

Murray continues to probe over Nike conference in Edinburgh

Ian Murray, MP for Edinburgh South and Shadow Scottish Secretary, says that questions continue to mount over the Edinburgh Nike conference.

He criticises the decision to continue with mass gatherings across the UK following what he describes as the cover-up of the Covid-19 outbreak at the conference held at the Hilton Edinburgh Carlton Hotel.

Mr Murray demands that both the Scottish and UK governments 'come clean' about why major sporting events took place, despite evidence from the conference about how easily coronavirus could spread.

More than 70 Nike employees from around the world attended the conference in Edinburgh on 26 and 27 February 2020, and a BBC investigation found that at least 25 people linked to the event contracted Covid-19, including 8 in Scotland.

At the weekend, in the Mail on Sunday, it was reported that several workers who came into contact with delegates, including kilt-fitters in Edinburgh and staff who shared a building with Nike in Glasgow, who also became unwell with flu-like symptoms a short while later – but were not contacted by health officials or told about the Nike link.

Health Protection Scotland was told on 2 March 2020 that a delegate at the conference had tested positive and The

Scottish Government was made aware of two cases in Scotland connected to the event on 3 March 2020.

The Scottish Government kept the information secret from the public.

Last night, The Scottish Government revealed that Public Health England was part of the 'incident management team' and was provided with 'full details'.

Just had it confirmed, Public Health England were "part of the Incident Management Team," and were provided with "full details surrounding the circumstances of the infections."

The UK public wasn't told about this & SAGE continued to advise it was safe to go to mass gatherings.
<https://t.co/uRG01xwSmz> pic.twitter.com/EIhSYazNMR

– Peter A Smith (@PeterAdamSmith) [May 17, 2020](#)

Mass gatherings were not banned in England and Scotland until 16 March 2020. While the outbreak was kept secret from the public:

- Scotland played France at Murrayfield in Edinburgh on 8 March 2020 in front of 67,000 fans.
- Rangers played Bayer Leverkusen on 12 March 2020 in front of 47,000 fans.
- Liverpool played Atlético Madrid on March 11 in front of 52,000 fans.
- The Cheltenham Festival was held between March 10 and 13, attended by around 150,000 people.
- The Scottish Government was also prepared to allow the Rangers v Celtic match to go ahead on 15 March 2020 until it was cancelled by the SPFL.

Ian Murray said: "The cover-up of this early and significant outbreak has shattered public confidence in the Scottish

Government.

“Questions are piling up for Nicola Sturgeon about her decision to keep this vital information secret, which we now know had consequences far and wide.

“With the revelation that Public Health England was informed, both the UK and Scottish governments now need to come clean and explain why major sporting events were allowed to go ahead after the outbreak.

“An earlier ban on mass gatherings could have saved lives, but our governments failed to take action despite the alarming evidence from the Edinburgh conference.

“People in Edinburgh and across the UK are rightly worried and angry, and they deserve a full explanation.”

At yesterday’s media briefing the Health Secretary answered further questions about the issue. She said: “All the proper clinically-led standard protocols were followed. The incident management team was convened, we reported the first case, which was not linked to that conference on Sunday 1 March 2020, we were informed of two more cases on 3 March 2020 and reported them on the Wednesday morning with normal reporting of cases.

“All the normal contact tracing approach was used then and we use it now and we will use it as we continue. Contact tracing sits on the information given by the individual who is the trigger case. They are asked where they’ve been and who they’ve been in contact with – and that’s someone within 15 minutes or more and within a distance of two metres.

“With what people tell us, the clinical professionals in health protection then go and trace those contacts and advise them to isolate, advise them they’ve been in contact with someone with the symptoms, and what to do if they develop symptoms, and then if they did, trace their contacts.”

Jason Leitch the National Clinical Director also said: “

“The contact tracing process relies on information from the individual from the first case, and you move from there. They were interviewed by experienced contact tracers.

“This wasn’t a mass gathering, quite a small group of people from different countries, and an international incident management team was set up very quickly and contact tracing done in a number of countries.

“This was when we were in the delay phase when there were very few cases in the country, or across the UK. It was absolutely the right thing to do at that point in the pandemic.

“When that began to change, and we saw sustained community transmission and we couldn’t work out where cases had come from – this one was clear where the case had come from, from somebody who had travelled – then we changed the guidelines for the population and our ability to test, trace and isolate.

“So we’ve moved from a delay to a suppression phase and now we’re in a new phase, thinking about how we might come out of this lockdown.

“And I’m sorry but that’s how it has to be. You have to follow the science and viral spread as you go through each of these stages.”