

Coronavirus – route out of lockdown will be a cautious one

Today was a big news day for everyone in the country, but the The Scottish Government continues to urge a careful, steady approach to exiting this lockdown.

So for the next few weeks nothing much will change. Schools remain the priority and making progress in suppressing coronavirus and vaccinating all priority groups all run in tandem with that.

The First Minister said that the government expects all adults on the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority list to be vaccinated by the end of July. Vaccinators are now administering first doses to Group 6 which is the largest of the priority groups and consists of around 1 million people.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said when addressing parliament: “Although our watchwords continue to be caution and patience at this stage, there is little doubt that we now have much firmer grounds for optimism that vaccination, and the other tools at our disposal, offer us a route back to greater normality. Of course, it is by being cautious, careful and patient for the next period, while the vaccination programme has time to progress, that we will make that route as safe and sustainable as possible. Taking off the brakes too quickly will allow the virus to get ahead of us again and put

our progress out of lockdown into reverse. I appreciate that that can be—indeed, that it is—a frustrating message, but it is an essential one.”

The Strategic Framework which you can read in full below has now been amended to take account of key dates. There will be a further update in the middle of March about opening the economy from the end of April.

- The first pupils returned to school yesterday. In three weeks time – around the middle of March more pupils – P4-7 and some senior phase secondary pupils will also go back to school. Outdoor non contact group sport for 12-17 year-olds may begin again.
- Outdoor mixing will be extended to four people from two households.
- Three weeks after that on 5 April the Stay at home message may be lifted. By then all school pupils should be back in the classroom.
- Communal worship may begin again with restricted numbers
- In time the number of people who may meet will increase to six from two households
- Retail will begin to reopen by extending the definition of non-essential retail.
- No international travel at any point until later in the year
- The country will move back to a Levels System from the last week in April and the hope is that all parts of the country will move from the current level 4 to level 3.

The First Minister said later: “I know how hard current restrictions are after 11 long months of this pandemic, however they are working and we can now see our way out of them. We are in a far better position now than at the start of January and these measures are initial steps on a slow, but hopefully steady, route back to much greater normality.

“Our intent remains to suppress the virus to the lowest

possible level and keep it there, while we strive to return to a more normal life for as many people as possible.

“At the moment, and for a bit longer, we need to rely very heavily on restrictions to suppress the virus. This is essential when the virus is so transmissible, and when case numbers are still quite high.

“In time though – once the vast majority of the adult population has received at least one dose of the vaccine – we hope that vaccination will become our main tool for suppressing the virus.

“The Strategic Framework is deliberately cautious at this stage but in the coming weeks, if the data allows and positive trends continue, we will seek to accelerate the easing of restrictions.”

Council Leader Adam McVey said: “Today’s announcement by the Scottish Government offers hope for better times to come, where some sense of normality is restored and where we can return to some of the activities we have all been missing so much.

“Right now, though, our number one priority is keeping the public safe. The First Minister has made it clear that we must be cautious. While the overall number of cases are falling and the rapid vaccine rollout continues, increased cases in Edinburgh of recent days highlight that our position is still fragile. That’s why it’s still so important that we continue to observe the restrictions in place, led by expert public health data, to limit the impact of this virus, which has by no means gone away.

“We’re working hard to deliver services with as little disruption as possible during this time, and this week welcomed the return of some of our pupils to schools across the city. We’ll continue to adapt and respond to guidance as

it changes, and I encourage everyone to do the same. We've come this far – let's work together to follow the path out of lockdown safely and sustainably.”

Depute Leader Cammy Day said: “The Scottish Government's route map outlined today offers guidance on how we could carefully, steadily reduce restrictions. It's essential that we observe this gradual, phased approach if we are to protect people's health and safety while working towards the city's successful recovery from the pandemic.

“Of course, we can look forward to spending time with others and enjoying a more relaxed spring and summer, and we'll be working closely with our own services, businesses and other partners to support this. However, at this point in time advice remains the same – stay at home and help to protect lives.”

Scottish Conservative Holyrood leader Ruth Davidson said: “This statement fell short of public expectations.

“We didn't get information about when measures like social distancing will end and when we will be able to do something as basic as give a loved one a hug.

“Everyone understands that we might not be able to give people absolute certainty – but they were at least expecting the First Minister to give them some kind of hope.

“Nothing has been published about what happens after the 26th of April. This isn't a routemap out of COVID, it is holding document.

“People didn't tune in today expecting to be told to tune in again in three weeks' time. They have a right to be disappointed that Nicola Sturgeon is not giving them a plan to get back to normality.”

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie said: “There is

a broad consensus in the country on the caution required and we must never forget that there are many harms like mental health and education, not just covid, which is why we need to move to ease as soon as we can without allowing the virus to get out of control again.

“The measures today are broadly similar to those early measures announced by Boris Johnson on Monday with an earlier, if phased, easing on schools and two-person outdoor limit and a slightly later easing on shops. I agree with that approach.

“There have been many false dawns of care home visiting. My hope that this is not another one and that families, separated for months, can be safely together again.”

“In the past the First Minister was sceptical about vaccine passports. Now she has left the door open for their use.

“I am concerned that vaccine passports are slowly gaining traction but we don't want a two tier society which would exacerbate inequalities.”



Loading...



Taking too long?

↻ Reload document

| ↗ [Open in new tab](#)

[Download \[162.00 B\]](#)