



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1126  
Ein cyf/Our ref DET/00091/21

Janet Finch-Saunders MS  
Chair, Petitions Committee

26 January 2021

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding a petition to allow organised sport for under 18s to be put in line with England's Tier 4 Restrictions.

The current situation is that England are in a Tier 5 National Lockdown and restrictions there include the closure of sports and leisure facilities. The Welsh Government is unable to comment on any [regulations](#) made by the UK government.

As highlighted by the First Minister on [19 December](#), as of 20 December, Wales has moved to alert level four in our published Control Plan, the highest level of restrictions. Unfortunately, while we fully acknowledge the importance of exercise for our physical and mental well-being, our alert level 4 regulations state that we must all 'stay at home' unless for essential reasons. This means all indoor and outdoor attractions and facilities must close. Doing activities outdoors, while safer, is not risk free and still requires people to leave their homes when it is not essential. As it becomes colder, darker and wetter, the conditions for the virus improve. The Welsh approach during 'stay at home' restrictions, based on expert behavioural advice, requires that people should be travelling as little as possible. Every exception to these rules, or concession in one area, weakens that message and could lead to misunderstandings amongst the population that place lives at risk.

As you'll be aware, schools in Wales are now closed and pupils are learning from home (apart those from key-worker households), in order to stop the transmission of the virus amongst our young people. Allowing organised youth sporting events to continue at this time would undermine that effort and the effects of schools being closed.

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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 Welsh Government's approach to restrictions has been based the latest data and science relevant to Wales, and based on the latest advice from our own scientific and medical advisors. This is in order to limit the people we come into contact with, and reduce the speed of the transmission of the virus. Through these rules, we are trying to balance importance of people's mental and physical well-being, our economy and with the need to keep people safe and protect the NHS.

At the moment, the situation in Wales is very serious – the virus is present in all our local communities. Our NHS is under pressure. We need strong measures to bring the virus under control and to protect public health. We also need everyone to help by not just following the rules but by making small changes to their daily routines and lives and reducing the contact they have with other people. This virus thrives on human contact – whenever we spend time with or near others there is a risk we will either catch or pass on coronavirus. We will minimise this risk, and reduce the pressure on our NHS, via the cumulative impact of all the changes we have made. It is the combined impact which makes the difference, not the risk posed by any one activity.

A review of restrictions will take place every three weeks. Sporting activities, including those for the under 18s, will resume at the appropriate time, as the situation improves and we are able to move down through the alert levels set out in the Control Plan.

We fully recognise the enormous efforts and sacrifices the Welsh public and businesses have made to keep Wales safe. The Welsh Government will continue to provide regular updates via the Covid19 Press Conferences over the coming days and weeks.

I hope this clarifies the current position regarding the regulations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elis-Thomas'.

**Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth  
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism