

Coronavirus – revising the strategy to get out of lockdown

On Tuesday afternoon, the First Minister will set out The Scottish Government's revised strategic framework and outline in broad terms how Scotland will gradually emerge from current lockdown restrictions.

The framework will detail how The Scottish Government will use and balance various tools such as restrictions and advice, vaccination, test and protect, travel restrictions and support for businesses, organisations and individuals – to restore, in a phased and sustainable way, greater normality to everyday lives across Scotland.

The government's priority will continue to be suppression of the virus to the lowest possible level – as the best way to secure a sustainable exit from lockdown – while striving to return to a more normal life for as many people as possible as quickly as it is safe to do so.

The plans for easing lockdown will be driven by data rather than by hard and fast dates – however the government will set out an indicative order of priority and proposed phases – with periods of at least 3 weeks between them – to, firstly, gradually ease current level 4 restrictions and then, when it is safe to do so, return to more geographically variable

levels when all or parts of the country may move to lower levels with more of the economy opening up.

The immediate priorities will continue to be the return of young people to education, followed by sports activities for young people and limited social interaction for adults.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: “We know we cannot continue in lockdown indefinitely and we must plan a gradual phased return to as much normality as possible.

“The restrictions we have put in place are difficult for individuals, families and businesses across Scotland, but they are working – case numbers have decreased, the numbers of people in hospital and needing intensive care are coming down and we are now seeing fewer vulnerable people dying from this horrible illness.

“This means we can begin to consider how, carefully and gradually, we can return to some normality in Scotland.

“A limited number of children and young people were able to return to school yesterday and we have prioritised this because children’s education and wellbeing is such an overriding priority. Of course, this has only been possible because people across Scotland have worked together and made sacrifices to bring down levels of COVID-19.

“We hope that more children will be able to return to school later in March. And we have published new guidance to enable an easing of restrictions on care home visiting from early March.

“Beyond that, giving people the ability to meet loved ones, initially outdoors, is a priority for easing restrictions within the current level 4.

“As we get to a situation where we can move back to a levels approach, with all or part of the country moving down a level,

we can start to carefully open the economy again too.

“The strategic framework sets out as far as possible at this stage how we will approach the gradual easing of restrictions. We will be able to give more detail and clarity in the weeks ahead as we make further progress both on suppressing the virus and vaccinating the population, and as we understand more about the impact of vaccination.

“However, to keep moving in the right direction and avoid setbacks caution will be necessary, which is why the framework will be clear about the need to move in a gradual way.”