

2m rule must be reviewed to save hospitality jobs

15 Jun 2020



Jackson Carlaw, leader of the Scottish Conservatives has again called for the 2m social distancing regulations to be reviewed in order to save thousands of jobs in Scotland's hospitality industry.

The call comes after the hospitality industry itself has stated that thousands of jobs are at risk, across Scotland, from the imposition of the 2m rule.

Scotland's pubs and bars alone account for more than 45,000 jobs, and more still through the supply chain in breweries.

The Scottish Beer and Pub Association has endorsed the reduction in social distance stating that, at 1m, 3,400 pubs will be able to open their doors when lockdown eases as opposed to less than half that number, 1,500, if the distance remains at 2m.

The call comes on the back of research from Yougov suggesting that British consumers are twice as likely to return to pub gardens than pubs themselves, again suggesting that the crucial 2m is deterring customers.

The research shows that 26% of the public is comfortable visiting pubs, 37% of the public is comfortable visiting restaurants, while 53% of the public is comfortable visiting pub gardens once lockdown rules have been eased.

Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Conservative leader said:

"Scotland's hospitality and tourism sector is vital for Scotland's economy.

"Thousands of jobs in Scotland could be saved if the Scottish Government reviews the 2m rule.

"Given that we are inevitably going to see a steep decline in overseas tourism this summer and beyond, it is even more important that we can encourage Scots to go out and spend money.

"This is why it is absolutely crucial that the 2m social distancing rule is reviewed.

"Looking again at the distance measure must be considered as part of the journey out of lockdown."

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Cancer patients were exposed to a higher risk of infection at the SNP's flagship hospital because of flaws in the design process, a report has found.

The independent probe into deaths at the Queen Elizabeth hospital was published today, and identified a "series of problems" with the construction of the £800 million Glasgow facility.

That followed deaths of cancer patients which was linked to contaminated water.

And today, co-chair of the investigation Dr Andrew Fraser said: "These specific groups have been exposed to risk that could have been lower if the correct design, build and commissioning had taken place."

The Scottish Conservatives have said the SNP government now has series of questions to answer about what was supposed to be a world-leading hospital.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"This is an explosive report which presents yet more questions regarding what SNP ministers knew and when.

"It very clearly concludes that patients young and old with cancer – the same group from which people died – were placed at increased risk because of the building and design of the hospital.

"That's an utterly damning verdict on this SNP government which planned, commissioned and built this hospital.

"Dr Fraser and Dr Montgomery have also expressed significant concerns about transparency and governance for both the Queen Elizabeth and Sick Kids construction projects.

"Above all, patients and families want answers and the independent public inquiry which is to now proceed must be able to undertake that work and have full transparency and access to provide answers.

“It is clear we have seen a loss in public confidence in both state of the art hospitals. That confidence needs to be restored as soon as possible.”

Set a deadline to get on top of care home testing, SNP told

10 Jun 2020



The SNP has been told to set itself a deadline to finally get on top of testing all care home staff for coronavirus.

It comes as Nicola Sturgeon admitted barely a fifth of care home staff had been tested – three weeks after her health secretary promised a campaign of routine testing.

At First Minister’s Questions, she said around 11,000 workers had been processed, and denied there were issues with getting testing equipment to certain areas.

But Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw pointed out that in the Borders it was reported fewer than half the kits had arrived, while the local health board said it didn’t have the capacity to get all the tests done.

Care homes remain the place most likely to suffer Covid-19 deaths, figures showed today, and tens of thousands staff across the country are still waiting to be tested.

There are an estimated 50,000 care home workers in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Three weeks have now passed since the SNP said it would routinely test every care home worker.

“But now we learn barely a fifth of these staff members have been tested, meaning tens of thousands are still going into work with vulnerable people with no idea whether or not they’re carrying the disease.

“The fact so few have been tested three weeks after this pledge is pathetic.

“We need to see Nicola Sturgeon set a deadline for when all care staff will be tested in Scotland.

“These dedicated workers need to know the Scottish Government has a grip on this perilous situation.”

Businesses must be treated like 'adults'

9 Jun 2020



With just over a week to the next lockdown review, the Scottish Conservatives are calling for clarity regarding the next phases of lockdown easing.

In May, the First Minister announced the key elements of the Phase 1 of lockdown easing well in advance of the actual implementation date saying that she was treating the people of Scotland as 'adults'.

This time she has so far refused to outline the specific restrictions that will be lifted from June 18 onwards.

This has led to significant confusion and anxiety among Scottish businesses who need time to prepare if they are able to operate properly once lockdown is further eased.

Given the extreme impact the lockdown has had on our economy, the Scottish Conservatives are arguing that more information must be given to businesses so that they can make the necessary preparations prior to restarting.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said:

"Everyone understands that normal life won't resume all at once. But businesses can't just reopen at the drop of a hat.

"They need time to prepare, and for firms that can take advance orders or bookings, knowing when they will open again could be a lifeline.

"The last time Nicola Sturgeon announced some restrictions were easing, she gave us some notice.

"In her words, she treated people like adults – telling the country, some time in advance, what was going to be allowed.

"Now it seems that she'll tell us only when she's ready.

"Across Europe, countries are giving specific timelines for different types of firm to open, balancing the public health situation with saving jobs.

"Last week, for example, hotels in Northern Ireland were told they'd open at the end of July – so at least they know how long they have to last, and can start taking bookings.

“That’s the kind of clarity we need in Scotland to safeguard jobs.”

Shielding guidance must be reviewed every 3 weeks

9 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives are calling for shielding advice to be formally reviewed every three weeks, similar to the lockdown reviews currently undertaken by the SNP government.

Yesterday the First Minister announced that shielding Scots must follow strict guidelines until the end of July.

This vulnerable group will be allowed to leave the house for exercise from the 18th June onwards, when the next lockdown review takes place, but will not be able to meet anyone from another household in the open air, even if they currently live alone.

This blanket ban has been implemented despite the SNP’s own new guidance stating “the chance of catching the virus when you are outdoors, keeping two metres away from anyone else and not meeting with other people is very low.”

Restrictions for shielded individuals have been relaxed elsewhere in the UK, with those living alone already allowed to exercise and socialise outdoors.

This call comes as Scotland has recorded no new deaths from Covid for the last two days.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

“This vulnerable group has already been shielding for months and further isolation until the end of July without any chance of review, is increasingly difficult for them to bear.

“Of course we want to keep vulnerable people safe, but Scotland has recorded no new deaths from Covid for two days now and even the scientists agree that the chance of catching the virus outdoors, with social distancing, is very low.

“Shielding guidance must be formally reviewed every three weeks, just like lockdown reviews, as both are informed by scientific advice.

“The rest of the UK has already relaxed these guidelines significantly, it seems strange that the Scottish guidelines are so restrictive.

“In some cases, where people live alone, the lack of direct human contact must be severely affecting.

“Many shielded people will find the thought of another seven weeks of total lockdown without any reappraisal or explanation particularly tough.”