



Rt Hon Boris Johnson
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Dear Prime Minister

I was pleased to have the opportunity at COBR(M) yesterday to discuss a range of issues relating to the current pandemic and our collective response with you and colleagues. However, I was disappointed at your response to the issue I raised about travel from high-prevalence areas of England, and the rest of the UK, to Wales. I previously wrote to you in detail about this important issue on 28 September and have yet to receive a reply.

I would urge you to consider introducing travel restrictions through regulations in England, to prevent the virus moving from high-prevalence areas to low-prevalence communities, to support our collective response to the virus. The voluntary guidance approach has proved ineffective and firmer action is urgently required to keep the virus under control.

The evidence against allowing travel from high-prevalence areas is clear. Examination shows the infection, as a general rule, concentrating in urban areas and then spreading to more sparsely populated areas as a result of travel.

Much of Wales is now under local restriction measures and people living in those areas are prohibited from travelling outside their county boundary without a reasonable excuse. This measure is designed to prevent the spread of infection within Wales and to other areas of the UK.

Our efforts are being undermined by travellers from high-prevalence areas in other parts of the UK travelling to Wales.

I attach a scientific paper *SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Insights, October 2020*, which demonstrates the spread of infection geographically and supports the case for travel restrictions as a means of controlling the spread of the virus and avoiding seeding events in

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

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

areas of lower prevalence.

From a public health response perspective, it is more straightforward to identify chains of transmission and manage outbreaks if there is less movement of people across administrative boundaries.

Wales shares a land border with England but the issue is UK-wide and I am also writing to the First Minister of Scotland and the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland asking them to regulate travel in a similar way. It would be better if all four nations were to act in concert, but in the absence of an agreed way forward, I will act to keep Wales safe.

I have been clear throughout that this is not a matter of the border between Wales and England. This is a matter of preventing the circulation of the virus from areas of high-prevalence to low-prevalence wherever they may be.

If you fail to introduce the sort of measures we have already introduced in Wales, it will make this an issue which will undermine rather than support the successful operation of the border region.

On a related matter, you also outlined at COBR(M) the three-tier model you intend to use to inform decision-making to limit the spread of coronavirus in England.

In his remarks, the Chief Medical Officer for England was clear the baseline measures in tier three will not be sufficient to bring the R number below 1. At the same time, the Chief Scientific Adviser, yesterday said that a circuit breaker period would have that effect.

That advice reflected the considerable work on circuit-breaker measures carried out by SAGE, which can be effective in the circumstances we are now seeing in various parts of the UK.

As I suggested yesterday, we should discuss collectively what circuit-breaker options might best serve to bring the virus – and the R number – under control across the UK. I would therefore request again that you urgently convene a further meeting of COBR(M) specifically to discuss circuit-breaker measures.

I am copying this letter to the First Minister of Scotland and the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, I will be writing separately to them asking them to introduce travel regulations to prevent the spread of coronavirus. I also copy this letter to the Secretary of State for Wales and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Best Wishes

PD

MARK DRAKEFORD