

Joint Statement Following Covid-19 Quad Meeting

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney today jointly chaired a conference call with the First Minister Arlene Foster, deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Health Minister Robin Swann and Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly to discuss the ongoing response to COVID-19 on the island of Ireland.

All participants noted that the recent increase in cases of COVID-19, including in border areas, has reinforced the immense importance of coordination and cooperation to address the virus across both jurisdictions.

Participants agreed that, as this virus does not respect borders, there is a clear need to cooperate effectively North-South and East-West to respond to COVID-19, and take a coordinated approach wherever possible to public health measures and messages.

They welcomed the ongoing contact and cooperation between the respective Health Ministers, working in close conjunction with the Chief Medical Officers.

There was agreement to intensify further the regular and ongoing contact between the UK Government, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. North South cooperation on the island and, where possible and practical, consistency of approach, in response to COVID-19, will be essential for the mutual benefit of everyone on the island of Ireland.

They also agreed to issue the following joint public appeal:

"We would like to appeal to everyone to strictly adhere to the public health guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We all have the power to stop this virus taking hold in our communities and towns.

"We would like to sincerely thank the public for playing their part in following the public health advice. We owe it to our health workers and, above all, to the most vulnerable in our communities, to continue to do our part.

"We have suppressed this virus once, and we can do it again.

"Follow the public health advice. Stay safe and help save lives"

Liverpool City Region to move into 'very high' local COVID Alert Level following rise in coronavirus infections

Following discussions over the weekend, the government and local leaders have agreed the need for further action to reduce the spread of coronavirus in the Liverpool City Region.

From Wednesday, Liverpool City Region will be placed onto the 'Very High' Local Covid Alert Level. The Liverpool City Region includes the local authority districts of Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral, as well as the City of Liverpool.

Under the country's new three tiered Local Covid Alert Level system, the Very High alert level applies in the areas of greatest concern.

The new restrictions for the Liverpool City Region include:

- Pubs and bars will close. They can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant – which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal
- Indoor gyms and fitness/dance studios, sports facilities, leisure centres, betting shops, adult gaming centres and casinos will close
- Wedding receptions will not be permitted
- People should try to avoid travelling outside their local area, or entering another area rated Very High other than for work, education, accessing youth services, or to meet caring responsibilities
- People should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK if they are resident in the Liverpool City Region and avoid staying overnight in the Liverpool City Region if they are resident elsewhere

The Prime Minister chaired COBR this morning, which was attended by Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram. COBR confirmed the new restrictions and the PM has announced these in a statement to the House of Commons this afternoon.

It follows a briefing earlier today by Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van Tam, Medical Director of NHS England Steve Powis and Dr Jane Eddleston, Medical Lead for the North West, where they set out the latest data on the rising infection rates across the country.

The latest figures show that the North West has around 40% of all Covid-19 cases, with an eight-fold increase in patients being admitted to hospital. Currently, 30% of the North West's intensive care capacity is taken up with Covid-19 patients.

They warned that in in four weeks' time the North West could see more patients in intensive care than at the peak of the first wave unless action is taken.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I am hugely grateful to local leaders in the Liverpool City Region for the constructive discussions this weekend over the further steps we will take together to combat coronavirus. They will be critical to save lives and protect the NHS – so it can continue to provide the essential services that so many of us rely on.

This is a vital moment in our national effort against the second wave of the virus. We will continue to work closely with other local leaders in the days ahead.

The government has also confirmed £14 million for the Liverpool City Region to enhance enforcement and NHS Test and Trace. Local leaders will be able to use this for a range of activities including compliance and enforcement, enhanced contact tracing and support for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

They will also be able to call on the armed forces to provide additional logistical support if necessary.

The support is in addition to the package announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak last week to protect jobs and support businesses required to close their doors as a result of coronavirus restrictions.

Prime Minister announces new local COVID Alert Levels

Details on new local COVID Alert Levels set out by the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister announces new local COVID Alert Levels

The Prime Minister has today set out how the government will further simplify and standardise local rules by introducing a three tiered system of local COVID Alert Levels in England.

Addressing MPs before hosting a Downing Street press conference, he confirmed the levels will be set at medium, high, and very high.

He set out how this new approach will be simpler and standardised, and thanked local leaders who have engaged with the government over the weekend.

The “medium” alert level – which will cover most of the country – will consist of the current national measures, which came into force on 25 September.

This includes the Rule of Six, and the closure of hospitality at 10pm.

The “high” alert level will reflect many current local interventions, but there will now be consistency across the country.

This primarily aims to reduce household to household transmission by preventing all mixing between households or support bubbles indoors. The Rule of Six will apply in outdoor spaces, including private gardens.

Most areas which are already subject to local restrictions will automatically move into the “high” alert level.

The “very high” alert level will apply where transmission rates are causing the greatest concern, based on an assessment of all the available data and the local situation.

This includes incidence and test positivity, including amongst older and more at-risk age groups, as well as the growth rate, hospital admissions and other factors.

In these areas, the government will set a baseline of prohibiting social mixing indoors and in private gardens, with the Rule of Six allowed in open public spaces like parks and beaches.

Pubs and bars must close, and can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant – which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal.

People will be advised not to travel in and out of these areas.

To create local consensus behind this more severe action, the government will work with local leaders on how individual areas should go beyond this baseline, which may include measures such as the closure of gyms, casinos, and leisure centres.

Non-essential retail, schools and universities will remain open in all levels.

Cases are rising rapidly across the country, particularly in the North East and North West, and this is resulting in increased hospitalisations and deaths.

The Prime Minister said that further action is required now to suppress the virus and make sure the NHS isn't overwhelmed, and can continue providing essential services such as cancer care.

This follows significant local engagement throughout the weekend.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister spoke to Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, following detailed discussions over the last few days between all the region's leaders, Chief Executives and senior government figures.

They discussed the huge challenge from rising numbers of COVID cases in the region and pledged to work together on combatting the virus.

Senior No 10 advisers and the Housing Communities and Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick also held discussions with local authority leaders and mayors from the highest areas of concern.

As the Prime Minister said, in recent months, local outbreaks have been tackled with targeted restrictions – helping save lives and avoiding the need to apply those measures nationally.

However, over time this has led to different rules in different parts of the country, with some rules becoming increasingly complex and difficult to enforce.

A postcode checker on gov.uk will show which alert level applies in each area and the NHS COVID-19 app will also direct people to this information.

Regulations for all three local alert levels will be laid today and they will be debated and voted on in the House of Commons tomorrow. Subject to that vote tomorrow, they will come into force on Wednesday, subject to the approval of Parliament.

These measures will be kept under constant review, including a four-week sunset clause for interventions in "very high" areas.

The PM also confirmed that the government will also provide Local Authorities across England with around £1 billion of new financial support.

He also said that engagement with other leaders in the North West, the North East and Yorkshire & Humber is continuing.

He also called on local leaders in the areas rated very high to work with the government on these measures, in return for more support for local test and trace, more funding for local enforcement, the offer of help from the armed services, and the job support scheme as announced by the Chancellor.

Full details on what the COVID Alert Levels contain are set out below.

Local COVID Alert Level – Medium

This is for areas where national restrictions continue to be in place. This means:

- All businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, other than those that remain closed in law, such as nightclubs.
- Certain businesses selling food or drink on their premises are required to close between 10pm and 5am.
- Businesses and venues selling food for consumption off the premises can continue to do so after 10pm as long as this is through delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-thru.
- Schools, universities and places of worship remain open
- Weddings and funerals can go ahead with restrictions on the number of attendees
- Organised indoor sport and exercise classes can continue to take place, provided the Rule of Six is followed
- People must not meet in groups larger than 6, indoors or outdoors

Local COVID Alert Level – High

- This is for areas with a higher level of infections. This means the following additional measures are in place:
- People must not meet with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place
- People must not meet in a group of more than 6 outside, including in a garden or other space.
- People should aim to reduce the number of journeys they make where possible. If they need to travel, they should walk or cycle where possible, or to plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport.

Local COVID Alert Level – Very High

This is for areas with a very high level of infections. The Government will set a baseline of measures for any area in this local alert level.

Consultation with local authorities will determine additional measures.

The baseline means the below additional measures are in place:

- Pubs and bars must close, and can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant – which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal.
- Wedding receptions are not allowed
- People must not meet with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor or outdoor setting, whether at home or in a public space. The Rule of Six applies in open public spaces like parks and beaches.
- People should try to avoid travelling outside the 'Very High' area they are in, or entering a 'Very High' area, other than for things like work,

education, accessing youth services, to meet caring responsibilities or if they are in transit.

- People should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK if they are resident in a 'Very High' area, or avoid staying overnight in a 'Very High' area if they are resident elsewhere.

Full list of Local COVID Alert Levels by area

Local COVID Alert Level: Medium

England

- All areas, excluding those listed below

Local COVID Alert Level: High

Cheshire

- Cheshire West and Chester
- Cheshire East

Greater Manchester

- Manchester
- Bolton
- Bury
- Stockport
- Tameside
- Trafford
- Wigan
- Salford
- Rochdale
- Oldham

Warrington

Derbyshire

High Peak – the wards of:

- Tintwistle
- Padfield
- Dinting
- St John's
- Old Glossop
- Whitfield
- Simmondley
- Gamesley
- Howard Town
- Hadfield South
- Hadfield North

Lancashire

- Lancashire
- Blackpool
- Preston
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Burnley

West Yorkshire

- Leeds
- Bradford
- Kirklees
- Calderdale
- Wakefield

South Yorkshire

- Barnsley
- Rotherham
- Doncaster
- Sheffield

North East

- Newcastle
- South Tyneside
- North Tyneside
- Gateshead
- Sunderland
- Durham
- Northumberland

Tees Valley

- Middlesbrough
- Redcar and Cleveland
- Stockton-on-Tees
- Darlington
- Hartlepool

West Midlands

- Birmingham
- Sandwell
- Solihull
- Wolverhampton
- Walsall

Leicester

- Leicester
- Oadby and Wigston

Nottingham

- Nottinghamshire
- Nottingham City

Local COVID Alert Level: Very High

Liverpool City Region

- Liverpool
- Knowsley
- Wirral
- St Helens
- Sefton
- Halton

UK statement to the WTO Trade Negotiations Committee

Thank you very much, Chair and thanks very much to you and your fellow Deputy DGs for your leadership during this transition period.

Chair, in the face of continuing uncertainty with regards to COVID-19, the United Kingdom commends the Secretariat for the steps they have taken to enable work to continue, while keeping staff and delegates safe. This has enabled our work to progress in an inclusive manner despite an evolving situation in Geneva and across capitals.

The United Kingdom would once again like to reiterate the importance of forging ahead with ongoing work at the WTO, including efforts to reinstate a fully functioning dispute settlement system as soon as possible. The United Kingdom welcomes Members' engagement on the draft consolidated text on fisheries subsidies, circulated by Ambassador Wills, as a basis for developing effective disciplines.

We have been strong supporters of the Joint Initiative on E-commerce since its inception. We welcome the resumption of monthly negotiating sessions in small groups and in plenary, and we stand ready to intensify our efforts towards achieving a consolidated negotiating text by the end of the year. The pandemic has shown us that digital trade lies right at the heart of the global economy – and will continue to be of fundamental importance as we look to build back better from this crisis. We need to ensure that this Initiative delivers an outcome that benefits developed, developing and least-developed members.

The United Kingdom has been a ready participant in the reinvigorated efforts

on the Joint Initiatives on Services Domestic Regulation and Investment Facilitation for Development. On domestic regulation, we urge members to reinvigorate their efforts to resolve the small number of issues that remain. We look forward to working with Members to finalise the draft Reference Paper by the end of the year and encourage others to join this important Initiative. We also welcome the shift to negotiating mode in investment facilitation for development which is testament to Members' commitment to progressing this initiative.

Finally, on MSMEs, the United Kingdom thanks the Facilitator and Secretariat for the further progress on texts made since the beginning of summer. With MSMEs accounting for 99.9% of British businesses, we strongly support this initiative, and we hope for an ambitious outcome in December.

Thank you, Mr Chair.