

An open letter to residents, businesses and partners across the Caerphilly county borough:



As we enter the second week of our Wales-wide fire break lockdown, we wanted to thank you all for your continued efforts to protect our community from coronavirus and, by doing so, you are helping to protect our NHS.

During today's Welsh Government briefing, the First Minister outlined what we can expect to happen when the firebreak ends on Monday 9th November. The First Minister reinforced that our national lockdown will end on this date, despite recent announcements by the Prime Minister regarding a new lockdown in England, commencing on 5th November.

We would like to highlight a few key points that emerged at the briefing:

- The Wales-wide firebreak will definitely end on Monday 9th November.
- We will not return to our previous 'local lockdown' arrangements, instead there will be new Welsh measures for the whole country. However, any local hotspots thereafter will need to be targeted, but this has not been decided yet.
- There will be no travel restrictions within Wales.
- Travel from Wales to England will not be permitted during the month-long lockdown there without a reasonable excuse. No international travel is permitted during this period.
- Each household will be able to form an exclusive bubble with ONE other household.
- Schools will remain open.
- Up to 15 people will be able to meet indoors and up to 30 outdoors for organised activities.
- All businesses that were closed throughout the firebreak will be able to reopen.
- It is not clear under what terms pubs and restaurants will be required to operate - this will be considered over next few days.
- Working from home will become an even more important requirement.
- You will recall that the First Minister announced last week his intention to put in place legislation that will make it an offence to give false information to contact tracers and further legislation to make it a legal duty upon us to self-isolate. Employers will also have a legal duty to ensure their employees self isolate when required. Self isolation payments will be available for all social care employees and for low earners.

In terms of council services, we are working hard to reinstate all the services affected by the recent restrictions and we are aiming to get them up and running again shortly after the fire break ends. Further details will be available at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Whilst the focus is upon what happens after the lockdown, we must still ensure we make the last week of the lockdown count. We know this is tough, but we really need to get the R number down below 1. Today's figures for Caerphilly are 339 cases per 100,000, with the all Wales picture ranging from 689 cases per 100,000 to 30.3 cases per 100,000. It is important to remember, these figures represent the virus about two weeks ago, so we really need the lockdown to bring these figures down significantly. The fruits of our combined efforts will not be seen until the middle of November. So please, stay with us during the last week of the lockdown and comply with the restrictions.

Monday 9th November certainly does not signal a return to normality for any of us. However, we need to think of it as a new opportunity to enjoy greater freedoms, but it is critical that we do not become complacent. The First Minister has made it clear that we should not be asking ourselves ***what can we do?*** - instead we need to consider ***what should we do?***

We need to find a balance between living our lives and living with the virus, so it is crucial that we all adapt the way we live our lives and think very carefully about our actions and behaviours every single day.

The forthcoming winter months will be very difficult as we know that this is 'virus season' and we are expecting infection rates to soar. We cannot relax or loosen our resolve - particularly if we want to enjoy the festive season with our loved ones.

We know this has been so tough on our business community. You will be aware that a new grant scheme opened last week for local firms impacted by the ongoing coronavirus restrictions. We have been inundated with applications and staff are working 7 days a week to process as many forms as possible. We are committed to supporting the local business community and we are making these payments as quickly as we can.

We all know that enforcement has a role to play for the very small minority who are not acting appropriately. Gwent Police and the Council are responsible for enforcement and we continue to work in partnership to address any issues that are brought to our attention. Our collective focus remains upon assisting and reminding people to exercise their 'good citizen' responsibilities to protect themselves and those around them.

So, we now know what the restrictions are post lockdown. The onus is very much upon each and every one of us to protect ourselves, our family and friends, our NHS and our Christmas.

Thank You



Cllr Philippa Marsden
Leader of Council



Christina HARRY
Chief Executive