

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth, cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications and sport

CWLC COV10

Ymateb gan unigolyn/ Response from an individual

Dear Deputy Minister,

I am writing to you regarding the First Minister's statement on Friday May 29, 2020 concerning the review of lock down measures in Wales.

It is with great disappointment and frustration that tennis was not included as a permissible activity under the new guidance. As a keen tennis player and member of a local club I would like to see the re-opening of tennis facilities as soon as possible for a number of reasons:

1. Tennis is now permitted in most countries across Europe and in three of the four nations of Britain. Given that tennis within households has been permissible in England for over two weeks already, even if restrictions are lifted at the next review we stand to lag around six weeks behind England in the lifting of these restrictions. What is the scientific evidence that distinguishes Wales from these other countries and what makes the risk of transmission of the virus higher in Wales?

2. Golf is now permitted in Wales and as of updated guidance yesterday can now be played in a group of people from up to four different households. Tennis requires a minimum of two players but these could be from the same household which would logically pose less risk of transmission than meeting with people of other households even when socially distancing. Likewise, golf coaching is now permissible whereas tennis coaching is not - social distancing measures are much more easily upheld in coaching tennis when compared to golf. Again, I would be very interest to hear the rationale and see any scientific evidence that might outline why tennis would pose a greater risk of transmission over other sports and activities already permissible such as golf?

3. Tennis lends itself particularly to social distancing - it is a non-contact sport and by its nature (even in doubles) you are at a significant distant (much further than two metres) throughout the course of game-play. Indeed this is unlike in golf where participants generally stand close together at the start of each hole.

3. For many people tennis is a great source of exercise and is vital to the physical and mental health and well-being of its players. For many at our club it is the only form of exercise they engage in and the return to exercise is avidly anticipated amongst many members of my local club.

4. Following announcements in England, and in particular, Scotland and release of their safety guidelines, many clubs (including our own) were already prepared to re-open with sensible policies and social distancing measures already in place. I am sure that private clubs and committees would move very quickly to re-open in a safe and responsible way.

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5. At our club the loss of revenue in membership fees has already hit club finances. Being unable to open facilities has resulted in the club losing members and having to offer discounted pro-rata fees which have caused a loss of revenue. At a time when the Welsh Government are trying to improve the general health and well-being of its population it would be disappointing if the viability of Welsh tennis clubs were jeopardised further by a delay in the safe re-opening of facilities. Ultimately, further unnecessary delay could potentially cause the delay in development at many clubs and the potential permanent closure of others. It would be very sad to see the permanent loss of such organisations and facilities in Wales.

I would very much like to see a return of tennis in Wales and would urge the Welsh Government to reconsider their position for the reasons laid out above. If this is not possible, then i would certainly be interested in seeing the scientific advice and basis for which the decision was made and which sets Wales apart from the rest of the UK and indeed much of the rest of Europe.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards.

Darryl Walters