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Dear Murdo

EXTENSION OF SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

I am writing to inform you that the Scottish Government has concluded the review of the regulations and guidance which underpin the current lockdown and have concluded that the regulations remain necessary but, as a result of the efforts of the public in sticking with the restrictions of lockdown, we have seen sufficient progress in suppressing the virus to enable us to move to Phase 1 of our *COVID-19: Framework for Decision Making – route map through and out of the crisis*.

On the 21 May we published that route map which set out how and when we might ease our lockdown restrictions. It outlined four phases of easing and indicated that in order to move to Phase 1, we would need to have seen evidence of transmission of the virus being controlled. We have now concluded we are at that stage and have seen sufficient progress in suppressing the virus to enable us to move to the first phase. An updated route map, showing this initial move, will also be published in due course.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, which will remain in force for a period of 6 months, came into force on 26 March to allow enforcement of those measures in recognition of the threat posed to public health from the coronavirus. They placed unprecedented restrictions on the movement of people and the operation of businesses across Scotland and have a huge impact on Scotland's way of life.

Due to the extraordinary nature of the restrictions placed on Scottish society, the Scottish Ministers have provided for a statutory review of the need for restrictions and requirements contained in 2020 Regulations. Such a review must take place at least once every 21 days. I wrote to you on 16 April at the time of the first review and on the 7 May at the time of the second review.

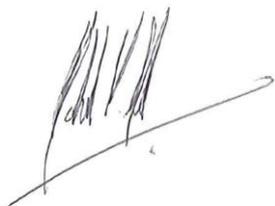
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Scottish Ministers have access to expertise from a range of professional advisers and expert groups, both within and beyond the Scottish Government. Having considered the advice and broader evidence and analysis on the impact of the crisis, the Scottish Ministers have decided that all the current restrictions and requirements set out in the 2020 Regulations continue to be necessary having regard to the terms of regulation 2(3), with the exception of those being adjusted through the Phase 1 changes.

The Amending Regulations make the following changes:

- amends regulation 4(3) to provide that the requirement for retail outlets to close (except insofar as required for distance selling or hiring of goods) does not apply to any preparatory steps to be taken by that outlet, while the premises are closed to the public, in advance of reopening at a later phase in the Route Map,
- amends regulation 8(5) to add taking part in outdoor recreation and visiting garden or recycling centres to the list of reasonable excuses,
- amends Parts 2 and 3 of schedule 1 to allow garden centres and sports courts used for tennis or bowls to open,
- amends regulations 2 to 6 to make some minor technical amendments which have already been cleared by the Cabinet Secretary, the effect of the technical amendments is to provide that any termination or restatement of a lockdown measure must be by amending regulations.

In accordance with the requirements of the regulations we will review them again within 21 days and will inform Parliament of the outcome of that review. As the First Minister has indicated if there are any changed circumstances that would permit earlier action we will of course notify the committee at the earliest possible moment.



MICHAEL RUSSELL

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