



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Cabinet meeting: 10 and 12 May 2021

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on 10 and 12 May 2021.

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Contents

Present

Previous meeting

Review of coronavirus restrictions

12th May

Present (via Teams)

- Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS
- Rebecca Evans MS
- Vaughan Gething MS
- Lesley Griffiths MS
- Julie James MS
- Eluned Morgan MS
- Jeremy Miles MS
- Ken Skates MS
- Jane Hutt MS

- Hannah Blythyn MS
- Julie Morgan MS
- Lee Waters MS

Officials

- Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary
- Will Whiteley, Deputy Director Cabinet Division
- Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications

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- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan, Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- Damian Roche, Cabinet Secretariat
- Tracey Burke, Director General, Education and Public Services
- Andrew Goodall, Director General, Health
- Andrew Slade, Director General ESNR
- Reg Kilpatrick, Director General, COVID-19 Crisis Coordination
- Frank Atherton, CMO
- Chris Jones, Deputy CMO
- Rob Orford, Chief Scientific Adviser for Health
- Simon Brindle, Director, Recovery and Restart
- Piers Bisson, Director, European Transition, Constitution and Justice
- Andrew Jeffreys Director Treasury
- Helen Lentle, Director Legal Services
- Dylan Hughes, First Legislative Counsel
- Tom Smithson, Deputy Director Restart
- Liz Lalley, Deputy Director Recovery
- Jason Thomas, Director, Culture Sport and Tourism
- Rob Holt, Deputy Director Tourism and Major Events
- Neil Buffin, Senior Lawyer
- Terry Kowal, Senior Legislative Counsel
- Christopher Stevens, Restart Social Policy
- Michelle Morgan, Restart Impact Assessment
- Nia Lewis, Restart Economic Policy
- Nicky Guy, Deputy Director Culture and Sport
- Steffan Roberts, Deputy Director Tourism Development
- Bethan Bateman, Deputy Director Sustainable Futures (Monday only)
- Gemma Nye, Deputy Director Public Health
- Duncan Hamer, Deputy Director Business
- Claire McDonald, Head of Economic Policy
- Ffion Thomas, Deputy Director Civil Contingencies
- Cathy Weatherup, CMO's office
- Jo Trott, COVID-19 response team
- Simon Jones, Director Economic Infrastructure (Wednesday only)
- Helen Ryder, Deputy Director Public and Integrated Transport (Wednesday only)

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Item 1: Minutes of the previous meeting

1.1 Cymeradwydd y Cabinet gofnodion y 19 Ebrill / Cabinet approved the minutes of 19 April.

Item 2: Review of Coronavirus Restrictions (No 5) Regulations – 13th May 2021 CAB(20-21)82

2.1 The First Minister introduced the paper, which sought a steer from Cabinet on easements planned for the current review cycle and those that could be signalled following the next review, scheduled for 3rd June.

2.2 The restrictions relating to COVID-19 were for the purpose of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence, spread of infection or contamination. There must be a threat to public health and the restrictions had to be proportionate in what they were intending to achieve. There was a requirement that the Welsh Government should review these restrictions every 3 weeks.

2.3 The First Minister invited the CMO to provide the latest advice in respect of the transmission of the virus and the impact on the NHS. In general terms the overall number of confirmed cases was gradually decreasing and the situation was relatively benign. Testing data demonstrated that test positivity for COVID-19 continued to fall consistently. The pattern was similar across the UK, but with Wales still having the lowest number of cases.

2.4 The 7 day average was approximately 8 in every 100,000 of population and the 'R' rate was around 0.84. The number of people with confirmed COVID-19 in hospital stood at 32, with 3 occupying critical care beds.

2.5 The roll-out of the vaccination programme was continuing to move at pace, with a higher proportion of the population in Wales receiving their first and second doses than the rest of the UK. Over 75% of the adult population had received their first dose, with one in four in receipt of their second.

2.6 Cabinet had previously signalled that, should the public health improvements continue, it would be possible to consider moving between the Alert Levels in a single step. This view had been informed by the modelling undertaken by the University of Swansea. The Public Health conditions did support a move to Alert Level 2 on 17th May, however, there were a number of issues that Ministers would need to consider before this could be confirmed.

2.7 Cabinet considered the advice from the CMO and TAG, and concluded that the numbers should be aligned.

2.8 Nevertheless, the mitigation measures, such as TTP, would need to be strongly enforced. It was also important to warn the public and the sector that if they did not comply with the rules, and should infection rates start to increase, there may be a need to re-impose tighter restrictions.

2.9 Unlike the previous re-opening of indoor hospitality, there would no longer be requirements for a substantial meal, a 10pm curfew, nor specific time slots. However, there would still be table service, contact details would be collected and people would be encouraged to pre-book.

2.10 Ministers agreed, at this stage, shared accommodation relating to residential activity for children should be limited to single occupancy rooms and tents. This should be extended to groups of no more than 6 under Alert Level 1, but a full re-opening of larger dormitories would be linked to any future changes to social distancing rules.

2.11 Cabinet considered that it was still proportionate for organised activities to prohibit the sale or consumption of alcohol given that these were higher risk activities. Alcohol would continue to be allowed at wedding receptions and wakes and could be sold at events, subject to mitigations.

2.12 Theatres and concert halls would be able to resume performances, similar to that of cinemas but limits on audience numbers, determined by social distancing requirements, may not result in many reopening at this stage.

2.13 Food and drink in cinemas, theatres, concert halls and sports grounds would only be available for consumption in seating, while watching the

entertainment. It was noted that most of these changes would not require amendments to the Regulations, apart from the requirement to sell food and drink to be consumed in a seated area.

2.14 Cabinet confirmed that there should be a move to Alert Level 2 from 17th May, subject to the increase to six people meeting in a regulated setting.

2.15 In terms of events, the proposal was that those within Alert Level 2 could resume from 17th May with specific caps on numbers, which would be in-line with Scotland. A number of pilot events, such as an Eid celebration at Cardiff Castle, had been scheduled to take place that month.

2.16 The government could also signal that, providing the transmission rates remained low, it was hoped that larger events could take place from 7th June, with caps on numbers in line with the approach in England.

2.17 Ministers agreed with the proposals but recognised the importance of indicating what could take place from 7th June, in terms of numbers, rather than making firm commitments at this stage.

2.18 Cabinet also agreed that the Coronavirus Control Plan should be updated to ensure that the references to the Alert Levels reflected the current review. Allowing people to exercise with one other person during Alert Level 4 would also be a permanent change.

2.19 It was noted that the UK government was in the process of reviewing the rules around social distancing and Cabinet would need to meet again later that week to consider the Welsh Government's response to such changes.

2.20 In terms of the return to non-essential travel, the UK government had recently announced a traffic light system, which included ten countries and territories within a 'green list' where it was considered safe to travel without the need to quarantine on return. There would be a further meeting to discuss the Welsh Government's response the following day and a note of this meeting would be shared with Cabinet.

2.21 In terms of preparing for the next review, Cabinet agreed that at the press

conference on Friday the First Minister should signal that, subject to conditions remaining favourable, Wales would move to Alert Level 1 on 7th June.

2.22 Cabinet agreed that officials should proceed in-line with the decisions taken by ministers.

2.23 It was noted that Cabinet would meet again later that week to consider any changes to the social distancing rules.

Wednesday 12th May

3.1 Cabinet reconvened to consider the outstanding issues from the meeting on Monday.

3.2 The supporting paper provided advice on whether to allow any changes to the social distancing rules, given the recent announcements from the UK and Scottish Government.

3.3 However, the CMO outlined some emerging concerns regarding the rapid spread of the Indian variant (B.1.617.2) of the virus in parts of London and the North West of England, close to the border with Wales. This variant was much more transmissible than the version that emerged from Kent and subsequently became dominant across the UK. The spread of B.1.617.2 would need to be addressed by all 4 Nations of the UK.

3.4 The Chief Scientific Adviser for Health (CSA) confirmed that there were also concerns amongst the scientific community on the rapid spread of this variant.

3.5 Cabinet agreed that it was too soon to take any decisions on relaxing social distancing requirements and on Friday the First Minister should signal, at his press conference, that it was the government's ambition to make such changes and possibly become more aligned with Scotland, but there was a need for further clarity on the spread of B.1.617.2 before any changes could be considered.

3.6 Cabinet recognised the need to give the wedding sector sufficient notice as

to when there would be an increase in the number of people that could attend receptions, but it would be difficult to commit to numbers at this stage, particularly given the news about the Indian variant of the virus.

3.7 Therefore, it was agreed that the First Minister would signal on Friday that more evidence on transmission rates was required before larger receptions could take place, but this would be reviewed when the information was available.

3.8 It was suggested that there may also be a need to signal that the government was considering increasing the number of people that could visit care homes.

3.9 Cabinet agreed that officials should proceed in-line with the decisions taken by ministers.

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