

As England moves into second lockdown Scotland will carefully consider impact

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced earlier this evening that the second lockdown will begin on Thursday.

He announced the measures at a Downing Street briefing after an apparent leak last night which suggested a lockdown would be announced on Monday.

The measures will be presented to parliament on Monday.

After a series of graphs and figures delivered by the Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty, and the recording of more than 1 million cases of Covid-19 in the UK, Mr Johnson said: "Now is the time to take action because there is no alternative.

"From Thursday until the start of December, you must stay at home.

"You may only leave home for specific reasons, including:

"For education; For work, say if you cannot work from home; For exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household or on your own with one person from another household; For medical reasons, appointments and to escape injury or harm; To shop for food and essentials; And to provide care for vulnerable people, or as a volunteer.

"I'm afraid non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues will all be closed – though click and collect services

can continue and essential shops will remain open, so there is no need to stock up.

“Pubs, bars, restaurants must close except for takeaway and delivery services.

“Workplaces should stay open where people can’t work from home – for example in the construction or manufacturing sectors.

“Single adult households can still form exclusive support bubbles with one other household, and children will still be able to move between homes if their parents are separated.

“If you are clinically vulnerable, or over the age of 60, you should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise your contacts with others.

“I know how tough shielding was, and we will not ask people to shield again in the same way again. However we are asking those who are clinically extremely vulnerable to minimise their contact with others, and not to go to work if they are unable to work from home.

“I am under no illusions about how difficult this will be for businesses which have already had to endure hardship this year. I am truly, truly sorry for that.

“This is why we are also going to extend the furlough system through November. The furlough scheme was a success in the spring. It supported people and businesses in a critical time. We will not end it. We will extend it until December.”

First Minister responded by advising against travel to and from England.

In response the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has made the following statement:

“We will carefully consider the impact of today’s announcement in England – however, we will continue to take decisions that reflect circumstances in Scotland.

“We expect to have further discussion in the coming days about the scope of additional financial support being made available. A crucial point for us is whether support on the scale announced for English businesses is available for Scottish businesses now or if we needed to impose further restrictions later – or if it is only available if Scotland has a full lock down at the same time as a lockdown in England.

“However, notwithstanding the above, today’s developments should be a reminder to people across Scotland of the need to follow the rules and not to put their own twist on them. It is important we all comply with the rules in our area if we are to successfully suppress the virus, protect the NHS and keep as many businesses and services open.

“People across Scotland have faced significant restrictions since late September as we work to stop the increase in Covid cases across the country. Prevalence of the virus is currently lower in Scotland than in other parts of the UK and there are some signs that those earlier restrictions may be starting to slow the rate of increase.

“However, we are monitoring the spread of the virus in all parts of Scotland on a daily basis to assess if, to what extent and at what speed the slowdown is continuing. We will not hesitate to increase the level of protection either locally or nationally if required. Our new levels approach – including a potential level 4 – enables us to respond quickly and flexibly as required.

“Scotland’s new levels based system of protection comes into force on Monday morning at 0600 and I encourage everyone to find out what level their local authority is in and to stick

to the rules in their area. I also urge everyone to follow two key national restrictions by not mixing with other households inside our homes, and not travelling to or from any part of the country in level 3 unless it is absolutely essential.

“Following today’s announcement by the Prime Minister we are also asking that people do not travel to England, or from England into Scotland unless absolutely essential, just as we are also asking people not to go to Northern Ireland or to Wales.

“We know that these restrictions are difficult, but public health and preventing the spread of the virus must come first.”

Scottish Greens co-leader Patrick Harvie MSP said: “Boris Johnson’s handling of the coronavirus crisis has been chaotic. It’s clear that his failure to follow scientific advice earlier now means that the people of England will have to endure stricter restrictions for longer. What’s not clear at all yet is what knock on effects this will have for Scotland.

“It’s vital that urgent clarification is provided about what impact these new regulations will have here, importantly we need to know urgently what funding will be made available for workers and businesses. It would be completely unacceptable for the UK Government to deny Scotland the funding that we need to tackle this crisis.

“I welcome confirmation that the furlough scheme will now be extended, but it is scandalous that this was left till the last possible moment. Huge numbers of people have already lost their jobs as a result of the UK Government’s delay, so the Prime Minister must ensure that they can be re-hired direct to furlough, instead of abandoning them. Workers also need clarity that support will be there for as long as they need it.

“It’s important that extra consequential spending that does come to Scotland as a result of these latest decisions makes its way to workers and businesses as soon as practicably possible. Any delays that risk yet more job losses would be unacceptable.”