



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

[REDACTED]

19 April 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

After some long and difficult months, we are now in a much better position because of the efforts people have made to reduce the spread of coronavirus and the extraordinary success of our vaccination programmes.

After the immense efforts people have made, it is vital that everything possible is done to secure those benefits. Clearly, the biggest risk to the hard won freedoms is the importation and seeding of variants of concern. Such variants are prevalent in many more countries than those currently on the 'red list', which is why I continue to believe strongly that a better approach would be to identify those countries where travel connections do not pose a threat and to allow travel, at this time, only to those so listed. To have any practical impact, this approach would have to be implemented across the UK and ideally in partnership with all governments within the Common Travel Area.

This week, concerns regarding the variant now in widespread circulation in India highlight the lack of protection afforded by current arrangements as we have seen a number of incursions of this variant. Although we have not had an opportunity to discuss this, and while I welcome the decision to add India to the 'red list', I remain very concerned that there will inevitably be increased short-term risks associated with the likely surge in travellers from India in the next few days before this change comes into effect.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has committed to a more detailed discussion on international travel at one of our Wednesday evening meetings, amongst the issues which that discussion will need to address will be the urgency of more being done at the UK level to ensure greater compliance among those returning from 'amber list' countries, in the absence of managed hotel quarantine being required. That matter has acquired even more importance because those 'amber list' arrangements need to be fully effective as far as those returning from India over the next few days are concerned. I would appreciate rapid engagement between our officials in this area to progress this issue.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The whole issue of international travel needs to be approached with caution and care over the coming weeks and months. In view of the current evidence, I reiterate the view of the Welsh Government that any significant opening of non-essential international travel from 17 May 2021 would be far too soon. This is especially the case in the light of emerging variants of coronavirus in other parts of the world. It would be very important that, as decisions about international travel are made, the accompanying formal assessment of the risks of the importation of new variants as a consequence of international travel are shared with devolved governments.

I copy this letter to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, First Minister of Scotland and First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

Best Wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD