

New bill makes it a criminal offence to flout public health guidance

Businesses and the public in Scotland are now required by law to follow necessary social distancing measures to slow the spread of coronavirus. The Scottish Government is using powers from the UK Coronavirus Bill to make it a criminal offence to flout the strict public health guidance that is helping save lives.



To enforce social distancing, people in Scotland are being asked to only go outside if they have a 'reasonable excuse'. These include shopping for necessary food, household and medical supplies, travelling to and from work where working from home is not an option, and daily exercise that adheres to social distancing guidance.

Enforcement can be used against businesses and venues that have been told to close, including drinking establishments, entertainment venues, and indoor leisure and sports facilities.

Police Scotland can issue penalty notices of £30, rising to £60 if not paid within 28 days, where they have reason to believe there has been an offence under the regulations. These penalties are

doubled for each repeat offence up to a £960 cap, with no reduction for early payment. Due to the exceptional nature of these powers, the regulations will be reviewed at least every 21 days to ensure they are still necessary.

Chief Constable Iain Livingstone QPM said: "I thank the overwhelming majority of people who are complying with very clear guidance to stay at home.

"I expect the public to continue to do their duty and contribute to the national effort to keep people safe from the spread of coronavirus.

"This is a challenging time for people who have to adjust their daily habits and everything we do will be done in a fair, reasonable and proportionate manner.

"Those who persistently and blatantly defy the law must know we will enforce the law."

Constitution Secretary Michael Russell said: "There has been a huge effort by the people and businesses of Scotland to respond to the unprecedented situation we face dealing with the coronavirus.

"I would like to thank everyone who is playing their part by staying at home to ensure the social distancing measures we have introduced help stop the spread of the virus.

"While the majority of people are doing the right thing, these regulations provide the police with emergency powers to enforce social distancing where necessary.

“It is only because of the unprecedented crisis we are facing, and to save lives, that these powers are being introduced. They are temporary and will be kept under review.

“I urge the people of Scotland to continue their outstanding collective effort and follow the rules that have been laid down.”