

Coronavirus – news and updates in Edinburgh

This is news from the week beginning 18 May 2020. We do not think there is one of us who might have thought at the beginning of the lockdown that it would still be continuing now.

The Scottish Government sets the rules for Scotland, and Scotland along with Wales and Northern Ireland have all decided to abide by a strict lockdown. We are told to expect that the First Minister later this week may start to explain some of the ways in which those rules may be relaxed.

But at present there are over 3,000 Covid-19 related deaths in Scotland, and 34,636 for the whole of the UK as at Sunday at 6.00pm.

The Scottish Government spent a lot of last week defending its stance in not going public with the news that people attending a conference in Edinburgh in late February were diagnosed positive with the virus. That may yet be assessed as a mis-step, but now is perhaps not the time for that particular inquiry.

The apparent outbreak of Covid-19 among perhaps as many as 25 attendees at the conference was revealed in a BBC programme last Monday. The First Minister denied that there was any Scottish Government cover-up of the outbreak, saying such accusations were 'complete and utter nonsense'.

The matter of the conference held at the Hilton Edinburgh Carlton on North Bridge came up at the most recent council committee meeting on Thursday 14 May 2020.

Cllr Cook first raised the matter. He said: "Obviously we are all aware of the coverage around Covid-19 and the Nike conference in February. Given that Covid-19 is now the biggest threat to council's delivery of certain services and operation, as it is to the private sector and other levels of government why wasn't the Convener of the Governance Risk and Best Value Committee informed at the same time that senior officers in the council were.

Chief Executive said: "As I think I have given a fairly detailed answer at the Group Leaders' briefing, I don't have anything else to add. I think we gave a briefing to all the requisite people. This is something you need to ask our health colleagues because health were dealing with this issue and we helped them out in terms of the Public Health agenda. We were told there was nothing else for us to do at the time around the Nike conference, and I gave you the details of that in the Group Leaders' briefing."

The Group Leaders' Briefing is held behind closed doors, so for the moment we have no more information about who knew what and when.

Conservative councillor Graeme Hutchison asked: "Following on from Cllr Cook's question can I ask when you became aware of the Nike outbreak, what assurances you've sought in that regard and how that's informed and shaped the council's response?"

The Council Leader, Adam McVey replied: "When Cllr Day and I were briefed specifically on that I think we were some three weeks into lockdown, so actions open to us at that stage were obviously fairly minimal, because lockdown had already taken place at that stage."

This is where you will find our news updates on the facts and figures as well as any helpful information we can find about ways to keep you entertained during the continuing lockdown.