allowed. It provided guidance on singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments together with general public health advice on managing the virus. It is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/67-INQ000081242**.
 - 'Coronavirus: guidance for tourism and hospitality businesses for a phased and safe re-opening.' This was published on 29 June and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/68-INQ000271927**. It included guidance and a downloadable

checklist for businesses. Detailed guidance specific to hospitality settings was coordinated with UK Hospitality Cymru and detailed self-catering specific guidance was coordinated with Wales Tourism Alliance (WTA) and the Professional Association of Self caterers (PASC).

- 'Culture and heritage destinations and venues: Guidance for a phased return' was published on 30 June to provide detailed sector and industry specific advice on opening to the public and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/69-INQ000081260**.
- "Providing safer toilets for public use: Coronavirus.' Published on 2 July, this guidance was aimed at owners and operators of toilets which were for public use, including the heritage and tourism sites and the hospitality sector and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/70-INQ000081269**.
- 'Guidance on marriages and civil partnerships: Coronavirus' was published on 7 July. It was aimed at local authorities and places of worship. It provided specific guidance on the legal requirement together with practical guidance about the restrictions in place and managing the virus. I exhibit the guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/71-INQ000081286**.

125. On 3 July 2020 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/2120/20, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/72-INQ000104021**) further amendments to the coronavirus regulations, including the lifting of the 'stay local' restrictions from Monday 6 July. As a result, outdoor attractions were allowed to re-open, subject to the requirement to take all reasonable measures to ensure 2m distance is maintained. However, indoor tourist attractions were listed as "closed businesses," to ensure that they remained closed. Advice from the CMO underpinned those Regulations and had been provided to the First Minister in MA/FM/2107/20 (I exhibit the advice at **ASM2BCSTD/73-INQ000227201**). Indoor businesses were to remain closed because it was considered that they were "other indoor leisure facilities" (which were required to remain closed under the Regulations) or were closed in practice due to restrictions on travel or indoor gatherings which meant that their business was not viable. However, the removal of the 'stay local' restriction could potentially make it economically viable for those businesses to reopen. As such it was necessary expressly to require those businesses to close. There was no evidence at that stage which supported the safe reopening of those businesses: as such, the Regulations required that amendment to make it clear that they had to remain closed. The reopening of such businesses was to be the subject of review the following week.

126. On 9 July 2020 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM/2211/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/74-INQ000176797**, that the restrictions on self-contained accommodation would be lifted from 11 July onwards. From 13 July it was agreed that restrictions in respect of opening indoor visitor attractions would be lifted, together with allowing outdoor areas of hospitality to reopen (restaurants, pubs, cafes). Underground visitor attractions were to remain closed, however, because of the combination of enclosed space, poor ventilation, cramped tight spaces which could be difficult to navigate, and/or an underlying environment which would be damp and noisy. The First Minister also allowed outdoor cinemas to open. An exception was provided for organised outdoor activities to take place under COVID-secure guidelines through an exception on the definition of “gatherings.”, as the additional risks of more people gathering would be mitigated by having a responsible club, society or other organisation that could ensure activities took place in a Covid-19 secure way.
127. It was also agreed that although the restrictions would remain in place, a clear signal would be given to enable preparations to be made for a potential reopening, from 25 July, for remaining accommodation with shared facilities (such as campsites); cinemas, museums, and galleries. It was also agreed that industry views would be gathered ahead of the 20 July review as to the re-opening indoor hospitality for cafes, pubs, and restaurants.
128. On 20 July, the Welsh Government published ‘Reopening children’s playgrounds and outdoor play areas: Coronavirus.’ The guidance was aimed at all owners and operators of such facilities including pubs, restaurants, and private landowners. I exhibit the guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/75-INQ000271736**.
129. On 24 July 2020 the First Minister agreed, by MA/FM/2363/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/76-INQ000116694**), that restrictions on the use of shared facilities would be lifted to allow all self-contained holiday accommodation, such as campsites, to reopen from 25 July. Underground attractions could also re-open from that date. From 27 July, the First Minister agreed to reopen cinemas, museums, and galleries; amusement arcades (which include adult gaming centres and family entertainment centres) were also permitted to operate.
130. On 28 July 2020 Cabinet considered a discussion paper relating to the latest 21-day review and agreed that indoor hospitality, bowling alleys, auction houses and bingo

halls, along with outdoor theatres, could re-open from 3 August, providing social distancing requirements were in place. In addition, indoor play areas could re-open from this date. I exhibit the paper at **ASM2BCSTD/77-INQ000048860**.

131. On 30 July 2020 by MA/FM/2440/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/78-INQ000176854**) the First Minister agreed to those amendments of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow, from 3 August, outdoor gatherings of up to 30 people and for indoor hospitality, bowling alleys, bingo halls and auction houses to reopen.
132. On 31 July 2020 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM/2437/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/79-INQ000116641**) to allow outdoor gatherings of up to 30 people; permit indoor hospitality for pubs, bars, cafes, and restaurants to reopen (but not allow venues where dancing is to take place to open for that purpose); permit bowling alleys, bingo halls and auction houses to reopen. The First Minister issued a written statement confirming those changes, which also meant that premises licensed to carry out marriages and civil ceremonies could re-open for small, socially distanced receptions.
133. Reflecting these changes, several guidance documents were updated:
 - 'Guidance on marriages and civil partnerships: Coronavirus,' published on 6 August,
 - Indoor play areas for children: Coronavirus guidance,' published on 8 August,
 - 'Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus,' published on 18 August (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/80-INQ000081390**)
 - 'Coronavirus: guidance for tourism and hospitality businesses for a phased and safe re-opening' on 10 August.
134. On 14 August 2020 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/2607/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/81-INQ000176857**) to regulations that would require the collection of contact details in hospitality businesses and other high-risk premises. In a written statement issued on the same day the First Minister said that collection of contact details for the purposes of contact tracing was a reasonable measure that higher-risk premises would be expected to take.
135. On 18 August 2020 Cabinet considered a paper (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/82-INQ-000048863**) and agreed that indoor meals for up to 30 people, following a wedding,

civil partnership, or funeral, would be allowed. That applied to premises which were otherwise open, and that guidance would be published to set out what conditions would apply. Cabinet also agreed to signal for future weeks the piloting of small outdoor events and the opening of casinos.

136. Those amendments to the regulations were agreed by the First Minister by MA/FM/2724/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/83-INQ000145498**) which permitted indoor celebrations for up to 30 people for a wedding, civil partnership, or funeral in premises, subject to reasonable measures set out in guidance, from 22 August 2020 onwards. It also permitted pilot outdoor events for up to 100 people, subject to agreement of, and conditions set by, Welsh Ministers.
137. Following approval of MA/FM/2716/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/84-INQ000145001**) by the First Minister on 21 August 2020 the list of what constitutes a 'reasonable excuse' to gather indoors was amended to allow up to 30 people to come together to celebrate a wedding or civil partnership or celebrate the life of a person who had died.
138. On 27 August 2020, the Minister for Health and Social Services agreed, by MA/VG/2826/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/85-INQ000271805**) to re-open casinos. The regulations were also amended to create a new offence of organising (or being involved in holding) an unlicensed music event for more than 30 people.

September – December 2020: Local restrictions, firebreak, Christmas 2020

139. On 10 September 2020 the First Minister agreed to MA/FM/2961/20 (exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/86-INQ000145504**) which introduced a new direction-making power for local authorities in respect of premises, events, and public places. That took effect from 14 September. The First Minister also agreed to provide a cautious signal that permanent skating rinks could reopen from 3 October.
140. On 15 September 'Reopening children's playgrounds and outdoor play areas: Coronavirus' was updated and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/87- INQ000271940**.
141. On 16 September 'Rehearsing, performing, and taking part in the performing arts: guidance for a phased return' was published. I exhibit the guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/88-INQ000081419**. It contained guidance on managing those involved in the performing arts, casting and auditions and guidance about rehearsals and

performances, and as with a number of other guidance documents, was intended to build upon the outline for a phased return to public engagement with the arts which had been set out in 'Unlocking our Society and Economy'.

142. I describe in my statement M2B-WTG-01 (from paragraph 243) the process which led to the introduction of local health protection areas, beginning with Caerphilly on 8 September 2020, and I set out the implications for travel between different parts of Wales and other parts of the UK. More local restrictions came into effect from 6pm on 22 September, for people living in the Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, and Newport local authority areas. These new restrictions included a requirement for the closure of all licensed premises at 11pm in any local health protection area (which also included Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf).
143. The First Minister issued a written statement on 22 September 2020 which confirmed that from Thursday 24 September at 6pm, hospitality businesses in Wales – including pubs, cafes, restaurants, and casinos – would have to close at 10pm. They would also have to provide table service only.
144. On 24 September 2020 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/3135/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/89-INQ000116625**) to impose new restrictions on the sale of alcohol, to come into force at 18.00 on 24 September 2020, which included that licensed premises would have to cease the sale of alcohol at 10pm, close by 10.20pm and not reopen until 6am. Further, it was required that customers had to order, be served, and consume their food and drink when seated (and not at the bar). The requirement to wear face coverings was extended to staff working in indoor hospitality and customers when not seated at a table. These additional measures were also introduced in other parts of the UK.
145. Also on 24 September, 'Creative industries: Guidance for a phased return' was updated. I exhibit the updated guidance at **ASM2BCSTD01/90-INQ000081422**. The guidance applied across Wales but included a reminder to consider whether additional, local restrictions were in place.
146. On 25 September, the "Coronavirus (COVID-19): travellers exempt from Welsh border rules" was updated. I exhibit the updated guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/91-INQ000081422**. The guidance noted that the Travel Regulations included a list of exempt countries and territories (also known as Travel Corridors), from which persons

might be able to travel to Wales without needing to isolate. It also provided an update on countries and territories which were exempt or had previously been exempted as of 26 September 2020. This guidance continued to be regularly updated over the following months, to reflect changes to the list of exempt countries.

147. On 2 October 2020 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/3195/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/92-INQ000176865**). to re-open permanent skating rinks, on 3 October. That was confirmed by a written statement on the same day.
148. On 8 October 2020 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/3342/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/93-INQ000145506**) that the regulations would be amended to allow maximum of 15 people (exempting children) to participate in an organised indoor activity.
149. On 15 October 2020, Cabinet agreed in principle to the introduction of a two-week 'firebreak' (also referred to as a 'circuit breaker') from Friday 23 October 2020. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/94-INQ000048796**, and the First Minister issued a written statement on 19 October. The firebreak would impose new, temporary restrictions from 23 October which included the prohibition of all outdoor gatherings, and the closure of all hospitality businesses, close contact services, and events and tourism businesses, such as hotels. The FM approved the new regulations (The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 3) (Wales) Regulations 2020) via MA/FM/3428/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/95-INQ000176863**.
150. In light of the introduction of these temporary restrictions, on 27 October 'Guidance to local authorities, approved premises and places of worship on marriages and civil partnerships: coronavirus' was published (**ASM2BCSTD/96-INQ000081549**), as was "Coronavirus: guidance for tourism and hospitality businesses for a phased and safe re-opening" (**ASM2BCSTD/97-INQ000081541**).
151. The Welsh Government also published on 27 October 'Keeping records of staff, customers, and visitors: test, trace, protect' guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers under regulation 13 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020' (**ASM2BCSTD/98-INQ000081563**). That guidance dealt with what information should be collected and how records should be maintained. It dealt with some of the GDPR issues that arose through the collection of such records, highlighted the importance of the NHS Wales 'Test, Trace, Protect' service and advised that those

benefits should be explained to those individuals who did not want to provide their details.

152. The following day, on 28 October, 'Indoor play areas for children: Coronavirus guidance' was updated and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/99- INQ000081558**.
153. At its meetings on 29 October 2020 and 1 November 2020, Cabinet discussed and agreed a new set of restrictions to come into effect at the end of the two-week firebreak. On 2 November 2020 the First Minister issued a statement which indicated that new measures were to be put in place from 9 November, following the end of the firebreak restrictions, and confirmed agreement on 3 November to the new national restrictions being introduced (via MA/FM/3689/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/100- INQ000176848**, announcement at **ASM2BCSTD/101-INQ000271770**)
154. Given that there was then to be a month-long lockdown in England, new arrangements would be required in Wales in respect of indoors meetings in settings such as pubs, bars, cafes, and restaurants. Up to 15 people would be able to take part in organised indoors activity and up to 30 in organised outdoors activities, providing all social distancing, hand hygiene and other Covid safety measures were followed.
155. Also, on 2 November 2020 an updated version of the "Coronavirus (COVID-19): travellers exempt from Welsh border rules" guidance was published; together with an update of Guidance on funerals: COVID 19.
156. The new national restrictions also introduced the 'rule of four' in regulated open premises and outdoors. That new rule meant that the maximum number of people that could meet in a regulated setting (such as a bar or restaurant) was four. The Regulations would make gatherings allowable indoors in open premises by providing a general rule for a maximum of 15 people (exempting children under 11 and those organising the activity) to participate in an indoor activity organised by a responsible body and subject to the organiser carrying out a risk assessment. Further, the reasonable excuse allowing for such gatherings would only apply to activities where alcohol was not sold or supplied. The limit of 15 people applied to wedding receptions, though such gatherings were exempted from the prohibition on alcohol sale.
157. There was an exception to the 'rule of 30' for elite and sub-elite sports as designated by Sports Wales. No events bringing together more than 15 people indoors or 30

people outdoors would be able to take place until the Spring and no test or pilot events would take place until February at the earliest.

158. Cafés, pubs, restaurants, and tourism businesses including accommodation were allowed to re-open on the same basis as pre-firebreak, and the 10pm curfew for alcohol sales in Wales was to remain in place. Museums, galleries, skating rinks, and swimming pools were all able to re-open on the same basis as before the firebreak.
159. Sector specific guidance was published by Welsh Government on 13 November in the form of 'Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for tourism and hospitality' (**ASM2BCSTD/102-INQ000081619**). The sectors covered by the guidance were:
- Hotels and holiday accommodation
 - Visitor attractions; museums and galleries; amusement parks and theme parks; bowling alleys, amusement arcades and indoor play areas
 - Holiday, leisure activity or events businesses
 - Venues for events or conferences.
 - Premises selling food and drink.
160. On 16 November, an update to 'Rehearsing, performing and taking part in the performing arts: guidance for a phased return' was published by Welsh Government (**ASM2BCSTD/103-INQ000081423**).
161. On 29 November 2020 Cabinet discussed the restrictions that should be implemented from 4 December, and the festive relaxations, including the approach to hospitality in December. It was agreed by Cabinet that restrictions for hospitality and indoor entertainment attractions would be introduced from 6pm on Friday 4 December. I exhibit the minutes of the Cabinet meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/104-INQ000048930**. It was also agreed that pubs, bars, restaurants, and cafes would have to close by 6pm and would not be allowed to serve alcohol but could provide takeaway services after that time. Also from 4 December indoor entertainment venues, including cinemas, bingo halls, bowling alleys, soft play centres, casinos, skating rinks, and amusement arcades, would close. Indoor visitor attractions, such as museums, galleries, and heritage sites, would also have to close. However, outdoor visitor attractions would remain open.

162. Cabinet also agreed measures in relation to self-contained holiday accommodation. An additional overnight hotel stay, either side of the Christmas bubble period for those travelling from Northern Ireland, was agreed. The First Minister formally agreed to these changes via MA/FM/4107/20 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/105-INQ000145509**.
163. On 4 December 'Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for/ tourism and hospitality' was updated to reflect the latest restrictions that applied from that day. "Culture and heritage destinations and venues: Guidance for a phased return" was also updated, to confirm that such venues needed to close.
164. On 11 December 2020 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM/4346/20 (**ASM2BCSTD/106-INQ000116728**) that all outdoor attractions, trampoline, and indoor skate parks should close. However, drive in cinemas and theatres were permitted to open. The First Minister issued a written statement that day confirming these changes.
165. On 17 December "Creative industries: Guidance for a phased return" (**ASM2BCSTD/107-INQ000081673**) was updated. It included reference to the Coronavirus Control Plan and the four "Alert Levels" which that plan introduced. On 18 December, the "Coronavirus (COVID-19): travellers exempt from Welsh border rules" (**ASM2BCSTD/108-INQ000081682**) guidance was updated and published, including the latest details of countries which were or had previously been exempted (i.e., from where persons could travel to Wales without needing to isolate).
166. On 19 December 2020 Cabinet agreed to bring forward the Alert Level 4 restrictions for the whole of Wales, in line with the action being taken in London and the Southeast of England. The new restrictions would come into effect from midnight that night instead of from 28th December. They required hospitality and accommodation (amongst others) to close at the end of trading. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/109-INQ000048803**. A further updated version of "Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for tourism and hospitality" was published that day, which drew attention to the move into Alert Level 4 restrictions and I exhibit this at **ASM2BCSTD/110-INQ000081695**.
167. On 22 December, the 'Sport, recreation and leisure guidance was updated (exhibit **ASM2BCSTD/111-INQ000081711**). It again provided sector specific guidance on the

current rules and included reference to the recently published Coronavirus Control Plan and to the decision to bring forward the Alert Level 4 restrictions. A further version of the guidance on marriages and civil partnerships (**ASM2BCSTD/112-INQ000081731**) was published the following day, again highlighting the move into Alert Level 4.

January 2021 – July 2021 – easing of restrictions

168. On 22 January 'Indoor play areas for children: Coronavirus' guidance was updated. (**ASM2BCSTD/113-INQ000081376**). The purpose of this updated guidance was to inform the owners and operators of indoor play areas in Wales of the ongoing legal restrictions and requirements related to Alert Level 4. On 26 January, an updated version of Guidance on funerals: COVID 19 was published (**ASM2BCSTD/114-INQ000081805**).
169. On 19 February 2021 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/0751/21 **ASM2BCSTD/115-INQ000176844**) to maintain the whole of Wales at Alert Level 4 until at least the next review on 11 March. Some changes to Alert Level 4 were agreed, including allowing visitor attractions and hotels to open for wedding ceremonies and show-arounds, together with a change to the Elite Athlete Designation to recognise people who make a living from sport and designations made by sporting bodies in other parts of the UK. The First Minister issued a statement that day confirming these changes, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/116- INQ000023280**.
170. On 3 March, an updated version of 'Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for tourism and hospitality' (**ASM2BCSTD/117-INQ000081883**) was published by Welsh Government. The guidance was intended to cover all alert levels, whilst noting that some aspects were not permitted at Alert Level 4, which remained in place in Wales at that time. The guidance emphasised that its purpose was to help employers, employees, and the self-employed working in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Wales to operate safely when local restrictions or national alert levels did not apply, but that when local restrictions or national alert levels were in place, the requirements of those alert levels took precedent.
171. Also, on 5 March 'Guidance on marriages and civil partnerships: Coronavirus' was updated and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/118-INQ000081887**.

172. At meetings on 8 and 9 March, Cabinet considered options for the latest review of the restrictions, which was due on 11 March. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/119-INQ000057740**. Cabinet noted the continued improvement in relation to the spread of Covid-19 and agreed that the Level 4 restrictions could be gradually reduced. Cabinet also noted that a staggered approach to the lifting of restrictions would allow better monitoring of the impact on the spread of the virus in reaction to specific easements. The measures agreed by Cabinet included that as from 13 March outdoor sporting facilities could reopen but would be subject to the 'stay local' and gathering limits. Cabinet also agreed that provided public health conditions remained favourable, self-contained accommodation could reopen from the last weekend of March, along with certain types of outdoor attractions.
173. Cabinet further agreed that the next 21 day review would be brought forward to 25 March in order to accommodate changes ahead of the school holidays which were to commence on 27 March. A decision would be taken at that review in respect of whether self-contained accommodation could re-open to households and Welsh customers only. Ministers also agreed that consideration should be given to re-opening certain types of outside attractions, such as country parks or CADW sites.
174. On 11 March 2021 the First Minister gave formal agreement (via MA/FM/1121/21 exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/120-INQ000145542**) to the reopening of outdoor sporting facilities (tennis courts, bowling greens, golf courses, outdoor gyms etc.) from 13 March. Theatres would also be allowed to open from the same date for the purposes of rehearsals.
175. On 25 March 2021, the First Minister gave formal agreement (via MA/FM/1495/21 exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/121-INQ000145543**) to the package of easements which had been agreed at the 11 March review, conditions permitting. These changes included:
- removal of the 'stay local' restrictions.
 - allowing self-contained accommodation to reopen to individual households from Wales and their support bubbles.
 - allowing some outdoor heritage sites and historic parks and gardens to reopen.
 - allowing for all organised outdoor children's activities for under 18s.

176. Following discussions at meetings of the Cabinet on 29 and 31 March (minutes exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/122-INQ000057895**), the First Minister agreed on 31 March 2021 to maintain Alert Level 3 restrictions and existing temporary modifications for at least a further three weeks. Wedding 'show-arounds' would be permitted in premises which were otherwise required to close if done by appointment. It was also agreed to pilot events being developed during April for implementation from early May and for these to include an event linked to Eid-al-Fitr. Those decisions followed, via MA/FM/1527/21 exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD01/123-INQ000176843**.
177. Cabinet had also agreed that the First Minister would signal at his press conference the following day that, providing the health conditions remained favourable,
- outdoor attractions and outdoor hospitality could open from 26 April.
 - Organised outdoor activities for up to 30 people and wedding receptions could take place from 5 May.
 - Gyms, leisure, and fitness facilities, for individual exercise, along with proposals to extend households would be permissible from 10 May.
178. These changes would need to be confirmed at the review scheduled for 22 April; I exhibit the press release at **ASM2BCSTD/124-INQ000081925**.
179. On 1 April 2021, an Action Card Guidance for organised indoor and outdoor activities for children (**ASM2BCSTD/125-INQ000081944**) was published by Welsh Government. The guidance covered activities attended by children and young people, where their actions needed to be supervised by appropriately qualified individuals. It provided advice on keeping Covid-19 out of the workplace, action to minimise the spread of infection, and actions that needed to be taken if an employee or visitor tested positive for Covid-19.
180. At its meeting on 19 April, Cabinet discussed easements for the 21-day review due on 22 April, and options for the following review, due on 13 May. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/126-INQ000129892**. Cabinet particularly welcomed the proposal to move fully to Alert Level 3 from 3 May 2021, noting that this would encompass previously announced easements and the re-commencing of organised children's activities, including swimming lessons. Cabinet also agreed that outdoor swimming pools should be classified as outdoor attractions. On 22 April 2021 the First Minister formally approved the changes agreed by Cabinet. I exhibit the Ministerial advice

(MA/FM/1598/21) at **ASM2BCSTD/127-INQ000145525**. The changes in the restrictions:

- Provided for outdoor hospitality, outdoor attractions, and outdoor swimming pools to reopen from 26 April.
- Provided for organised outdoor activities for up to 30 people from 26 April.
- Allowed weddings and civil partnership receptions and wakes, limited to 30 people outdoors, from 26 April.

181. The First Minister also agreed to signal an intention to complete the move to Alert Level 3 on 3 May, by bringing forward changes to provide for indoor supervised activities for children, indoor organised activities for up to 15 adults, and the re-opening of community centres, and to signal an intention to move to alert level two, should conditions allow, on 17 May.

182. The Welsh Government had published in March 2021 the 'Coronavirus control plan: revised alert levels in Wales (March 2021)' which was a refresh of the alert levels, in light of what was then new evidence set out in a February 2021 update to the plan (Coronavirus Control Plan Coming out of Lockdown) and in particular the need for greater caution given the transmissibility of the 'Kent' variant, and the impact it was hoped would be seen over time from the vaccine rollout. Several guidance documents were updated in the weeks following the publication of the plan, and in the light of the gradual transition between the alert levels and the easing of restrictions, including:

- "Culture and heritage destinations and venues: Guidance for a phased return" updated on 27 April (**ASM2BCSTD/128-INQ000081985**)
- 'Rehearsing, performing and taking part in the performing arts: guidance for a phased return,' updated on 28 April, on 7 May, and on 14 May (**ASM2BCSTD/129-INQ000081987**, **ASM2BCSTD/130-INQ000082000** and **ASM2BCSTD/131-INQ000082029**)
- 'Guidance for weddings and civil partnerships: receptions and celebration events,' updated on 7 May and on 14 May (**ASM2BCSTD/132-INQ000081998** and **ASM2BCSTD/133-INQ000082027**)
- 'Sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a safe return,' updated on 10 May (**ASM2BCSTD/134-INQ000082015**)

- 'Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for tourism and hospitality' updated on 13 May and on 17 May (**ASM2BCSTD/135-INQ000082019** and **ASM2BCSTD/136-INQ000082040**)
183. Following agreement at Cabinet on 10 May (minutes exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/137-INQ000022534**), on 13 May 2021 the First Minister formally approved changes to the regulations to place Wales in Alert Level 2 from 17 May 2021. I exhibit the Ministerial Advice document (MA/FM1649/21) at **ASM2BCSTD/138-INQ000176840**. The effect of that change was to permit indoor hospitality, including pubs, restaurants, and cafés; entertainment venues including cinemas, bingo halls, bowling alleys, indoor play centres and areas, casinos, amusement arcades and theatres; Indoor visitor attractions, such as museums and galleries; and all remaining holiday accommodation and associated shared facilities, such as shower blocks in campsites, to open. Cinemas, theatres, concert halls and sports grounds would be allowed to sell food and drink as long as it was consumed in a seated area, while watching a performance.
184. On 21 May Indoor play areas for children: Coronavirus guidance was updated. (**ASM2BCSTD/139-INQ000082052**). The guidance confirmed that under the Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales indoor play areas were considered to be indoor attractions and were able to open at alert levels 1 and 2.
185. Cabinet considered options for the latest 21-day review at meetings on 27 May and 3 June 2021. Given concerns about the spread of the Coronavirus Delta variant, Cabinet agreed to split the move to Alert Level 1 into two stages, beginning on 7 June with mostly outdoor changes, and followed on 21 June by the indoor elements of Alert Level 1. Cabinet agreed that maximum capacities should be set at 30 people for outdoor gatherings, 4,000 for standing events and 10,000 for seated events. I exhibit the Cabinet minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/140-INQ000057894**. On the same day, the First Minister formally approved these changes via MA/FM/1879/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCST/141-INQ000145467**.
186. Further guidance updates were issued in early June, including:
- an updated version of 'Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for tourism and hospitality' published on 4 June (**ASM2BCSTD/142-INQ000082084**).
 - 'Creating COVID-aware events,' published on 10 June (**ASM2BCSTD/143-INQ000082101**).

- 'Keep Wales Safe: Creating COVID safe events' published on 10 June (**ASM2BCSTD/144-INQ000082103**).

187. As above, Cabinet had agreed on 3 June 2021 to a staged move to Alert Level 1, with indoor elements being introduced on 21 June. However, at its meeting on 16 June, Cabinet considered a paper on an interim review of the regulations (CAB(21-22)10), exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/145-INQ000057836**, and noted that cases had risen exponentially over the previous two weeks and were expected to continue to do so. Cabinet therefore agreed to pause the full move to Level 1 until at least the next review which was due to take place by 15 July. Cabinet also agreed that the permitted number of guests at a wedding/civil partnership reception or a wake (organised on regulated premises or as a regulated event) would be to be determined by the size of the venue and risk assessment, as opposed to being fixed by regulations. A further exception for small "grass roots" entertainment such as music and comedy venues to operate in alert level two and lower was also agreed. The First Minister formally approved these changes on 17 June 2021(MA/FM/2100/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/146-INQ000145471**), and an updated version of 'Guidance on marriages and civil partnerships: Coronavirus' was published on 12 July 2021.
188. Cabinet considered the next review of the regulations at its meeting on 12 July. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/147-INQ000129973**. Cabinet agreed to changes to the regulations which would amongst other things apply the rule of six to visitor accommodation, allow ice rinks to reopen, and allow indoor events to restart, with up to 1,000 people permitted at indoor seated events and up to 200 at standing only venues. In addition, the restrictions requiring food and drink to be consumed whilst seated for events would be removed.
189. Cabinet further agreed that some Level Zero relaxations could be introduced to the removal of all caps on the number of people who could gather outside in all settings, and to adjusting the reasonable measures' regime for all outdoor settings so physical distancing was not an absolute requirement, but one of a package of measures that should be considered. Cabinet also agreed that the First Minister could signal later that week that Wales would move to Alert Level zero from 7 August provided the public health situation remained favourable. The First Minister formally approved the regulatory changes via MA/FM/2517/21 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/148-INQ000145474**.

190. At their 12 July 2021 meeting, Cabinet also agreed to the publication of an update to the Coronavirus Control Plan ('Coronavirus Control Plan: Alert Level 0'), and the First Minister formally approved publication on 13 July, via MA/FM/2509/21 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/149-INQ000145473**.
191. Further updates to guidance documents were published following the latest review and the publication of the updated Coronavirus Control Plan, including:
- An update to 'Creating COVID-aware events,' published on 16 July (**ASM2BCSTD/150-INQ000082172**).
 - An update to 'Keep Wales Safe: Guidance for tourism and hospitality' on 17 July (**ASM2BCSTD/151-INQ000082176**).
 - An update to 'Indoor play areas for children: Coronavirus guidance' on 20 July was updated (**ASM2BCSTD/152-INQ000082180**).

August – October 2021 – Covid Pass

192. On 2 August 2021 Cabinet considered a paper relating to the latest review due on 5 August, which is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/153-INQ000271816**. Cabinet agreed to the removal of the remaining legal limits and caps on the number of people who could meet, including in private homes, public places or at events and to allow nightclubs and adult entertainment venues to reopen.
193. On the re-opening of night clubs, the Cabinet minutes reflect concern that such venues had the potential to become 'super-spreaders' of the virus, balanced against the fact that night clubs were already open in England, the potential risk that people would instead hold unregulated house parties, and the need to be consistent with the relaxation of the rules for other premises. Cabinet therefore concluded that such venues could re-open from 7 August, noting that the owners of such venues would be required to undertake detailed risk assessments.
194. Cabinet also discussed whether vaccine certificates should become mandatory for entry into night clubs and other large venues from the end of September, as was the case in England. Cabinet noted that in England a major driver for the approach was to encourage take-up of the vaccine in the younger population, which was not justified in Wales given the higher take-up rates and felt that there were also social justice

implications that would need to be considered. Cabinet therefore decided against mandatory vaccine certificates at that stage, whilst recognising that businesses could decide to implement such a requirement as one of the reasonable measures within their own risk assessments.

195. It was also agreed that, from 7 August 2021, the requirement to wear face coverings in hospitality settings would be removed together with the requirements which had been set out in statutory guidance for specific premises to collect contact information.
196. I exhibit the minutes of the 2 August 2021 Cabinet meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/154-INQ000057896**.
197. Several further sector specific guidance documents were published on 12 and 13 August 2021, in the form of reasonable measures 'action cards'. Action cards were used in conjunction with the Welsh Government regulations and other (more general) guidance and acted as a means of highlighting and addressing core advice to industry in an accessible, prioritised format. I.e. on specific measures that were likely to be reasonable to take to minimise the risk of coronavirus with regards to particular venues and within the operations of certain sectors. These included action cards for hospitality venues (**ASM2BCSTD/155-INQ000082242**); tourism businesses (**ASM2BCSTD/156-INQ000082246**); nightclubs, music venues and adult entertainment venues (**ASM2BCSTD/157-INQ000082258**); and events (**ASM2BCSTD/158-INQ000082249**). In addition, on 1 September 'Gyms, leisure centres, sports clubs, dance studios and other indoor sports facilities: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' was published (**ASM2BCSTD/159-INQ000082284**), followed by 'Organised children and young people's activities: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' on 14 September (**ASM2BCSTD/160-INQ000082290**).
198. At its meeting on 21 August, Cabinet considered a paper on the possible introduction of a 'covid pass' for entry into high-risk events and venues, such as nightclubs. I attach the paper at **ASM2BCSTD01/161-INQ000057872**. Cabinet noted that given the introduction of mandatory covid passes in England, it was important that the Welsh Government considered the rationale and evidence for a similar pass in Wales. Cabinet recognised that introduction of a covid pass could mitigate the potential risks of attending high risk events and venues and could act as an incentive for increased vaccine take up in underrepresented groups, such as those aged 18-25. Cabinet also recognised that there were ethical and practical issues associated with mandatory

covid passes, which would require careful consideration. Cabinet agreed that officials should explore the issues further, so that Cabinet could in due course take an informed decision, when the situation in England would hopefully have become clearer. The minutes of the meeting are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/162-INQ000271735**.

199. On 13 September 2021, as part of its consideration of the 21-day review due on 16 September, Cabinet returned to the issue of mandatory covid passes. I exhibit the paper at **ASM2BCSTD/163-INQ000057880**, which recommended the introduction of mandatory Covid certification from 1 October as a condition of entry to certain premises and events. Cabinet noted that the Scottish Government had announced a mandatory certification scheme to be introduced from 1 October, but that the UK Government had signalled the previous day that it would be postponing its plans for a scheme in England. Cabinet discussed the issues and requested additional information to be provided in time for a further Cabinet discussion on 15 September.
200. At its meeting on 15 September, Cabinet considered a range of possible options, and concluded that given the time constraints and other practical matters, it would not be possible to introduce mandatory vaccine certificates from 1 October, but that the covid pass would be mandated for use in nightclubs, high risk venues and certain major events. I exhibit the minutes of the meetings on 13 and 15 September, at **ASM2BCSTD/164-INQ000057743**.
201. On 16 September 2021 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM/3148/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/165-INQ000145477**, to signal that the NHS COVID pass will be a mandatory condition of entry in certain designated high-risk venues from Monday 11 October. On 17 September, the First Minister issued a written statement confirming that the Welsh Government would amend the regulations to require people to show the NHS COVID Pass to enter the following venues and events from Monday 11 October:
- Nightclubs and similar venues.
 - Indoor non-seated events for more than 500 people, where people are mixing closely for prolonged periods.
 - Outdoor non-seated events for more than 4,000 people, where people will be mixing closely for prolonged periods.
 - Any event, of any nature, which has more than 10,000 people in attendance.

202. The First Minister agreed the necessary changes to the regulations on 24 September 2021, via MA/FM/3233/21 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/166-INQ000145486**.
203. In early October, several further guidance documents were published, including:
- 'Children's soft play and indoor play areas: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus),' published on 7 October (**ASM2BCSTD/167-INQ000082345**)
 - 'Hospitality venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus), on 8 October (**ASM2BCSTD/168-INQ000082358**)
 - 'Events: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' on 8 October (**ASM2BCSTD/169-INQ000082354**)
 - 'Nightclubs, music venues and adult entertainment venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus),' on 8 October (**ASM2BCSTD/170-INQ000082360**)
204. On 25 October 2021 Cabinet met to consider the latest 21-day review, due on 28 October. I exhibit the paper at **ASM2BCSTD/171- INQ000057928**. Cabinet noted the feedback from the introduction of the mandatory use of COVID passes and asked for a further paper on mandating use of the COVID pass for entry into other venues, such as theatres, cinemas, hospitality and possibly leisure facilities.
205. On 28 October 2021 Cabinet met again to consider the Covid pass. It was agreed the mandatory use of the pass should not be applied to the wider hospitality industry as part of the current review of the Regulations, but that at his press conference the following day, the First Minister should signal the intention that it should be applied to larger venues at the next review period, should infection rates continue to rise. This would also provide time for work to be undertaken with stakeholders over the three weeks to agree a definition and the approach to implementation. In terms of leisure and entertainment venues, cinemas, theatres, and concert halls already had controlled entry procedures in place and could implement additional checks for COVID passes. Therefore, it was agreed that the mandatory use of the pass would be applied to those venues. This would be announced as part of the press conference and implemented two weeks thereafter. I exhibit the minutes of Cabinet's meetings on 25 and 28 October at **ASM2BCSTD/172-INQ000057927**.

206. On 29 October 2021 the First Minister formally agreed (via MA/FM/3639/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/173-INQ000176896**) to extend the use of the COVID Pass in theatres, cinemas, and concert halls from 15 November; and to signal the intention to further extend the scope of the Covid Pass to the hospitality sector at the next review if public health conditions do not improve significantly. The First Minister issued a written statement that day confirming these decisions.
207. Further guidance documents were issued/updated in November, including 'Organised children and young people's activities: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (on 3 November), exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/174-INQ000082394** and 'Theatres, concert halls and cinemas: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' on 15 November, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/175-INQ000082415**.
208. At its meeting on 15 November, Cabinet considered a paper relating to the 21-day review due on 18 November 2021. I exhibit the paper at **ASM2BCSTD/176-INQ000129996**. Cabinet noted that Covid-19 cases had fallen across Wales and that pressures on the NHS were lower than in previous waves. Cabinet therefore agreed that the use of the Covid Pass would not extend to hospitality settings. However, the option of extending the use of the Covid Pass in hospitality settings during the coming winter would remain under consideration in an attempt at allowing bars, restaurants, and cafes to stay open and trading through the busy festive period. Cabinet also considered three possible scenarios for the trajectory of the virus, to inform the next review scheduled for 9 December. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/177-INQ000022555**.

December 2021 – March 2022

209. Cabinet met on several occasions in early December 2021 (on 2, 6, 8 and 9 December), to consider the 21-day review due on 9 December, in the context of the emerging new Covid variant (subsequently named Omicron). I attach the minutes of these meetings at **ASM2BCSTD/178- INQ000271796**.
210. On 8 December, Cabinet noted that the UK Government was expected to announce later that day that it was introducing the remaining elements of its 'COVID Plan B', which included the introduction of a Covid passport for entry into certain venues in England. It was agreed that officials would need to give further consideration to whether to extend the use of the Covid pass to hospitality settings.

211. On 9 December 2021 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM/4273/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/179-INQ000176899** to retain the existing restrictions, subject to a change to clarify that from 11 December, the auditorium of a theatre, cinema or concert hall and the viewing areas of an indoor arena or stadium were not to be treated as premises where food or drink is sold, or otherwise provided, for consumption on the premises.
212. On 10 December 2021 the First Minister issued a written statement noting that the Coronavirus rate in Wales had remained relatively stable since the last review of the regulations – though it continued to be high at around 500 cases per 100,000 people – and indicated that people should continue to wear face coverings in all public places, including in cinemas and theatres, pubs and restaurants, except when eating or drinking.
213. On 23 December 2021 Hospitality venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus) was updated and is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/180-INQ000082518**.
214. In response to the challenges caused for the inbound tourism sector by the impact on visitor number of international travel restrictions, challenges which had been consistently raised through the Travel Trade Stakeholders Group, the Minister for Economy approved MA-VG-3448-21, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/181-INQ000145574**, and the Wales International Inbound Tourism Fund (WIITF) was announced. That provided £400,000 towards supply chain businesses impacted by international restrictions.
215. On 16 December 2021 Cabinet met twice to consider the latest position, Cabinet agreed that nightclubs would close from Boxing Day. It was agreed that indoor sporting events, without spectators could take place, but there was a need for further advice on the transmission of the new variant before a decision could be taken on outdoor events. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/182- INQ000271744**.
216. Cabinet met on 20 December 2021 to consider the latest position. Cabinet concluded that given the expected increase in cases of Omicron and the impact this would have on the NHS along with the delivery of public services, measures to slow down transmission rates were required, and decided that all indoor and outdoor events should be closed to spectators from Boxing Day. There would be a need to consider the implications for other indoor venues, such as cinemas, theatres, and concert halls. Cabinet asked for additional information before further consideration of the restrictions.

217. Cabinet met again on 21 December 2021. Cabinet decided that the requirement for 2m physical distancing should be re-introduced. It was also agreed that specific measures should be applicable to licensed and 'bring your own alcohol' premises. Restrictions on holiday accommodation should follow the previous regulations. Cabinet also agreed the Alert Level 2 provisions for events in public places, of up to 50 attendees outdoors and 30 indoors, should be reinstated. The previous exemptions would still apply, so would the provisions that alcohol should not be consumed or sold at such regulated events. Limits would be removed for those attending weddings and wakes, but numbers would be determined by the ability of the venue to comply with social distancing and other reasonable measures. Ministers also agreed the rule of six should be applied to cinemas, theatres, and concert halls to allow groups of people to sit together and specific risk assessments should be undertaken for performances in hospitality sessions.
218. At the meeting on 21 December Cabinet agreed that £120m would be available for nightclubs, events, retail, hospitality, leisure, and tourism businesses affected by the move to Alert Level 2 and there would be additional funds to support sports venues, arts and cultural organisations affected by the pandemic. I exhibit the Cabinet minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/183-INQ000271746**.
219. On 22 December 2021 the First Minister agreed, via MA/FM/4495/20, that Wales would move to Alert Level 2 from 26 December 2021. It was agreed that provisions regarding gatherings in holiday accommodation would be removed and the current guidance on reducing contacts over the Christmas period was extended. To prevent egregious gatherings, it was decided that it would remain an offence for more than 30 people to meet indoors or 50 people to meet outdoors. The provision allowing pilot events at alert level 2 was removed with elite sporting events only being allowed to be played behind closed doors. The requirements for ice skating rinks and sexual entertainment venues to be closed at Alert Level 2 were removed. However, they would require additional mitigations to be put in place. Nightclubs were required to close from 26 December. Face coverings were required in hospitality settings when not seated alongside reintroducing measures for licensed and bring your own premises to control entry, provide table service only and collect contact details. I exhibit the MA at **ASM2BCSTD/184-INQ000176901**.
220. The Alert Level 2 provisions were further amended in respect of people involved in the running of team sports either indoors or outdoors. This included players, coaching staff, officials, and those working or volunteering. There were however restrictions on

spectators based on the general restrictions for regulated activities, which were a maximum of 30 indoors or 50 outdoors. These measures applied to team sports, only, so that grass roots individual sporting events like 10k races could not go ahead unless they did not exceed 50 people. Gatherings of up to 50 people outside in regulated premises, such as a pub beer garden, would be allowed if no alcohol were served and outdoor events held elsewhere in public places would not be subject to the no alcohol rule (on the basis that gathering in groups of up to 50 would be allowed, albeit not recommended).

221. Several updates to guidance were published the following day, including:
- 'Events: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/185-INQ000082510**)
 - Theatres, concert halls and cinemas: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/186-INQ000082529**)
222. Further guidance updates were published in January 2022, including:
- 'Theatres, concert halls and cinemas: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' on 6 January 2022 (**ASM2BCSTD/187-INQ000082563**)
 - 'Gyms, leisure centres, sports clubs, dance studios and other indoor sports facilities: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' on 7 January 2022 (**ASM2BCSTD/188-INQ000082569**)
 - 'Children's soft play and indoor play areas: potential reasonable measures action card (alert level 2)', also on 7 January, providing advice on measures that were likely to be reasonable to take to minimise the risk of coronavirus in children's soft play, and indoor play areas. (**ASM2BCSTD/189-INQ000082566**)
223. On 13 January 2022, Cabinet considered the latest 21-day review. Cabinet agreed that from 21 January (conditions allowing) the cap on numbers for outdoor sports would be lifted: that additional measures (such as the rule of six and the requirement for table service) be removed in respect of outdoor hospitality. They would however remain in place for indoor hospitality. Hospitality at events would permit food and drink to be taken outdoors. Nightclubs would be permitted to reopen from 28 January with the additional reasonable measures (including the 2m requirement, table service and contact details) lifted in respect of licensed premises. The COVID pass was retained in respect of nightclubs, events, cinemas, and theatres. In relation to a proposal to

permit outdoor events involving up to 500 people plus 500 spectators, Cabinet noted that the First Minister would need to consider further from when this change could be introduced. I exhibit the minutes of Cabinet's meeting at **ASM2BCSTD/190-INQ000057924**.

224. On 14 January 2022 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM/0153/22, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/191- INQ000271809**, to amend the regulations from 15 January 2022 to increase the number of people who can be present at outdoor events from 50 to 500 (not including those participating in a team sport event). The First Minister issued a written statement that day which confirmed this change and noted that data was suggesting that cases of Coronavirus had started to fall back from their very high levels.
225. On 18 January 2022, the 'Hospitality venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' was updated.
226. Cabinet considered the restrictions again on 17 January 2022. Cabinet confirmed the Regulations would be amended from 21 January to remove the additional protections outdoors, providing the conditions remained favourable on 20 January. There would be no limits on the numbers who could take part in outdoor activities, crowds would be able to return to outdoor sporting events and outdoor hospitality would be able to operate without additional measures. The Covid pass would be required for entry to larger outdoor events.
227. The expansion of the Covid pass into hospitality would be revisited at the review due on 10 February. Cabinet also confirmed, subject to the public health context remaining favourable, in the advice due to be presented to the First Minister in the week of 24 January, the move back to all Alert Level Zero protections from 28 January. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/192-INQ000022568**.
228. On 19 January 2022 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/0186/22, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/193- INQ000271810**) to lift the specific restrictions and requirements applying outdoors from 6am on Friday 21 January which:
- Removed the caps on numbers gathering outdoors.
 - Removed the offence for gathering outdoors in excess of 50 people.

- Removed the additional reasonable measures for outdoor hospitality: the rule of six and the table service requirement.
 - Allowed food and drink can be taken outdoors at events from indoor hospitality settings.
229. On 21 January 2022 the First Minister issued a written statement confirming that Wales could move to alert level zero for all outdoor activities on that day. The statement also noted that the Covid Pass would continue to be required for entry to outdoor events attended by more than 4,000 people, if unseated, or 10,000 people when seated, and in all cinemas, theatres and concert halls which were open.
230. At its meeting on 24 January, Cabinet considered a paper entitled 'Coronavirus: next steps', which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/194-INQ000130028**. The paper summarised the latest position, set out the issues for consideration at the next 21-day review, and sought agreement for officials to work with partners on a plan for transition from emergency measures. Cabinet approved the paper; I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/195-INQ000130027**.
231. On 27 January 2022 the First Minister agreed (via MA/FM/0284/22, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/196- INQ000271811**), to amendments to the regulations to move the whole of Wales to Alert Level Zero from Friday 28 January, and to a technical amendment to allow people who are medically exempt to enter premises and events where the Covid Pass is used. The First Minister also agreed to remove the formal legal requirement to wear a face covering in hospitality settings, including nightclubs, and move it instead into guidance.
232. 'Gyms, leisure centres, sports clubs, dance studios and other indoor sports facilities: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' was updated on the same day which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/197-INQ000082283**.
233. On 28 January 2022 the First Minister issued a written statement confirming that Wales would complete its move to Alert Level zero on 28 January. That meant that nightclubs could re-open; the rule of six for gatherings in regulated premises, such as hospitality, cinemas and theatres no longer applied; and the additional reasonable measures requirement (table service and collection of contact details) in licensed premises was removed. The statement noted that the remaining measures, which included

requirement for a Covid Pass to enter larger indoor and outdoor events, nightclubs, cinemas, theatres, and concert halls, would be reviewed by 10 February.

234. Several guidance documents were updated on 31 January, including 'Tourism businesses, such as accommodation and visitor attractions: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/198-INQ000082615**); and 'Events: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/199-INQ000082612**).
235. On 7 February 2022 Cabinet agreed that the mandatory use of the Covid pass had been an important part of the Welsh Government's response to Coronavirus, but that it was no longer proportionate. The requirement for venues to restrict entry to those with such passes would be removed from 18th February. I exhibit the minutes at **ASM2BCSTD/200-INQ000130031**; the First Minister formally agreed on 10 February (via MA/FM/0541/22, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/201-INQ000177047**) to the removal of the requirement for venues to restrict entry to holders of a domestic Covid pass from 18 February.
236. Further updates to sector specific guidance documents were published on 18 February, including:
- 'Events: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/202-INQ000082664**)
 - 'Nightclubs, music venues and adult entertainment venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/203-INQ000082676**)
 - 'Theatres, concert halls and cinemas: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus)' (**ASM2BCSTD/204-INQ000082674**)
237. On 25 February 2022 the First Minister issued a written statement confirming that from 28 February, adults and children aged 11 and over would no longer be required to wear face coverings in many indoor places, with the exception of the public areas of health and social care settings, in all retail settings, and on public transport. Those amendments meant that face covering requirements no longer applied to particular types of premises that were open to the public (for example, leisure and entertainment premises, and visitor attractions).

238. On 24 March 2022 the First Minister agreed via MA/FM1233/22, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/205-INQ000177065** to revoke the requirement for face coverings in indoor retail settings and on public transport on 28 March. Regulation 39 (2) and (3), which made it an offence for any person to be involved in organising a large unlicensed music event without reasonable excuse, was also revoked from 28 March. Businesses and organisations would still be required to undertake specific Coronavirus risk assessments and take reasonable measures to minimise risks.
239. On 29 March final versions of all action cards were published, namely: Hospitality venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus) (**ASM2BCSTD/206-INQ000082741**); Tourism businesses, such as accommodation and visitor attractions: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus) (**ASM2BCSTD/207-INQ000082751**); Nightclubs, music venues and adult entertainment venues: potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus) (**ASM2BCSTD/208-INQ000082745**); Theatres, concert halls and cinemas: Potential reasonable measures action card (coronavirus) (**ASM2BCSTD/209-INQ000082750**); Children's soft play and indoor play areas: potential reasonable measures action card (alert level 2) (**ASM2BCSTD/210-INQ000082737**); Places of worship and funerals: potential reasonable measures action card (alert level 0) (**ASM2BCSTD/211-INQ000082746**).
240. The above deals with guidance and regulations that specifically related to the Directorate's subject matter areas. Other regulations and guidance may also have been relevant, for example for coach operators. I have covered Transport related guidance in my statement in response to M2BWTG-01.

Funding and support

241. I will deal with the financial assistance provided briefly, though the amount of work required by the Directorate's officials in running the schemes was significant.
242. On 5 July 2020 DCMS announced a funding package of £1.57 billion as part of its Cultural Recovery Fund. The consequential payment for Wales was £59 million and was to be utilised to support cultural organisations to survive the financial pressures caused by the pandemic and to support their long-term sustainability. The Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, and Minister for Finance and Trefnydd agreed on 29 July 2020 (via MA/DET/2221/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/212-INQ000103966**) to establish a

Cultural Recovery Fund of £50 million for revenue support and £3 million of capital support. The Cultural Recovery Fund was operated and administered using the model already developed for the Economic Resilience Fund, which I describe in detail in my statement in response to M2B-BRD-01.

243. A £7 million freelancer fund was announced by the Welsh Government on 28 September 2020. The fund was open to freelancers in the sub sectors of arts, creative industries, arts and heritage events, culture and heritage, whose work had direct creative/cultural outcomes. A further £8.9 million of the Freelancers Fund was announced on 10 February 2021.
244. On 30 September, an additional £600,000 of events funding announced, as part of a reprioritisation of Event Wales budgets agreed by the Minister for International Relations via MA/EM/2370/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/213-INQ000103963**.
245. On 25 November 2020, the Deputy Minister agreed (via MA/DET/4012/20, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/214-INQ000103969**) to the budget for and commissioning of an evaluation of the Cultural Recovery Fund 2020–21.
246. An extension to the CRF, CRF2, was approved on 22 March 2021 by MA-DET-1090-21 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/215-INQ000145335**. The Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language and the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism agreed the policy of extending the Cultural Recovery Fund, and the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd agreed to allocate an additional £20 million in 2021-22 from the centrally held Covid-19 revenue reserve, and also to consider a further call of up to £10 million if there was further demand from the sector.
247. Further advice was submitted on 4 May 2021 (MA/DET/1608/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/216-INQ000116760**), noting that CRF applications closed on 20 April 2021 with demand for funding of more than £44 million, and that an early review had indicated that eligible applications would be around £35 million. Ministers agreed to the recommendation for additional funding of £2 million to support the delivery of applications up to £10,000. Ministers subsequently agreed (via MA-DB-1866-21) exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/217-INQ000116791** to a further allocation of £8 million from reserves for the Cultural Recovery Fund, as the assessment of applications had confirmed that the full £30 million was required to fund eligible projects.

248. In December 2021, in response to the severely challenging position of the inbound tourism sector raised consistently through the Travel Trade Stakeholders Group the Minister for Economy approved MA-VG-3448-21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/181-INQ000145574**. and the Wales International Inbound Tourism Fund (WIITF) was announced providing £400k towards supply chain businesses impacted by international restrictions.

Response to enquiries, informal guidance, and stakeholder communications

249. Given the nature of the issues and the working relationship between the Directorate and industry there were numerous requests for information, clarity and enquiries made by stakeholders. These were all fact-specific. In an attempt to streamline the work of responding to those queries and in order to ensure consistency, the Directorate maintained internally a central log of frequently asked questions, common issues, and “lines.” These were used in responding to individual queries raised throughout the pandemic.
250. Such “lines” did not have any particular public status and were merely used as an aide for staff to ensure consistent and speedy responses could be provided to queries.
251. The Visitor Economy team provided regular updates to industry by way of e-newsletters. Weekly updates and special bulletins in respect of announcements, changes in regulations, alert levels, and guidance, were published. In 2002 there 95 newsletters; in 2021 there were 106; and from there until 31 March 2022 there were 25. I exhibit an example at **ASM2BCSTD/218-INQ000271557**.
252. Bulletins had been provided for sector-specific issues prior to the pandemic but the uptake in readership was significant. Reach doubled from pre pandemic from around 10,000 to around 20,000. Opening rates, which is the number of recipients who in fact open the newsletter, were high with an average being in the region of 30%, and often over 40%. Anything over 25% is considered a strong read rate for industry newsletters.
253. In addition, the content of those newsletters was regularly shared in partners’ communications material (e.g., Gwynedd Council’s business support bulletins), providing further indirect reach.

254. There was also active and regular social media engagement on twitter channels [@VisitWalesBiz](#) and [@CroesoCymruBus](#). There were frequent posts promoting the publishing of the newsletters / special bulletin. There were further individual posts to push key content from the newsletters / bulletins – e.g., Revised guidance, action cards, Good to Go, toolkits, Keep Wales Safe assets.

Sector-specific teams

255. As previously stated, the Directorate is divided into a number of divisions/teams which operate in discrete areas within and across (albeit that they work very closely together). I provide below further information about how each team responded specifically to the pandemic and the handling of the coronavirus restrictions.

Cadw

256. Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service. It seeks to protect Wales's historic places by:
- helping to care for its historic environment for the benefit of people today and in the future.
 - promoting the development of the skills that are needed to look after its historic environment properly.
 - helping people to cherish and enjoy its historic environment.
 - making our historic environment work for its economic well-being, and
 - working with partners to achieve their common goals together.
257. Cadw operates as a major visitor business, a heritage conservation body, a regulatory authority, and a more traditional government policy and business unit.
258. The head of Cadw is Gwilym Hughes who reports to Jason Thomas, Director of Culture, Sport, and Tourism. The head of Cadw sits on an internal operating board which supports, scrutinises and monitors Cadw's strategic direction, business plan and standards.
259. The board currently comprises:
- Jane Richardson – Chair and non-executive member
 - Gwilym Hughes – Deputy Director and Head of Cadw

- Huw Davies – Head of Finance and Central Services
- Liz Girling – non-executive member
- Peter Wakelin – non-executive member
- Steven Foulston – non-executive member
- Gaynor Legall – non-executive member
- Tracy Dicataldo – staff representative

260. 28 of Cadw's larger sites are staffed. These sites usually have exhibitions as well as a shop, and some have catering facilities. During the year to 31 March 2019 Cadw welcomed 1,321,400 visitors to its staffed sites. Cadw estimates that its unstaffed sites received at least a further 1 million visitors.
261. Cadw's sites are a focal point for its work to make the historic environment of Wales interesting and understandable. There are structured educational opportunities provided together with opportunities to volunteer at Cadw sites.
262. Throughout the pandemic Cadw participated in regular internal departmental meetings for Culture, Sport, and Tourism – allowing policy decision making to be fully integrated into wider approach to hospitality, events, and the wider visitor economy across Wales.

Cadw response

263. I set out below the Cadw response to the coronavirus restrictions, followed by a description of Cadw's approach to decision making.
264. On the evening of the 16 March 2020 Jason Thomas decided that all staffed properties should be closed to visitors from the morning of the 17 March. All unstaffed monuments were closed from the 23 March. In practical terms this meant that all sites with lockable gates were locked. Bi-lingual signage was erected at those sites which could not be locked stating that they were 'Closed to Visitors.' All maintenance visits across all sites were suspended together with all in-house conservation. Work from home orders were issued by Cadw to all its staff. All externally contracted conservation and development projects suspended. That email correspondence is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/219- INQ000271819.**

265. It is also relevant that Cadw has a number of holiday let properties. On 16 March it was decided that all such holiday lettings would be closed from the 17 March. The Harlech Café was also closed. Some sites are also used as wedding venues. It was decided that initially all weddings between the 17 March to the end June would be cancelled, refunded, or re-booked. Weddings did not resume at Cadw sites until September 2020 and under strict covid controls.
266. On 23 March, all Welsh Government offices were closed. On that date Cadw decided that all officer fieldwork should temporarily cease including grant, designation, consent, and condition surveys. External contract "Buildings at Risk" survey field visits were also ceased. A part of Cadw's work is to assess and designate sites of historical or cultural significance. Such designation activity was suspended from 23 March including Parks and Gardens consultation.
267. Cadw funds (or part-funds) numerous heritage bodies and heritage project work. On 23 March 2020, all bodies in receipt of revenue grants by Cadw were advised to cease fieldwork. Cadw's own archaeological fieldwork projects were suspended and re-scheduled until later in the year.
268. By April 2020, when the national lockdown was in place, all Cadw sites were closed with no visitors nor conservation activities taking place. The 100 or so custodians were working from home, and many were reassigned to duties in other Welsh Government departments. During that time, all branch staff with Historic Environment responsibilities were home-working undertaking office-based work largely revolving around consents and planning issues. Plans were put in place to enable site visits to be undertaken in cases of urgent damage.
269. In May 2020, the Covid-19 Guidance for 'Re-Opening natural and outdoor cultural sites' was published by Welsh Government. That guidance was led by Natural Resources Wales with close co-operation from Cadw staff.
270. Development and conservation projects re-started at Cadw sites around this time. Statutory maintenance work re-commenced together with all in-house conservation work. Team sizes were reduced to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements. There were increased PPE measures introduced for Cadw staff. Preparatory works were undertaken with external contractors ahead of recommencing contracted works.

271. Steps were also taken to prepare for post-restriction re-opening. Sites were divided into three tranches based on location, accessibility, and risk. New COVID social distancing signs produced with training being provided for custodians. Sites were risk assessed with visitor management strategies prepared.
272. As regards Cadw's holiday accommodation there was engagement with the agency which managed those properties with new cleaning routines initiated which followed best practice as set out by the Wales Tourism Alliance.
273. Internally, there were six workstreams and a steering group created to lead the work on post-restriction re-opening of Cadw monuments and the activities of the Cadw Inspectorate teams. The Historic Environment branch drafted a decision tool which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/220-INQ000271778** and **ASM2BCSTD/221-INQ000271939** to guide visits to sites and private dwellings.
274. Early drafts of the Culture and Heritage Destinations Guidance were shared with a range of stakeholders in June, including National Museums Wales, the National Library of Wales, Arts Council Wales, Ffilm Cymru, and the National Trust. Around that time Tranche 1, that is low risk and unstaffed sites re-opened for local visitors. It was decided that local staff would carry out spot checks to monitor visitor behaviour. There was however no permanent staffing presence at any of those sites. Staffed sites remained closed with staff returning on 22 June to prepare for re-opening. Guidance was provided to key keepers who open the sites, seeking to ensure their safety at all times. I exhibit the guidance at **ASM2BCSTD/222- INQ000271558**.
275. Cadw hired security for the Summer Solstice at Bryn Celli Ddu to prevent and if necessary, disperse and manage, the usual Druid gathering. Bryn Celli Ddu, or the Mound in the Dark Grove, is a chambered neolithic tomb on the isle of Anglesey. As the sun rises on the summer solstice shafts of light shine directly down the tomb's passageway to illuminate the chamber within: that sight is visible for one day a year, only. That event generally sees a large number of attendees on an annual basis.
276. Tranche 2 sites, which is all other unstaffed sites, re-opened their external areas in July 2020. Staff remained on site preparing staffed sites throughout July with re-induction session for staff held on 30 July 2020. An online ticketing system was prepared with COVID risk assessments and cleaning regimes implemented. The same

happened at all Cadw holiday lettings with cleaning and contamination awareness session held for cleaners and agents. The Historic Environment branch undertook a health risk assessment for all its staff.

277. Staffed sites started to re-open on 4 August 2020 with holiday lettings re-opening later in the month. All cafés opened under a takeaway model.
278. By 30 September, all staffed sites had re-opened. During September local restrictions impacted upon some sites, for example, Caerphilly, Castell Coch and Denbigh Castle's closing in the light of local restrictions. During September sites began accepting walk-in customers as well as pre-booked. Wedding ceremonies also re-commenced during September under strict COVID conditions. Site visits for Buildings at Risk surveys were re-started by the Historic Environment operations team.
279. The firebreak restrictions imposed between 23 October and 9 November 2020 resulted in all staffed sites, holiday lettings and cafés closing. Unstaffed sites remained open for local visitors to exercise in outdoor areas. All Halloween and Christmas events were cancelled with a digital Santa campaign replacing the usual physical grottos.
280. In December 2020 sites reduced their visitor capacity with all close contact areas being closed. In light of the lockdown . all staffed sites closed on 20 December with holiday lettings also closing.
281. There was a phased re-opening of sites thereafter from 1 April 2021 with cafés again opening on a takeaway model. Weddings re-commenced under a "keep local restrictions" policy which included a limit of six guests if guests travelled from outside of Wales.
282. By 22 May 2021, all sites were re-opened. All Cadw sites applied for 'Covid-19 safe' accreditation with updated risk assessments. Lateral flow tests were bulk ordered and distributed to sites also. In June 2021 security was again procured for the solstice at Bryn Celli Ddu. As a result of the measures undertaken by Cadw in 2020 and 2021 the summer solstice took place without incident.
283. The first large-scale event was the Blaenavon Rocket Launch in September 2021. This event was run as a test 'hybrid' event in order to manage numbers physically in attendance while maximising participation and engagement. The 450 who attended in

person followed all the requirements at the time to ensure COVID compliance, while another 1000 engaged digitally. Following the safe and successful event, Cadw sites open applications for third party events to be held. In December larger events re-started outdoors at other sites including Tintern Abbey with a choral service taking place. An evaluation report was produced, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/223-INQ000271925**.

- 284. Into March and April of 2022 all staffed and unstaffed sites were open. Staff continued to work on a socially distanced basis but with face coverings being optional but not discouraged.
- 285. Cadw's Deputy Director participated in all internal departmental (Culture, Sport, and Tourism) discussions that were held at least on a weekly basis, and other regular internal Welsh Government briefings. This facilitated a full understanding of the progress of the pandemic as it impacted on Wales and informed decision-making relating to monument closures and openings and other key operational activities. Cadw's Deputy Director also attended regular meetings between DCMS and wider heritage stakeholders across England – allowing a wider understanding of the approach to the changing course of the pandemic and the impact on stakeholders on both sides of the border.

Cadw: approach to decision-making

- 286. Cadw's Deputy Director and other senior staff met with key operational partners (including National Museum of Wales and National Trust Cymru) on a weekly basis at the height of the pandemic and also with a wider heritage stakeholder group timed to coincide with the 21-day review cycle.
- 287. Regular meetings of the wider Historic Environment Group were also held, at which Covid-19 matters were discussed. In particular, as noted earlier in my statement, the HEG held two meetings specifically to discuss the response to the pandemic, on 5 May and on 7 July.
- 288. All this engagement facilitated a two—way flow of information. Views from stakeholders were included in Ministerial briefings and where possible proposed options were shared with stakeholders to test for deliverability and practicality. Feedback also informed the development and revision of guidance, as did liaison with other UK nations.

289. Regular stakeholder meetings allowed the swift communication of key messages to major heritage stakeholders. It also allowed the development of joint public communications – for example over the reopening of visitor attractions, allowing partners to coordinate messaging and avoid public confusion.
290. All the internal Cadw working groups were asked to consider the impact of decisions on visitors to our monuments as re-opening was undertaken and, in particular, the need to keep the public safe at all times. We conducted constant visitor surveys to obtain feedback on the measures that were put in place, which also allowed us to consider adjustments when required. Similarly, we discussed the impact of proposals on all groups (in particular on visitors and staff) with partner organisations (National Museum and National Trust) at our regular meetings, which proved vital in sharing experience and approach.
291. Regular visitor surveys were undertaken that provided critical feedback on our approach at monuments. These allowed us to monitor the impact of decisions along with regular (virtual) meetings of the site-based staff where information on the impact of our on-site arrangements could be collected, reviewed, and evaluated.

Sport

292. Sport Wales is an arm's length public body which is funded by the Welsh Government, and whose purpose is to develop and promote sport and physical activity in Wales.
293. On 24 March 2020 Sport Wales was asked to consider how it could support the national response to COVID 19 by reprioritising work, staff, and budgets. In response Sport Wales re-purposed £200,000 of Grant in Aid to respond to sports clubs' immediate financial challenges of Covid. Welsh Government provided an additional £200,000 to create the Emergency Relief Fund.
294. In April 2020 Sport Wales re-purposed £4.5 million of Grant in Aid and Lottery funding to extend the Emergency Relief Fund to support voluntary sports clubs during the lockdown.
295. From April onwards there were regular meetings between DCMS and Sport policy teams in the devolved nations. That enabled a significant amount of understanding of policy to be shared whilst also enabling cross-border issues, such as with competitions and travel, to be dealt with smoothly.

296. The weekly ESNR group Covid19 Co-ordination meetings, and other internal Welsh Government briefings, attended by the Deputy Director of Culture and Sport facilitated a full understanding of the progress of the pandemic as it impacted on Wales. The information was disseminated to all Culture and Sport staff during weekly briefing meetings. These discussions, together with the information shared at weekly meetings with DCMS and other DA sports teams informed, especially around international travel, informed the decision-making relating to the restrictions placed on sports clubs, sports participation, sport and leisure facilities and elite athletes and teams.
297. In early April 2020, CSTD began a regular dialogue with the Welsh Sports Association (WSA) and Sport Wales about developing a responsible and managed return to sport in Wales. Initially, six sub-groups were established by the WSA, with membership drawn from Sport Wales, local authorities, venues, sports governing bodies and the Welsh Government:
- Outdoor Sports played individually or socially distanced.
 - Outdoor Team Sports.
 - Indoor Sports played individually or socially distanced.
 - Indoor Team Sports
 - Facility providers
 - Elite and Professional Sports/Athletes
298. The WSA consolidated these into three groups, an approach that was discussed and signed off in a meeting between the Welsh Government, WSA and Sport Wales on 22 May 2020. The three brigaded groups covered indoor and facilities; outdoors; and elite/professional.
299. A final meeting of the wider group, consisting of all the individual groups combined, happened on 26 April 2022, following the lifting of Covid restrictions, to discuss ongoing risk management. While the groups have not formally been 'disbanded', there hasn't been any call for them to meet since that last meeting.
300. Ahead of every 21-day review (until all restrictions were removed for the sport sector in 2022) stakeholder meetings were arranged between officials and representatives from sport and leisure organisations, via these six (and later three) groups. The Welsh

Sports Association arranged and hosted these meetings, some of which were attended by Ministers, to clarify the reason for and listen to concerns about the impact of Covid-19 and the restrictions. These meetings gathered the views from a wide variety of sport and leisure stakeholders, which were fed into Ministerial briefings and each easement assessment when restrictions or easements were being considered. By way of an example, I exhibit three documents at **ASM2BCSTD/224-INQ000271768**, **ASM2BCSTD/225-INQ000271765** and **ASM2BCSTD/226-INQ000271802** which illustrates how the discussion and recommendations of the Professional and Elite Sport stakeholder group were reflected in the easement assessment for the return of elite athletes to training.

301. The easement assessments completed prior to restrictions being applied or eased considered the impact on different groups. These assessments were informed by surveys and insight provided by Sport Wales throughout the pandemic. The surveys, conducted by Com Res, were also key to understanding which groups were most disadvantaged by the Covid-19 restrictions and this informed the advice officials submitted to Ministers on the need for additional funding to combat the impact of the pandemic on people's health and wellbeing. The survey results also informed the decisions Sport Wales made about the investment of its resources.
302. On 20 May 2020, the Welsh Government issued a letter to professional sports and governing bodies (Cardiff City, Swansea City, WRU and FAW) to clarify the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 did not prevent athletes and staff, acting in a professional capacity, from resuming work. The letter confirmed training and a match could take place behind closed doors without the need to change the Regulations and requested a copy of the club's/organisation's bespoke return-to-training protocols to be reviewed from a public health perspective. I exhibit a copy of the letter to Cardiff City at **ASM2BCSTD/227-INQ0000000000** and **ASM2BCSTD/227a-INQ000320862**.
303. On 17 September 2020 £14 million of funding for a Sport and Leisure Recovery Fund was agreed by the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, and the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd (via MA/DET/2774/20 which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/228- INQ000271787**). Sport Wales was awarded £12.5 million to distribute to the sector with a further £1.5 million added to the CRF to support sport events organisations.

304. On 23 October 2020, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport, and Tourism wrote to Sport Wales (**ASM2BCSTD/229-INQ000271797**) to confirm under the Regulations that would come into force at 6.00pm, Olympic and Paralympic athletes who are full-time and funded by the National Lottery could train and compete and access facilities. The letter also confirmed a list of sports facilities that could open to professional and elite athletes, and also to their coaching and support staff. The letter was shared with facility operators.
305. In November 2020, in the light of exceptions which applied to elite athletes, the Welsh Government asked Sport Wales to establish a process to further manage the designation of elite status which also allowed for the phased return of team sports, ensuring that was done safely, gradually, and in the context of the wider public health crisis. To help ensure the proper oversight and governance of this designation process, Sport Wales established a National Sport Group (NSG) made up of representatives from Welsh Government, Sport Wales, Commonwealth Games Wales, and the Welsh Sports Association.
306. The purpose of the NSG was to manage the elite status designation process for a measured and gradual return to competitive sport. The Group was led and chaired by Sport Wales, and the Terms of Reference required Welsh Government attendance at each meeting. The Welsh Government was normally represented by Steffan Roberts. I exhibit the Terms of Reference at **ASM2BCSTD/230-INQ000271785**. The Group operated within the Welsh Government's national coronavirus rules and its Sport, Recreation and Leisure Guidance, and had due regard to guidance produced by Public Health Wales. The aim was to ensure that a safe return to competitive sport is balanced with a responsible contribution to keeping people safe and protecting the NHS.
307. The role of the National Sport Group was:
- To provide and review elite status designations that exempt athletes from certain restrictions within the Regulations and seek Welsh Government approval where necessary.
 - To collate evidence of the impact of the return to competitive sport to inform the Welsh Government's periodic reviews of the Regulations and guidance.
308. The NSG met weekly throughout the period of Covid-19 restrictions, between 18 November 2020 – 21 February 2022

309. On 21 January 2021, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport, and Tourism; the Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing, and the Welsh Language; and Minister for Finance and Trefnydd agreed to the creation of a £17.7 million 'Spectator Sports Survival Fund', as a response to the severe impacts of the pandemic on spectator sports between 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. I exhibit the Ministerial Advice (MA/DET/4498/20) at **ASM2BCSTD/231-INQ000116773**.
310. Following the announcements in December 2021, sporting events were to be held behind closed doors. When those measures were announced the Economy Minister also confirmed a £3 million Spectator Sports Fund would be available to support clubs and sporting venues affected by the measures. The details of the Fund were agreed by the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip; the Minister for Economy; the Minister for Finance and Local Government, and the First Minister via MA/DB/4502/21, exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/232-INQ000145527**.

Culture

311. During the initial period of the Covid-19 restrictions from March 2020 all Welsh cultural attractions, organisations and facilities that were ordinarily open to the public were closed. The immediate concern was to reallocate funding to support the independent sector. The Cultural Recovery Fund played a large part in providing financial assistance to cultural venues. On 1 April 2020, £350,000 of emergency funding was awarded to the Museums Federation to distribute to independent Accredited Museums (including those working towards Accreditation). There was a further award of £250,000 for Digital library resources to enable public libraries to provide access to resources to enable people to read and to engage whilst self-isolating. A Cultural Resilience fund was also established which provided support to cultural heritage organisations (including local authority services) to ensure the safety of collections and phased re-opening. Support was also provided to independent/freelance conservators.
312. From April 2020 onwards, weekly meetings were held between the Museums and Archives Team, Cadw, the Museums Federation and National Lottery Heritage Fund. There were regular meetings between the DCMS museums team and the museums teams in the devolved nations. Similar meetings were held between the DCMS and the WG libraries teams.

313. The Arts Council for Wales (ACW) re-purposed funding to open an Urgent Response Fund for Individuals during April, they also create a Stabilisation Fund for Organisations and Individuals using reserves, core funding and National Lottery Funding.
314. On 8 May 2020, the First Minister announced an adjustment to the regulations “enabling local authorities to begin the process of planning how to safely reopen libraries”. Between May 2020 and August 2020, library services operated by local authorities undertook a phased approach to reopening libraries. In the first instance, a click and collect loans service was provided, as well as a home delivery service. Each library authority received £5,000 of additional funding to support the process of re-opening.
315. Three-weekly meetings between Culture Division’s Deputy Director, Ministers, and CEOs of culture-related Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies (WGSBs) commenced with discussions around the use of the UK Job Retention Scheme by WGSBs. Redeployment of staff at Culture WGSBs was also discussed at first meeting (20 May) followed by direct engagement with WGSBs to understand which staff could be offered up to assist with the emergency response more broadly.
316. From June 2020 specialist advice for museums was incorporated into the re-opening guidance.
317. ACW and the Welsh Government liaised in July 2020 regarding the Welsh Government guidance issued at the time on resuming arts activity. ACW met virtually with specific sector groups including brass bands, wind bands and orchestras, circus and outdoor arts, orchestras, choirs, and theatre groups.
318. Museums were allowed to reopen from 3 August. There was a mixed pattern of reopening within the local museum sector. Very few reopened immediately, with most beginning to reopen over the following three months. Some museums did not reopen until 2021 due to staffing shortages as a result of shielding and the inability to facilitate social distancing. Some did not reopen due to the costs associated with purchasing additional equipment, or adherence to restrictions. Amgueddfa Cymru began a phased reopening from 4 August.

319. Into September 2020 there was a mixed pattern of reopening within the performing Arts sector. Very few venues reopened immediately, due to capacity limitations. Some venues did not reopen until 2021 due to the long lead time in booking in performances, staffing shortages due to shielding, inability to facilitate social distancing, costs attached to equipment and interventions to adhere to restrictions.
320. During the Autumn there were three outdoor test events held: firstly, an event at Theatr Clwyd; secondly a triathlon; and thirdly a rallying event. These had been agreed by Ministers at Cabinet on 18 August 2020 (minutes exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/233-INQ000048862**), as part of their discussion of the 21-day review due on 20 August 2020.
321. By March 2021 there was a phased re-opening of most public library and archive buildings.
322. Following consultation with Public Health and legal colleagues to ensure guidance is in line with wider restrictions at this time, revised guidance was published allowing Theatres to open at Alert Level 2. In line with restrictions limiting numbers within venues and social distancing, many venues chose not to open on this basis.
323. On 3 and 4 June 2021 theatre pilot events were held in order to test the efficacy and practicality of guidance. 'We love Bees,' a family performance at Theatre Brycheiniog, was staged with a target audience of 250. It was a seated event at which 100 people attended. I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/234-INQ000182590** a report on the findings of a programme of pilot events, of which the Theatre Brycheiniog production was one.

Visitor Economy

324. Visitor Economy is the overarching term used to cover areas under the responsibility of the Culture Sport Tourism Directorate. I exhibit an organogram at **ASM2BCSTD/235-INQ000271929** setting out how its teams are structured.
325. From December 2019, due to some Visit Wales offices and officers being located overseas, there was monitoring of Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice. The

British Tourism and Travel Show and the ITB Berlin were both postponed, giving a good indication of the international impact of the pandemic at that stage.

326. The UK Tourism Industry Emergency Response Group (TIER) comprises key tourism industry associations and organisations including as well as relevant government dept and Devolved Administrations, for which VisitBritain provides the secretariat. The group develops plans for crisis scenarios as well as manages the tourism industry's response to a specific crisis. It met regularly, every one or two weeks, from the start of pandemic in January 2020 to early 2022. The work of the group included:
- Monitoring impact on tourism, hospitality and event businesses and destinations
 - Providing evidence of the issues facing the industry
 - Feeding in support requirements for businesses and identify where there may be gaps, and
 - Sharing evidence of the issues facing the industry and business impact
327. On 12 March 2020 the first WG Tourism Newsletter advised the industry to note the emerging COVID-19 pandemic and the international situation. That newsletter provided sector updates throughout the relevant period. I exhibit a copy of the first newsletter at **ASM2BCSTD/236-INQ000271951**.
328. By mid-March the Directorate's consumer marketing, branded as Visit Wales, was paused. Visit Wales' web and social media content was changed from promoting travel to and tourism in Wales to promoting guidance and advice in respect of COVID. The phrase "Visit Wales – Later" was adopted.
329. Following the imposition of restrictions, a Newsletter was published on 24 March which provided sectoral guidance on which businesses must close, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/237- INQ000271807**.
330. Throughout March 2020 the Directorate was responding to industry and consumer queries which were being received directly. The general themes of that correspondence included understanding the new Regulations, which businesses needed to close, and requests for the reasoning around those decisions, requests for

advice in respect of cancellations and refunds, travel queries, and queries relating to accommodation for key workers.

331. During that period, particular queries received from industry and consumers related to refunds on caravan park ground rents, travel queries into Wales (e.g., whether people could travel to check their second home), and queries around re-opening of venues and businesses for future events (e.g., weddings).
332. On 13 May 2020 the first Event Wales Group meeting took place. The minutes are exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/238- INQ000271952**. The stated aim of the group was to: To share views and thoughts on how the events sector in Wales should transition from lock-down to a 'new normal.' How might that best be achieved? What are the immediate concerns and what are the practical steps and timescales involved? What are the economic and social risks and benefits?
333. The Communications Lead Group also met around that time with Visit Wales coordinating a communications working group that met weekly. Items included feedback on hot issues "on the ground" and collaboration to coordinate complementary messaging. Core members include communication leads from the three National Park Authorities, the National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Dwr Cymru, the RSPB, and Amgueddfa Cymru. Visit Wales chairs and Cadw colleagues also attended.
334. The Local Authority (LA) Tourism group also met around that time. That group of 22 Local Authority officers (with responsibility for tourism), chaired and coordinated by Visit Wales, met bi-weekly from May 2020, and still meets every six weeks. The forum was initially convened to enable guidance sharing and explanation, dissemination of industry focussed news through the respective local authority channels and destination feedback on hot issues and destination management.
335. From mid-June onwards officials worked with UKG and DA officials to develop the "Good to Go" campaign. That campaign created an industry standard and consumer mark available to businesses, attractions, and tourist destinations to certify that COVID-regulations and guidance were being applied and adhered to. I exhibit an email announcing the campaign at **ASM2BCSTD/239-INQ000271555**.
336. On 11 July UK Government and VisitBritain launched their "Eat Out to Help Out" and "Enjoy Summer Safely" (**ASM2BCSTD/240-INQ000271565**) campaigns. Those

campaigns followed dialogue and co-operation with Visit Wales. Although Welsh Ministers were not involved in the decision making process surrounding the UKG initiative, the close official-level work with VisitBritain ensured that there were Welsh destinations in this pan-UK campaign, though messages aligned with the restrictions as they then were in Wales. Visit Wales played a key role in inputting content and ensuring that the campaign was consistent with the regulations and guidance in Wales. There was also guidance published at the same time through toolkit, imagery, destinations, and attractions featured in digital and print advertising, press and media partnership activity.

- 337. On 24 July 2020, the Welsh Government ran a webinar on contact tracing for the industry, ensuring dissemination of accurate information about the requirement.
- 338. The Directorate identified the vital role of Environmental health officers in providing advice, and Local Authority Licencing Officers delivering the business support and Tourism Officers for disseminating information.
- 339. On 23 April 2021, an open letter was sent to the visitor economy sector from Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer. It provided an overview of the current position and provided direct links to relevant action cards and toolkits. I exhibit the letter at **ASM2BCSTD/241- INQ000271762**.

Pilot Events

- 340. The pilot events programme was commenced in March 2021 and was introduced as a means of using a range of test events to develop processes, procedures, guidance, and an authorisation structure which would allow the safe return of events in Wales on a phased, but increasing capacity, basis.
- 341. To oversee delivery of the project, the Pilot Events Project Board was set up by Welsh Government in March 2021 and ran until July 2021. It was an internal Welsh Government multi-user group set up with membership made up of representatives from the across Welsh Government together with attendees from Public Health Wales ("PHW"). Its role was to advise the Director, CSTDas SRO on issues and risks that could impact on delivery of the project. I exhibit the Terms of Reference for the Project Board at **ASM2BCSTD/242- INQ000271766**.

342. It considered a small number of pilot events that were held during this period which included Eid Celebration, Tafwyl Festival, a live music performance at a music venue, a business event at the Celtic Manor Resort and Swansea Play offs home leg.
343. Inclusion of events in the pilot required Ministerial agreement; as examples I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/243- INQ000271656** (MA/EM/1633/21) the advice submitted on 7 May 2021 in respect of the Eid Celebration and the Tafwyl Festival; and at **ASM2BCSTD/244-INQ000177103** (MA/VG/2531/21) the advice submitted on 14 July in respect of a live music event at the Tivoli Music Venue, Buckley, Flintshire. The earlier exhibited (**ASM2BCSTD/234-INQ000182590**) 'Pilot events: report on findings' covers the findings from the Eid Celebration and the Tafwyl Festival.

Creative Wales

344. Creative Wales was launched as an internal Welsh Government agency in January 2020, fulfilling a government manifesto commitment made in 2016. Alongside activity to grow the priority creative sectors of screen, digital, music and publishing, we deliver against our Programme for Government commitments, and further commitments included within the Welsh Government Co-Operation agreement with Plaid Cymru, these are:
- Establish a Creative Skills Body.
 - Establishing a Creative Industry Research and Development Fund.
 - Pursue the case for devolution of broadcasting and communication powers.
 - Explore the creation of a shadow Broadcasting and Communications Authority for Wales and provide additional investment to develop enterprises to improve Welsh based media and journalism.
345. In delivering its programmes, Creative Wales has aligned its focus with wider Welsh Government priorities as set out in the Programme for Government. This includes ensuring diversity and inclusivity are embedded in everything it does, in particular through skills and talent development activity and through its own ambitions to build a more diverse Creative Wales team.
346. The head of Creative Wales is Gerwyn Evans who reports to Jason Thomas, Director of Culture, Sport, and Tourism. The head of CW sits on an external non-executive

operating board which supports, scrutinises, and monitors CW's strategic direction, business plan and standards.

347. The board currently comprises:

- Catryn Ramasut (Chair), Non-executive Board member
- Helgard Krause, Non-executive Board member
- Phil Henfrey, Non-executive Board member
- Sian Gale, Non-executive Board member
- Richie Turner, Non-executive Board member
- David Banner, Non-executive Board member
- John Rostron, Non-executive Board member
- Garffild Lloyd Lewis, Non-executive Board member

348. Gerwyn Evans, Deputy Director participated in all internal departmental (Culture, Sport, and Tourism) COVID discussions that were held at least on a weekly basis, and other regular internal WG briefings. This facilitated a full understanding of the progress of the pandemic as it impacted on Wales and informed decision-making relating to creative business/ industry closures and openings and other key operational activities.

349. CW's Deputy Director also attended regular meetings between UK and wider heritage stakeholders – allowing a wider understanding of the approach to the changing course of the pandemic and the impact on stakeholders.

350. CW's Deputy Director and other senior staff met with key operational partners on a weekly basis at the height of the pandemic, and with a wider stakeholder group timed to coincide with the 21-day review cycle.

351. Regular meetings of the wider creative groups and freelancer community took place ensuring a two—way flow of information. Views from stakeholders were included in Ministerial briefings and wherever possible advance notice was given of Ministerial decisions. Feedback also informed the development and revision of guidance – as did liaison with other UK nations.

352. The regular stakeholder meetings allowed the immediate communication of key messages to key creative stakeholders. It also allowed the development of joint public communications – for example over the reopening of businesses – allowing partners to coordinate messaging and avoid public confusion.
353. On 22 March 2021 the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd agreed to allocate an additional £20m in 2021-22 from the centrally held Covid-19 revenue reserve to the Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language MEG, to bolster support for the sector; and to consider a further call of up to £10m if there was further demand as the impact of the restrictions on the Culture, arts, creative and heritage sectors became clearer. That was by MA-DET-1090-21 which I exhibited earlier at **ASM2BCSTD/215-INQ000145335**. The scheme was launched on 6 April 2021 and closed two weeks later on 20 April.

Modelling

354. The Directorate did not undertake any of its own modelling for the purpose of policy, guidance, or regulations. Rather, the group used advice and data provided by TAC/TAG. There was significant anecdotal evidence collected from industry, which was used to inform decisions, however.
355. In order to support decision making by the Directorate generally, and also to monitor the impact of restrictions on the visitor economy, commissioned research was modified during the duration of the pandemic. The ‘tourism barometer’ was conducted over the telephone, with the exception of the events edition which was done online. I exhibit (at **ASM2BCSTD/245-INQ000271946**) as an example the first tourism barometer (coronavirus) impact survey dated 26 March 2020.
356. For domestic tourism sentiment the UK Consumer Tracker was utilised. That was updated every two weeks from April 2020 onwards. Internationally the Sentiment Inbound Tracker was utilised which was updated every 2 months from January 2021 onwards.

Lessons learned

357. Processes evolved throughout the pandemic as a result of experience gained and the Directorate fed into lessons learned discussions/exercises at the ESNR group level as well as Welsh Government level. In terms of developing guidance, an improved

system evolved whereby core guidance was drafted by Legal and Health colleagues and CSTD officials worked to produce nuanced action cards and explanations/Q&As for our specific sectors/industry.

358. The Directorate maintained a high level of stakeholder engagement in relative terms to the UKG. This was achieved via regular engagement with the various groups referenced throughout the statement. Due to the well-developed existing relationships, the Directorate was able to get the groups up and running quickly and, in some cases, promptly established groups with stakeholders who had no direct line in to Welsh Government prior to the pandemic, for example, Weddings, Sport Stadia, Hospitality sector and Amusement Arcades.
359. In terms of funding, the Culture, Sport, and Tourism Department has undertaken a light touch review of the Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF) to inform the delivery and management of any additional CRF funding rounds. That is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/246-INQ000271782**. Many of the lessons learned running successive rounds of the ERF were fed into delivery of the CRF, and vice versa.
360. In March 2021, the Welsh Government's Internal Audit Service (IAS) produced a report assessing the Cultural Recovery Fund. I exhibit the report at **ASM2BCSTD/247-INQ000022595**. It noted that the fund was established to provide essential support to the sector (including theatres, music venues, heritage sites, museums, and galleries) which had been impacted by the pandemic and was administered and managed using the Economic Resilience Fund model. IAS concluded that it could provide substantial assurance on the management and controls in place over the Fund, which in their view had provided urgent and necessary financial support to the Welsh cultural and creative sector.
361. In September 2021, IAS produced a report assessing the Sport and Leisure Recovery and Spectator Sports Survival funds. It noted that the funds were established to assist the sector in its short- and long-term recovery from the effects of the pandemic. I exhibit the report at **ASM2BCSTD/248-INQ000022602**. IAS concluded that it could provide reasonable assurance on the controls in place over both funds. IAS recommended that a debrief exercise was undertaken to ensure lessons learned were identified. This exercise should also seek to gather the views of all appropriate stakeholders, to determine whether objectives have been met and whether any improvements can be made to the governance, risk management and control framework for future iterations.

The Sport Wales lessons learned report on the Sport and Leisure Recovery Fund is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/249- INQ000271943** and the CSTD stocktake, and lessons learned of the Spectator Sports Survival Fund is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/250- INQ000271950**.

362. As referenced in the chronology, a number of pilot events were held during the easing of restrictions. Event Wales worked with the stakeholders to develop a rolling programme of events, covering a range of community, cultural and sporting events to test guidance; identify issues, challenges and opportunities; enable the observation of peripheral risks, such as travelling and mixing before and after events; the opportunity to test mitigations, such as rapid COVID (lateral flow or LF) tests, etc. A pilot events report was completed by CSTD officials in July 2021, which I exhibit at **ASM2BCSTD/251- INQ000066556**. Overall, the pilots emphasised the need for thorough risk assessments to be undertaken by the event organisers, taking into account the specific circumstances.
363. CSTD officials also contributed to the Welsh Government Internal Audit Service's review of Covid 19 assurances which is exhibited at **ASM2BCSTD/252- INQ000271748**.

Evidence to Senedd Committees

364. To date the director, Jason Thomas, has provided evidence to Senedd committees on four occasions as follows:
- Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee - 12 May 2020
 - Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee - 17 September 2020
 - Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee - 14 January 2021
 - Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee - 11 March 2021
365. A transcript of each is exhibited at:
- 12 May 2020 - **ASM2BCSTD/253- INQ000271933**
 - 17 September 2020 - **ASM2BCSTD/254- INQ000271935**
 - 14 January 2021 - **ASM2BCSTD/255- INQ000271934**
 - 11 March 2021 - **ASM2BCSTD/256- INQ000271932**

360. CSTD officials also contributed to the Senedd PAPAC review of Covid economic interventions as referenced in WG-BRD-01.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Personal Data

Signed: _____

Dated: _____ 16 October 2023 _____