

Time for Plan B

The decision of the Welsh devolved government to impose a wider ranging lockdown on an already scarred and weakened Welsh economy has made the contradictions and absurdities of too many controls more obvious. The supermarkets are told to tape up their shelves and fence off their aisles for so called non essentials. The devolved government stumbles over what is an essential. They defend their decision by saying that as they have closed non food specialist shops it would be unfair to let the supermarkets sell items the specialist shops cannot offer. There is no good answer when people point out that the policy will just lead to many more people buying the banned items on line, losing business not only to the specialist High Street shops but to the food shops of the high Street as well. How is that sensible?

The idea is that stopping more shopping will abate the spread of the disease, which then will allow relaxation of controls which on their analysis of course will lead to a further spread of the disease. How does that help? Why should the virus wait until after Christmas before it builds up again, if the plan is to relax a bit for Christmas. What proof is there that shopping spreads the disease anyway? People do not spend much time in the company of another person from outside their household in a supermarket. Air flows through stores of course need to help control the disease, and can do so.

As I argued in Parliament and put to the government, trying to change behaviour to contain the virus requires consent and co-operation from the public. There is no longer enough buy in to the detailed rules nor to Test and trace. The even more complex and wide ranging Welsh rules have met with a hostile response from many Welsh people, showing that the devolved government is losing support for these measures.

The U.K. government needs to learn from the Welsh experience. More needs to be done to encourage a business and jobs revival. There are many things that are being done and can be done to limit deaths. Improving treatments, safeguarding the vulnerable, improving ventilation and air flow in public buildings and improving infection control in health settings, can all help to get the death rate down. There are limits to how many detailed rules and controls government should seek to place on people generally, as government has reached the end of tolerance for the current degree of control let alone for tightening. People now want explanations of why and how a control will help or is necessary, and why it should continue.

It is time to put economic recovery higher up the priority list, and to go out to save many more livelihoods. There needs to be another drive to get more non CV 19 medical problems treated. We have to live with the virus, and do all we can to lower the death rates from CV 19 and from other killer medical problems without shutting down the economy or seeking to control everyone's social life and shopping habits..