

Scottish Government must explain increasing 'R' number

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Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative shadow Constitution Secretary has asked the Scottish Government to explain the increasing R number relating to the reinfection rate of Covid-19.

Speaking in the Scottish Parliamentary debate on 'Suppressing COVID: Next Phase' this afternoon Mr Fraser outlined that two weeks ago the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, stated that the R number was 0.7, while just last night he stated it was 0.8.

The Scottish Conservative shadow constitution Secretary has therefore asked the Scottish Government to explain this increasing reinfection rate.

And Mr Fraser said it is science that will guide the ongoing decisions of the Scottish Government so a "detailed and accurate understanding" of what that science says is vital.

During his speech the Scottish Conservative shadow constitution secretary highlighted the human and economic cost to continuing the lockdown.

He also outlined concerns that while the lockdown has, so far, been 'self-policing' this is likely to change, especially as frustration builds and the number of daily fatalities decline. The Scottish Government must therefore prepare to share the scientific underpinning for their choices, in particular the R number.

Given that all nations are now in the process of easing lockdown, it is more important than ever that citizens understand the reasons for the differing decisions at differing times, and the all-important R number behind them.

Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative shadow constitution secretary said;

"There is a human and economic cost to continuing lockdown that we must understand.

"1100 Scottish people have died over and above the regular death rate from non-Covid causes since the lockdown began – in many cases they may be avoidable deaths.

"The Scottish Government has stated that the R number in Scotland is higher than the rest of the UK.

"John Swinney, the Deputy First Minister told the Covid-19 Committee 2 weeks ago that the R number was estimated at 0.7. Last night, he said on the BBC,

it was 0.8.

“If that is correct, and it is going up, we need to know why that is.

“If the Scottish Government is using a different R number in Scotland compared to England as a justification for greater restrictions, then that information must be shared with the public.

“The long term consequences of extending lockdown any longer than is absolutely necessary could be horrendous. For that reason we need full transparency for the choices that have been made.”