

Coronavirus – Conservatives call for priority on economic recovery

At Friday's media briefing when the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, was at pains to point out that the numbers of cases and tests today broke all previous records, she also cautioned that while the government is not considering a circuit breaker lockdown, there may be a need for restrictions.

Ms Sturgeon also reminded everyone to take steps to keep themselves and others safe.

Today 6,835 new cases of Covid-19 were reported which is the highest since the pandemic began. The number of people who had been tested was also markedly higher at 50,493 and the test positivity rate was 14.2%.

These include a reminder to businesses to continue allowing staff to work from home and where they cannot that they all comply with Covid mitigations. She appealed to everyone who had not yet been vaccinated to go to a drop in centre, and to

test regularly even if there are no symptoms. [Finally she asked everyone to abide by all the rules](#) which remain in place including wearing a mask on public transport and in public places.

After the briefing, Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery, Murdo Fraser MSP, said: “Nicola Sturgeon cannot put Scotland’s recovery in jeopardy by heightening the threat of restrictions when our vaccine system has been so successful.

“The Scottish Fiscal Commission are reporting that Scotland’s economy is on course to rebound strongly, earlier than anticipated, with the condition that we keep moving forward past Covid restrictions.

“The SNP Government need to put recovery as the priority over clinging onto powers which, at this stage, are not justified.

“Imposing strict restrictions would have serious consequences for jobs, mental and physical health. Depending on their severity, it may increase NHS backlogs.

“The Scottish people cannot be kept in this holding pattern of removing and introducing Covid restrictions, particularly when there is no threat of a new variant at this time.

“The recovery of our NHS and Scotland’s economy is at stake. The SNP must give that more consideration now that so many people have been vaccinated.”



Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar. Photo: © 2021 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar said: “This surge in cases was avoidable and we’re not prepared as a country for it to

get worse.

“Our NHS remains at breaking point as it does the vital work to catch up on treatments delayed from the last pandemic.

“That is why any rise in cases that increases pressure is so concerning.

“And despite this the Scottish Government are still cutting corners on Test and Protect.

“It is now more important than ever that the vaccination scheme is pushed ahead at pace.

“Staff across the health service have worked heroically – and giving them the support they need to mobilise to meet the backlog is essential.

“The First Minister is right to raise the need to look urgently at the vaccination of 12-17 year olds and how that can be done in Scotland as has happened elsewhere.

“But Scottish Labour have spoken in the past about the need to replicate international best practice looking to cut the time between doses to ensure the widest possible protection before winter pressures pile on our health service.

“This is being done in Northern Ireland and elsewhere and needs proper examination.

“Now is the time for ministers to begin a door-to-door scheme to ensure that the vaccine is being taken up.

“And there is still a need for consistency in communicating how and why certain decisions are being made.

“These must all now be looked at again.

“But what is now more important than ever is we must have a Test and Protect scheme fit for purpose or risk losing our hard won progress.

“The Scottish Government needs to get a grip of these issues before even contemplating more restrictions.

“Lockdowns should be our very last resort – not a fall-back option for government incompetence.”