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Convener  
Health and Sport Committee

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16 April 2020

Dear Lewis,

## **EXTENSION OF SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES**

On 23 March the First Minister announced an intention to introduce measures to restrict public gatherings, non-essential business activity and for people to stay at home unless it is absolutely essential to go out, in order to protect public health and protect the NHS.

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 and the first review is due by the 16 April 2020. The matters that require to be considered within the review process are set out in regulation 2(3) of the 2020 Regulations.

We all want these restrictions to be lifted as soon as possible but we also know that if we lift these restrictions too early then we risk the virus spreading out of control, overwhelming our National Health Service, and we risk it taking many more lives. Having considered the Chief Medical Officer's 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). However we are considering some minor amendments to the regulations at the moment and will of course keep Parliament informed of any changes that we determine are necessary, to allow for Parliamentary scrutiny.

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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.

**MICHAEL RUSSELL**

Cc. Chirstine Grahame, MSP, Chair of Committee Conveners' Group

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