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COVID-19 Committee

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Dear Murdo

CONFIRMATION OF EXTENSION OF SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

I am writing to inform you that the Scottish Government has concluded the review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 and guidance which underpin the current lockdown. We have concluded that we have seen sufficient progress in suppressing the virus to enable us to continue the implementation of Phase 3 of *COVID-19: Framework for Decision Making – route map through and out of the crisis*. Nevertheless based upon the advice of the Chief Medical Officer we have not met the criterion that would allow us to move into Phase 4, which would require that “[The] virus is no longer considered a significant threat to public health.” It is likely that we will remain within Phase 3 for some time to come.

The First Minister has set out our approach to the remainder of Phase 3 in a statement to Parliament.

We entered Phase 3 of the Route Map on 9 July. The changes to the restrictions made from the 10th to 22nd July were significant. They included, among others changes, a relaxation of the rules around social gatherings, the opening up of places of worship for communal prayer and congregational services, the full re-opening of our retail and hospitality sectors – all with ongoing public health measures such as physical distancing and enhanced hygiene measures. These changes were made to deliver much needed social and economic benefits. However, the consequence of opening up is increased opportunity for the virus to spread. This underlines the importance of continuing to comply with the rules and restrictions that do remain in place.

We are now focussed on ensuring continued suppression of the virus ahead of the full and safe re-opening of schools, which we can now confirm will take place from 11 August. In the interim, only limited, albeit important, adjustments will come into effect before 11 August. It is important that we allow the impact of the re-opening of schools to be assessed before we proceed with further significant changes to restrictions. For this reason, we are only planning

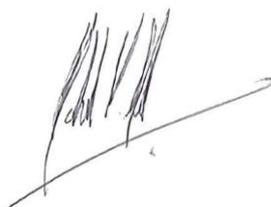
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at this point to give indicative dates to further Phase 3 changes, which we envisage happening at two main stages: Monday, 24th August and Monday, 14th September. These indicative dates will need to be confirmed at the respective review dates: 20th August and 10th September. If progress on keeping the epidemic suppressed is not as positive as we expect, for example as a result of increased importation of the virus, then these dates are liable to be pushed further into the future. The planned dates are set out in [today's publication](#).

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 9) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations") were made by the Scottish Ministers under paragraph 1(1) of schedule 19 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 ("the 2020 Act") and laid before the Scottish Parliament today. The Regulations come into force tomorrow, Friday 31 July, with the exception of regulations relating to the reopening of community centres which come into force on Monday 3 August.

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.

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



MICHAEL RUSSELL

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