



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PRESS RELEASE

# National coronavirus firebreak to be introduced in Wales on Friday

**A short, sharp “firebreak” will be introduced across Wales at the end of this week to help regain control of coronavirus, First Minister Mark Drakeford announced today.**

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The fortnight-long action is needed to save lives and prevent the NHS from being overwhelmed.

Speaking to the people of Wales, the First Minister said:

“ This is the moment to come together; to play our part in a common endeavour to protect the NHS and save lives. This will not be easy, but we will do it together. ”

The fire-break will start at 6pm on Friday 23 October and end on Monday 9 November. It will apply to everyone living in Wales and will replace the local

restrictions which are in force in some parts of the country.

The Welsh Government will provide a package of almost £300 million to support businesses, which will complement wage-support schemes available from the UK government.

Cases of coronavirus have been rising sharply in Wales as the virus has woken up for winter. While the national and local measures put in place across Wales have helped to keep the spread of the virus in check, there is a growing consensus that additional action is now needed.

Between October 9 and 15, there were 4,127 new confirmed cases of coronavirus recorded by Public Health Wales, based on positive test results but the real level of infections will be much higher. The number of people admitted to hospital with coronavirus symptoms is growing daily and sadly so too are the number of people dying with coronavirus.

The R number is currently between 1.1 and 1.4, meaning continued exponential growth in the number of cases and the seven-day rolling incidence rate for Wales stands at more than 130 cases per 100,000 population.

The firebreak will be short but sharp to have a maximum impact on the virus.

- People must stay at home, except for very limited purposes, such as for exercise.
- People must work from home wherever possible;
- People must not visit other households or meet other people they do not live with either indoors and outdoors
- No gatherings will be allowed outdoors, such as Halloween or fireworks/Bonfire night or other organised activities
- All non-food retail, hospitality businesses, including cafes, restaurants and pubs (unless they provide take-away or delivery services), close contact services, such as hairdressers and beauticians, and events and tourism businesses, such as hotels must close
- Community centres, libraries and recycling centres will be required to close
- Face coverings must be worn in indoor public spaces, which remain open, including on public transport and in taxis.

During this time:

- Adults living alone or single parents will be able to join with one other household for support
- Primary and special schools will re-open as normal after half-term
- Secondary schools will re-open after the half-term for children in years seven and eight and most vulnerable children. Pupils will be able to come in to take exams but other pupils will continue their learning from home for an extra week.
- Universities will provide a blend of in-person and online learning
- Childcare settings will stay open as normal
- NHS and health services will continue to operate
- Local parks, playgrounds and outdoor gyms will remain open.

Following the end of the firebreak, a new set of national rules will be introduced, covering how people can meet and how the public sector and businesses operate.

Businesses affected by the firebreak will be supported with a new £300 million fund, which will open next week:

- Every business covered by the small business rates relief will receive a £1,000 payment.
- Small and medium-sized retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, which have to close will receive a one-off payment of up to £5,000.
- There will also be additional discretionary grants and support for smaller businesses, which are struggling.
- The £80 million fund announced last week to help businesses develop in the longer term, will be increased to £100 million, which includes £20 million ring-fenced for tourism and hospitality.

Businesses will also be able to access the support available through the existing Job Retention Scheme or the new expanded Job Support Scheme.

The First Minister has written to the Chancellor to ask him to give Welsh businesses early access to the new expanded Job Support Scheme from Friday. The Welsh Government has offered to pay the extra costs to the UK government scheme to ensure businesses can retain staff.

First Minister Mark Drakeford said:

- “ “It is with a heavy heart that I once again ask everyone to stay at home and businesses to shut.
- “ We are all tired of coronavirus and the many rules and regulations we all have to live with. We all want to see an end to this pandemic and our lives returned to us. Unfortunately, we do not yet have a vaccine, which will allow us to do that.
- “ This fire-break is our best chance of regaining control of the virus and avoiding a much longer – and damaging – national lockdown. We have a small window of opportunity to act.
- “ To be successful, we need everyone’s help. Wales has shown throughout this pandemic that we can come together and take the actions to keep our families and our communities safe.
- “ We must come together once again to stay ahead of this virus and to save lives. ”

### **Coronavirus circuit break: frequently asked questions** (</node/33775>)