

Leaving lockdown together: Why we are better united against coronavirus

This week we commemorate VE Day. It was a moment of profound national relief, tinged with the reality of the sacrifices made in reaching that point. As this week proves, even after 75 years we remember vividly what that long period of attrition and grief taught us.

And so the current coronavirus pandemic reminds us of what matters in times like this, and what we can achieve as a United Kingdom.

Because if there is one thing that these crises have shown us throughout our shared history, it's that the nations of the United Kingdom are at their strongest when they work together.

Politics is a profession that thrives on disagreement and debate so I pinch myself as I agree with Nick Thomas-Symonds, the Labour MP for Torfaen and the new Shadow Home Secretary, when he said that the UK Government had worked well with the devolved administrations during this emergency. His comments reflected the appeal I hear daily from businesses and residents across Wales – park our political differences and unite in the defeat of this unwelcome and invisible killer, COVID 19.

Here in the United Kingdom, the pandemic response has been marked by joint decision-making and collaboration between the UK Government and the devolved administrations.

This is the approach that a crisis dictates, and it is the level of grown-up politics that the public demands. This does not preclude challenge, disagreement and analysis. That is important, but for now it is a question of timing and effort, all of which is focussed on a common objective.

Sometimes there have been differences of approach in the different nations as our administrations reacted in real time to the incredible challenges faced every day. We all accept there will be some 'divergence' – that's the reality of devolved government. But it has been striking that despite the very different political make-up of the administrations across the UK, the similarities in approach taken have by far outnumbered the differences.

It may not be reported widely, but almost every day I speak to Welsh Government Ministers, and what we call the 'machinery of Government' – civil servants, advisers and officials – are in near constant discussion. And guess what? More often than not we agree on this very point.

Whether it's the protection of jobs and livelihoods, the vast UK wide welfare system, the UK armed forces support that is so visible up and down Wales or the world class UK wide research and development – the importance of the Union (including the presence of the UK Government in Wales) has never been so crucial to the lives of the people of Wales. And rather than pose a threat

to devolution and a sense of intense national pride, it actually empowers them.

So, as the First Minister Mark Drakeford himself has pointed out, all four nations entered lockdown restrictions at the same time and should, if at all possible make any modifications to the restrictions at the same time. This is because our economy and systems are so intertwined.

We agree that a UK-wide transport system that permits one thing in Bristol but demands another in Newport is doomed to failure. How would we explain to our bigger employers that the rules in Deeside are different from their plant in Doncaster, especially if staff members work between the two?

People across Wales have been magnificent in the weeks since March when social distancing measures began. The overwhelming majority have followed the guidelines, stayed indoors and have more than done their bit to slow the spread of the virus and protect the NHS.

This is because the guidance has been simple, and the approach from both governments has been united. It is why Welsh business has quietly risen to the challenge, making PPE, sanitiser or developing new ventilator technology. They have donated food and time, supported key workers and looked after the workforce.

This is the approach that we need to sustain in the weeks ahead.

Covid-19 will undoubtedly be with us for some time yet and until we have met the five tests set out to beat this virus, we must continue with the measures we have been taking to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. Later this week the Prime Minister will give an update on the measures and decisions we will need to take next to safeguard the economy and avoid the risk of a second peak that would be so damaging.

It is a UK wide approach in this next phase which will be the best for the people and businesses in Wales. We entered this fight as a United Kingdom and we will come out of it even more united.

ENDS.

Note:

This article was published in English in the Western Mail on Thursday, 7 May. A Welsh translation of the article will be made available shortly.

[Coronavirus precautions on the Defence](#)

Training Estate

The Training Estate is considered an important asset in support of the military's response to COVID-19, and every measure is being taken to ensure personnel are protected from the virus. In particular, staff at Warcop Training Area in Cumbria and Swynnerton Training Camp in Staffordshire brought in extra facilities to ensure the safety of soldiers.

Facilities at Warcop Training Area were in use by soldiers from 4th Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Scotland. Numbers in each building were restricted to ensure that social distancing measures could be observed. Working with our industry partner Landmarc and their sub-contractors Splashdown, additional shower and toilet facilities were temporarily brought in to make sure that numbers could be limited. 2 mobile laundry facilities were also provided. Due to the fast-moving nature of the Coronavirus pandemic, the teams had to work very quickly and the new facilities were in place within 2 weeks.

At Swynnerton Training Area, members of 29 Regiment Royal Logistics Corps were preparing to be individual augmentees for various different operations around the world, as well as soldiers returning from rest and recuperation time after having been on operations. As personnel were coming in from different parts of the world, each group was kept isolated from other groups, including taking their meals and undertaking fitness training separately until they had completed 14 days in self-isolation.

Personnel were accommodated in the normal camp accommodation which had been rearranged to give sufficient space between soldiers, with separate ablution facilities for each group. Landmarc arranged for additional toilet and shower blocks at Swynnerton as well as Warcop. In total an extra 20 showers, 18 toilets and 6 hand washing stations were brought in at Swynnerton. The facilities arrived within a week.

Colonel Phil Cook, Deputy Head of UK Training at DIO, said:

At both Warcop and Swynnerton the DIO and Landmarc teams on the ground had to react very quickly and proactively to a changing situation. Plans had to take into account the number of troops, existing facilities, available space and any steps which could be taken to protect troops, contractors and staff. Their hard work ensured that all the soldiers could complete their training safely.

Mark Neill, Landmarc's Managing Director, said:

As DIO's industry partner for the strategic management and operation of the UK Defence Training Estate, our primary responsibility is to enable our servicemen and women to deploy safely on operations. The speed and agility in which critical

services have been delivered in response to the Coronavirus crisis reflects the high level of collaboration between Landmarc and DIO to ensure we can continue to support the nation's key defence and national security outputs.

[London rapist has sentence increased](#)

A man who violently raped one woman and attempted to rape another has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Wilfred Marodza, aged 28, had been drinking with friends after work on 19 July 2019. He had been harassing people in a bar and behaved in a sexually provocative manner to a number of women.

After leaving the bar in the early hours of the next morning, Marodza began following the first victim who was on her way home. He grabbed her by the neck and dragged her to a secluded park. Marodza then threatened to kill her, made her strip naked and raped her. After a struggle, the woman eventually managed to escape and ran away from Marodza, who chased her.

One hour later, Marodza approached his second victim, who is visually impaired, while she was waiting for the bus. He offered to help her find a taxi, before grabbing her and placing his hand over her mouth. She managed to scream, causing the offender to run away. He was later arrested at his home in Eastbourne, after his work ID was found by police at the bar he had visited the day before.

Marodza was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment on 16 January 2020 at the Inner London Crown Court. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 27 March the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to a sentence of 16 years' imprisonment, with a 5 year extended licence.

After the hearing the Solicitor General said:

"Marodza subjected his victims to depraved, callous attacks, resulting in serious emotional trauma. I am pleased the Court of Appeal agreed he should serve a longer sentence, and hope the increase brings some comfort to the victims."

Sewing skills making a difference

News story

Our employees can volunteer in response to Covid-19 during work time, if they are not a key worker. Tracey Standring is one of those volunteers.



Tracey is putting her sewing skills to good use

Employees are bringing different attributes to the volunteer cause, including Tracey Standring of Corporate Planning at the Risley office in Warrington who is putting her sewing skills to good use in her spare time.

Tracey, alongside fellow sewers in a purposely-formed local Trafford 'Scrub Hub', have been supplying numerous hospitals and clinics with protective medical scrubs, scrub bags and headbands, and are now focused on supplying nursing homes that have insufficient and inadequate PPE.

She said:

It's fantastic how people are pulling together to support the community, I really wanted to volunteer but was struggling to know how I could contribute. I found a pattern to make scrubs that are desperately needed and realised this was how I could make a difference.

Our team has distributed more than 100 sets of scrubs and 450 scrub bags so far to Trafford General Hospital, Salford Royal Infirmary, Altrincham General Hospital, Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester Children's Hospital, a number of medical centres and GP surgeries as well as care and nursing homes. We have lots more scrubs in preparation and others awaiting fabric.

So far, the group have been sewing scrub bags with recycled duvet covers and pillow cases as well as donated fabric, however sourcing material has been a challenge.

Tracey with the donated fabric

Tracey's work colleague Brenda Martin has been contacting our supply chain to request any surplus fabric, and she has recently received a donation from Carrington Textiles who supply fabric to the manufacturer of Sellafield Ltd's PPE clothing.

Tracey added:

We have a GoFundMe page for the Trafford group and have raised over £1500 so far to buy fabric. Meanwhile, we've had the offer of using the textiles room in a local secondary school to help production, we are trying to get more sewers signed up and I've been asked to help project manage the hub group.

The community spirit, togetherness and innovative ways in how we work to support communities are vital in the process of managing this crisis.

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[Update on Company Names Tribunal services](#)

News story

We have plans in place to maintain services for customers while ensuring the ongoing protection of staff.



Following government advice on measures to tackle the spread of the coronavirus, we are able to confirm that our services are mainly unaffected

at present.

Our people are our top priority. The majority of our staff are equipped to work from home and are doing so to avoid unnecessary travel and social contact. Our sites remain open for essential work that can only be undertaken on site.

Online services

We are still able to process fees, paper forms, faxes and paper correspondence. But, we ask customers to use our online services whenever possible. This will give us the best chance of continuing to deliver our services.

For services that are not available online, we have created an email address called paperformcontingency@ipo.gov.uk which can be used instead of faxing, or posting documents to us. For now, our fax machine is still operating. We will review this and will let you know if we are going to shut the fax service down. Please do not send duplicate copies to the email and fax. This will slow down the processing of yours and others' forms.

Hearings service

Aldgate Tower where we undertake Tribunal hearings is currently not operational.

- we will continue to operate hearings via telephone, Skype or other virtual methods
- no further physical hearings will be booked or take place until 1 June 2020 (this date will be kept under review)
- parties will be contacted over the next few days if their current hearing arrangements need to change

We will continue to update this page with any changes to services, as well as providing more details as they develop.

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