



**Janet Finch-Saunders MS|AS**

Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Aberconwy  
Member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy



Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister,  
Welsh Government,  
*By Email*

Office of Janet Finch-Saunders MS,  
29 Madoc Street,  
Llandudno,  
LL30 2TL.  
07540 964676  
Welsh Parliament,  
Cardiff Bay,  
CF99 1SN.  
Janet.Finch-Saunders@Senedd.Cymru

12 March 2021

**URGENT**

**Re: Review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus  
Restriction) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations**

Dear First Minister,

It is with the utmost seriousness that I write to express my exasperation at the outcome of the review announced this afternoon.

In the first instance, I would like to acknowledge that cases of coronavirus in our communities continue to fall, that pressure on our NHS is steadily easing, and that the vaccines continue to be rolled-out. Indeed, thanks to the effort of individuals across Wales the latest 7 day case rate is 41 per 100,000 population. In fact, according to Public Health Wales, the rate is 9.4 per 100,000 here in Conwy County today, and as such you will appreciate the considerable concern that is already being raised with me about the measures you have chosen, the apparent inconsistencies, and lack of common sense.

As I advised you during Plenary earlier this week, we have been left to focus on your tier system, which has completely collapsed. Indeed, it is noted that to be in level 3, there should be a confirmed case rate of more than 150 cases per 100,000. In fact, so to be in level 2 you set an indicator of confirmed case rates between 50 and 150 cases per 100,000 on a rolling seven-day average. Over the Winter months our communities have adhered to level 4 restrictions, only now to find that you have abandoned the tier system in favour of an inconsistent approach to reopening.

You had the audacity to advise that your top priority is to enable as many children and students to return to face-to-face learning as possible. Clearly, this simply is not the case because some students will not be returning to on-site learning until after the Easter holiday. Should children and students have been your genuine priority, why stop some returning until 12 April?

Whilst I welcome the decision to lift the stay-at-home restrictions, tomorrow we will once again be in the confusing situation of only being allowed to travel within our local areas. Indeed, constituents in Aberconwy are rightly wondering when they will be able to travel to Arfon, Anglesey, Clwyd West, and Dwyfor Meirionnydd to meet with another household outdoors.

[Cont...]



**Janet Finch-Saunders MS|AS**

Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Aberconwy

Member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy

[Cont...]

Certainly, the fact that hairdressers and barbers can reopen by appointment on 15 March is positive. However, I would be grateful if you could provide a copy of the scientific evidence which shows that it is reasonable to allow residents to attend a salon to have their hair cut, but not visit a non-essential retail establishment which sells scissors.

In fact, your treatment of non-essential retail is abhorrent. Indeed, I am astounded that from 22 March restrictions on the sale of non-essential items will be lifted in supermarkets, but not small and independently owned shops. Small and medium sized businesses are the backbone of our economy, and you have just gone and given them a great big kick. Indeed, for years we have been campaigning to encourage constituents to buy and back local, but you have decided to provide major retailers with another advantage. It follows that I ask that you urgently consider enabling non-essential retail to open from 22 March also. As some in the sector have already informed me, due to your actions they feel discriminated against, and as if they have been 'left out to hang'.

Yet again we are seeing unfair treatment of hospitality too and an apparent lack of understanding of the sector. Around 80% of tourism customers come from outside Wales. As such, whilst I hope that Welsh residents will make the most of the opportunity to have a Welsh holiday from 27 March, there is a real risk again that self-contained accommodation will not have enough customers. Additionally, whilst I believe that hotels which can provide room service will be allowed to open, I would be grateful if you could provide clear evidence that there would be a considerable risk should table service in restaurants recommence.

Finally, there is the serious matter of financial support. It would be much appreciated if you could explain why the ERF Sector Specific Grant is limited to businesses with 10 or more staff, and whether local authorities will have discretion to award some of the £150million to businesses which do not have a rateable value.

I do hope that you will reconsider your newly announced regulations as it is clear to me that they are not in the best interest of Aberconwy nor Wales. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

**Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS**