

Letter from Scotland

We've done well this week. The freedoms we've been granted – traveling more than 5 miles from home, the re-opening of outdoor pubs and restaurants – have not resulted in a resurgence of the “plague”.

The only outbreak, a small one on the Cumbrian border involving just 12 people, was quickly contained.

The weekly death toll continues to fall (17 this week, bringing the total to 4,172) and the prevalence of Covid-19 is now said to be five times lower in Scotland than in England.

So our First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has announced that we are moving into [“Phase 3”](#) of her route out of lockdown. Children's outdoor sports can start again. Groups of up to 8 people can gather indoors. From Wednesday (15th) indoor pubs and restaurants can re-open, so too can hotels and B&Bs, museums and cinemas. Child care centres can re-open and hairdressers and places of worship, though there's to be no singing or chanting. Weddings and funerals can take place again without the same tight restrictions as before.



Is this the road out of Lockdown ? (The harbour at St Andrews.)

The immediate road ahead certainly looks a bit more like a normal summer – albeit with the two metre rule remaining in most places and face coverings mandatory in shops and public transport.

On Wednesday, the UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak brightened the prospect further with the announcement of a £30bn rescue package for the economy. It's said to be worth £800m to Scotland when you add all the elements together, the cut in VAT on hospitality, the kick-start apprenticeship scheme for young people, the £10 voucher for eating out and the £1,000 incentive for firms who keep furloughed workers on.

The Scottish Government, however, says none of this measures up to the challenge of 10 per cent unemployment facing the country in the autumn. It was recommending an £80 billion package, equivalent to Angela Merkel's rescue plan for Germany.

Another sharp difference with the UK Government is over "air bridges" which allow travel between some 59 countries and Britain without the need for 14 days of quarantine. Ms Sturgeon and her scientific team were not happy with some of the countries on the UK's list, so there is no "bridge" to and from Spain or Serbia to Scotland. The Covid-19 infection rate in Spain, Ms Sturgeon said, is ten times the rate here in Scotland. At First Minister's Question time she rejected pleas from the Conservatives to make an exception for parts of Spain, like Majorca, which they claimed had a much lower infection rate than Scotland.



fbpic- Nicola Sturgeon MSP First Minister before announcing further changes to the Scottish government Covid-19 lockdown today at the Scottish Parliament Poolphoto/Fraser Bremner/Scottish Daily Mail Thursday 9 July 2020. Picture FRASER BREMNER (date taken)09.07.2020

I find it astonishing that people want to fly anywhere for a holiday this year. But it seems a lot of people just don't accept "the new normal." Leisure air travel is just not compatible with the green agenda or with supporting our tourism industry here at home. After all, it was air travel which brought the plague to our shores in the first place and

it could do so again.

We discovered this week that no checks were being made on people supposed to be in home quarantine after arriving in Scotland from abroad. This was because Scottish officials had no access to UK Home Office records. It was some bureaucratic mess-up apparently which, after four weeks, has eventually been put right. But in any case, it seems there are no check-ups being made on those told to self-isolate under the normal “trace and protect” system. It’s simply left up to people’s sense of responsibility. Quite hard to do, if you are losing earnings by staying at home.

But none of this has dented people’s faith in Nicola Sturgeon. According to the latest opinion poll in The Sunday Times, her handling of the coronavirus crisis has three times the approval rating of Boris Johnson’s. And support for Scottish independence has increased to 54 per cent.



Modern One. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

I’m pleased to see that both governments have finally seen the importance of keeping our theatres, concert halls, museums and [art galleries](#) alive during the pandemic so that we can rebuild our arts industry next year. £1.5bn is being made available in loans and grants, including £97m for Scotland. That comes on top of the £100m announced earlier by the Scottish Government. It’s not only good for jobs, it’s good for the soul of the nation.

And our souls will need a good deal of healing. I sense the pandemic has made us all a little brittle. There’s intolerance in the air, a tendency to un-stage those with unfashionable opinions. There’s paranoia over the hygiene regulations. Some people are even frightened to pass you on the pavement. There’s anger boiling in the streets during demonstrations over “Black Lives Matter” and protests against statues of past slave-owners. There’s apocalyptic talk about “the new

normal". Beauty spots like Loch Lomond are being despoiled. There are still sharp divides over Brexit and Independence.

And I wonder whether younger people are just losing heart of finding a job and ever owning their own home. We need to re-build our civilisation as well as our economy. And the arts can help us do that.

[su_spoiler class="my-custom-spoiler" title="Friday 10 July 2020"]Mandatory face coverings in shops

OUTDOORS a household can meet up to 4 other households at a time up to 15 people in total

INDOORS a household can meet up to 2 other households at a time – up to 8 people in total. This includes overnight stays. A house can meet up to 4 other households per day in total.

The limit on the number of other households you can meet per day (indoors or outdoors) does not apply to young people who are under 18.

Children aged 11 or under no longer need to physically distance indoors.

Young people aged 12-17 must continue to physically distance.

Extended Households: All non cohabiting partners (and any children under 18 in the household) can form extended households without physical distancing.[/su_spoiler]

[su_spoiler class="my-custom-spoiler" title="Monday 13 July 2020"]Non-essential shops inside shopping centres can re-open (following guidance and with physical distancing).

All dental practices may begin to see registered patients for non-aerosol routine care.

Urgent care centres will continue to provide aerosol generating procedures.

Organised outdoor contact sports, play and physical activity can resume for children and young people under 18 (subject to guidance).

Face-to-face youth work can resume outdoors (following relevant guidance).[/su_spoiler]

[su_spoiler class="my-custom-spoiler" title="Wednesday 15 July 2020"]Places of worship can re-open for congregational services, communal prayer and contemplation with physical distancing and limited numbers.

Museums, galleries, monuments, libraries, various other visitor attractions, cinemas (including drive-ins and venues screening films) – with physical distancing and other measures (e.g. ticketing in advance).

Hairdressers and barbers can re-open – with enhanced hygiene measures. All childcare providers can open subject to individual provider arrangements.

Indoor hospitality can reopen (subject to physical distancing rules and guidance).

All holiday accommodation permitted (following relevant guidance).

Easing of restrictions on attendance at funerals, marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations with physical distancing (limited numbers).

Associated receptions are subject to restrictions on hospitality and household meetings.[/su_spoiler]

[su_spoiler class="my-custom-spoiler" title="Wednesday 22 July 2020"]Universities and colleges – Phased return to on campus learning as part of a blended model with remote teaching.

Public health measures (including physical distancing) in place.

Other personal retail services such as beauticians and tailors can re-open – with enhanced hygiene measures.

Motorcycle instruction and theory/hazard tests can resume.

Tractor driver instruction can resume.[/su_spoiler]