

Message

**From:** PS FirstMinister [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=7D46FBA2D9B94A7193CB7971F7B6ECFF-FIRSTMINIST]  
**Sent:** 13/10/2020 18:39:43  
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Subject: Official sensitive: note of Ministerial call 13 October

## Official sensitive: note of Ministerial call 13 October

The First Minister updated on meetings with the UKG yesterday. COBR focused on the three tier system the Prime Minister announced later that day. The Prime Minister was unable to explain the criteria that would be used to place areas into (and out of) the different tiers. England's CMO and CSA also repeatedly stated in the meeting that tier three measures would not be enough to bring the

R number below 1. The Prime Minister's response was that there were additional levels within tier three that could be introduced in conjunction with Local Authorities if the need arose, and that would bring the R number further down. The Metropolitan Mayor of Liverpool made the point that the Jobs Support Scheme offer of paying two thirds of people's wages for businesses legally required to close would not be enough to live on for people on minimum wage. The First Minister pressed for a detailed four nation discussion on the potential 'circuit breaker' option, the length of time that would be needed, whether it would be effective in reducing the R number to below 1. The CSA confirmed that a 'circuit breaker' would bring the R number below 1, but the UKG did not offer a more detailed discussion of that option. The FM also raised again the case for travel restrictions in areas with a high prevalence of the virus, particularly given the proximity of high level areas in England to the Welsh border, and the impact on Wales. People are only *advised* not to travel in or out of high level areas in England, or have overnight stays elsewhere, but this is not prohibited in Regulations.

The Winter Summit was held yesterday afternoon with the Devolved Administrations and the CDL, where there was a constructive discussion on information sharing and areas where Administrations could work more closely together (for example with the Joint Biosecurity Centre).

In relation to travel, UK Ministers asked for further information on the Welsh Government position - particularly evidence of the problem and how restrictions can be enforced. The First Minister will write to the Prime Minister today setting this out, drawing on evidence from genomics colleagues, waste water analysis, and evidence from the first phase of lockdown. The letter will make the case to the Prime Minister once again that the most appropriate way forward is for him to introduce travel restrictions in areas of high incidence in England. If that doesn't materialise, discussions are ongoing with Lawyers regarding the most appropriate way for the Welsh Government to introduce these restrictions.

In terms of transmission, the position in Wales is better than in many parts of the UK, but remains a worsening picture. Advice has been commissioned from TAC, CMO and officials on options for next steps in Wales. There are three main options being considered. The First Minister invited the preliminary views of Ministers, and noted that more substantive discussions on these would be needed quickly as this week progresses:

1. Strengthen local measures
2. Introduce a set of Wales-wide measures, building on and strengthening the local measures already introduced
3. Invoke a circuit breaker mechanism. This would be a short period of a few weeks where restrictions similar to those introduced in March and April would be re-introduced on the grounds that it would buy time and prevent the overwhelming of the Health Service.

The Chief Medical Officer noted the growing view of UK CMOs that some sort of circuit breaker will be needed, and Northern Ireland may make an announcement as soon as today. Public Health Wales, SAGE and TAC also agree that it is the right approach. Discussions are needed as to what form a circuit breaker would take, looking at what was successful in the first lockdown (for example the stay local message, working from home, closure of non-essential retail, leisure and hospitality). A two week minimum would buy approximately 28 days in terms of the curve, and colleagues will be looking at what point the NHS would come under undue pressure. Coinciding a circuit breaker with the half term break would be beneficial. The circuit breaker period could be used to develop a simple framework for coming out of the lockdown, build NHS capacity, and boost the TTP system. Policy officials are working on estimating the costs and the support that could be available. If a circuit breaker gave 28 days it might get us through Christmas, but it may be that a rolling programme of such circuit breakers are needed until such time as a vaccine is available.

Areas of discussion included:

- What the form and objective of a potential circuit breaker would be, and need to ensure the measures would target the drivers of transmission identified by TTP
- Whether a circuit breaker would include schools, and the impact on children's education and mental health if schools were to be closed again.
- Planning for the post circuit breaker period
- Issue of people travelling from high risk areas in England into Wales, particularly the balance between community cohesion and bookings being taken for the upcoming half term.
- Consideration and weight being given to the four harms identified in our covid response documents.

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