



Ein cyf/Our ref:

Mick Antoniw MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

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Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter of October 22nd in relation to the accessibility and public understanding of the Coronavirus regulations in Wales. I of course share yours and the committee's aim that there should be maximum awareness of the law as it applies to people in Wales, to gain the greatest possible compliance with the rules. From the outset of the pandemic, communication of our regulations has been a high priority for the Welsh Government, alongside our public health messaging.

This has been especially important as we have amended the regulations to reflect Cabinet decisions which reflect the changing situation we face during the pandemic, often at great pace. However, as a government we have also given as much warning and notice of changes as we can, for example through publishing regulations as far in advance of coming into force as possible. In drafting regulations, we have been as clear as possible as far as the wording and structure is concerned, alongside a clear and consistent approach to naming regulations. We have also consolidated the regulations twice to aid clarity, and made amended regulations available in up to date form, bilingually, as soon as possible.

This approach to the presentation of our regulations has been praised, for example, Tom Hickman QC, of Blackstone Chambers in London, said Wales has led the way: *'It was publishing a really good version of the regulations which showed the amendments, it was up to date, saying what the law was. That was totally fantastic and was not replicated at all in England.'*

Alongside the regulations themselves, we have used a wide variety of channels to ensure the public are informed about the law relating to Coronavirus in Wales. We work with other

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400
YP.PrifWeinidog@llyw.cymru • ps.firstminister@gov.wales

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.

public sector bodies, for example the police and local authorities to make sure our communications have the greatest possible reach. It has been particularly important to work particularly closely with agencies who are tasked with enforcing the regulations, to ensure that there are consistent messages to the public, and that there is shared understanding of the scope and remit of the regulations between public bodies. This has been particularly important where regulations in Wales have differed from those in England.

Media engagement has also been crucial in accurate, timely reporting of the regulations during the pandemic. We have undertaken well over a hundred live televised press conferences, several of which have been dedicated to explaining the outcome of the 21 day reviews, and setting out clearly changes and their impact on people and businesses. There have also been technical briefings and Q+A sessions with senior lawyers to improve the media's understanding of the regulations and their context.

We share your concerns over the dominance of the UK media for Welsh news consumption, and we have worked closely with UK broadcasters and London-based media to ensure that there is accurate reporting of the different regulatory approaches across the four nations, and that Wales' voice is clearly heard across the UK.

Our own social media channels and website have also enabled us to communicate directly with the people of Wales. There have been hundreds of thousands of views a day on our website, which has been a clear and stable platform for publishing regulations, guidance, FAQs and other materials. I and other Ministers have also taken part in several Facebook Live sessions to reach broader audiences than those consuming traditional media. There have also been large increases in engagement with our social media channels where we have been able to answer queries and engage with the public directly on the regulations affecting them.

Our communications campaigns have also had the objective of driving compliance alongside understanding of the regulations, and through the Keep Wales Safe campaign in particular, we have built a sense of shared national endeavour and personal responsibility.

We will continue to make every effort to minimise any public confusion around the regulations by presenting and explaining them in a way which is clear, accessible, and using all the channels and media opportunities at our disposal. I welcome the committee's desire for even greater public understanding and I hope there is a recognition of the substantial and ongoing efforts we have made, even in the most challenging and rapidly-changing circumstances, to keep the public properly informed and help them Keep Wales Safe.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark Drakeford'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Mark' being more prominent than the last name 'Drakeford'.

MARK DRAKEFORD