

Scottish football to be played to empty stadiums or even cancelled

Scottish football matches may have to be played behind closed doors or even cancelled as the UK move to a new phase of the coronavirus threat.



First minister Nicola Sturgeon has said a ban on crowds of over 500 at mass gatherings will kick in for a restricted period of time, starting this Monday.

Speaking at First Minister's questions earlier today she said: "I can tell Parliament we will see a sharp rise in cases today. We may also see further evidence of community transmission of coronavirus.

"The Health Secretary and I have decided this morning that we are minded that we will advise the cancellation, from the start of next week, of mass gatherings of 500 people or more.

"Our emergency services are likely to suffer from higher than normal sickness absence rates in the weeks and months ahead and our NHS, in particular, will be under significant pressure. It's important we protect that resilience as much as possible."

Hibs face St Johnstone on Saturday in a match likely to

determine which side makes the top six whilst Hearts travel to the Tony Macaroni Arena to face Livingston in their bid to avoid relegation.

As things stand both games are likely to take place although with authorities in constant dialogue the situation for this weekend could change at short notice.

It is unclear whether the matches scheduled for the week commencing March 16 will be played behind doors or postponed to a later date.

The Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) and the SFA (Scottish Football Association) are expected to provide an update in due course but are likely to follow government advice on the matter.

There is also the possibility of matches being postponed indefinitely should players from any particular team go down with the virus, forcing others to self-isolate.