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Donald Cameron MSP  
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COVID-19 Committee

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23 October 2020

Dear Donald

## COVID-19: SCOTLAND'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Scottish Government has today published [COVID-19: Scotland's Strategic Framework](#). This new Strategic Framework sets out how we will work to suppress the virus and presents an honest reflection of the decisions we will need to make, and the balance we will have to reach, and it does so rooted in tackling the four harms we know the virus causes.

Since the first COVID-19 cases were notified in Scotland, and the World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic 7 months ago, we have achieved a significant amount – suppressing the virus to a low enough level to enable us to begin lifting restrictions on our daily lives, and creating a strong base for economic and social recovery.

We have been guided by the evidence, lifting restrictions in a phased and gradual way which safeguards public health, underpinned by [Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#). As seen from the clinical evidence, as we have cautiously re-opened society, the virus has taken advantage of opportunities to re-emerge and we have had to respond to a growing number of outbreaks. We have made changes at a pace and level that we think is right and safe for Scotland, and must ensure that we are in the best position to continue to do so. This means learning from our experiences to date, listening to and supporting people across Scotland whose lives have been impacted by this crisis, and ensuring the necessary infrastructure is in place to support people, businesses and other organisations to do their part.

We have always been clear that the current phase of the Route Map would require a continuing focus on containing outbreaks and responding to different conditions in different parts of the country. So far we have taken a tailor-made approach to the application of geographically targeted protective measures, responding to the specific circumstances of each outbreak with individually tailored packages of interventions.

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This approach has served us well, and helped make good progress in suppressing the virus, but we have also learnt from it – both in how we communicate the specific measures in place in different areas, and in terms of decision-making, guidance, regulation and enforcement. Looking ahead to the challenges of the coming months, it is clear that a refreshed approach is needed.

We now propose to move to a strategic approach to outbreak management based on five levels of protection, each with graduated packages of measures to reduce transmission of the virus, that can be applied locally or nationally, according to the evolving patterns of infection and transmission.

A table setting out the five levels is at Annex 1 of the publication. Additional measures specific to the hospitality industry are shown at Annex 2.

We will now undertake a short period of detailed engagement with our local authority partners, stakeholders, business and trade unions, enforcement and wider civic society, on the detailed design, operation and implications of our new approach.

To ensure proper parliamentary scrutiny, a final framework will also be subject to the views of the Scottish Parliament. We will engage with all political parties on the detail of the framework, and put this to a debate and vote in Parliament next week.

I will of course make myself available to give evidence to the committee should that be helpful.

This letter has been copied to the conveners of the Health and Sport and Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committees.

**JOHN SWINNEY**

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