

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales
Welsh Government
5th Floor, Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

cc. Baroness Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language

cc. Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

24 March 2021

Dear First Minister

Our sector has welcomed the steps the Welsh Government has put in place to protect sporting facilities through the Covid 19 pandemic. The support given to both the public and private leisure sector has allowed us to weather the worst of the storm and be in a position to safely reopen in the coming weeks.

Last week, you published the revised Coronavirus Control Plan. In this document, you indicate that the Welsh Government will consider the reopening of indoor sporting facilities in the review cycle of the 22nd of April. From our understanding, this should facilitate the reopening of indoor sport and leisure centres from the 26th April.

We urge you to proceed and confirm a reopening on the 26th April for our sector. This would be in line with Scotland, and would be warmly welcomed by our sector.

In addition, we request that Welsh Government sets out a timeline beyond the return to Level 3 restrictions to include Level 2 and 1. This would greatly support business planning, especially an indication of when group sizes can be increased indoors beyond a maximum of 15 people.

Looking further into the future, we also require an indication of when larger group activity may be permitted. This is in line with revisions to Alert Level 2 set out in Coronavirus Control Plan. Having a forecast timeline will greatly assist us in business planning as both facility operators and organisers of sporting activity. We will need to prepare staff to safely supervise larger groups and will also need to begin to redeploy staff back into "business as usual roles".

Evidence on the safety of indoor facilities has developed in recent weeks, with Public Health Wales' own assessment of the situation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil suggesting no link between indoor sport and leisure facilities and transmission of Coronavirus. We also know that evidence from across the UK suggests that transmission risk within our facilities is low, with just 2.06 cases per 100,000 visits according to UKActive statistics on gym visits in Wales.

The steps taken by the sector in implementing guidance developed with your officials and our partners across the UK have been extraordinary. Leisure and sport facilities have put extensive precautions in place to enable a safe reopening when national restrictions allow, including, amongst other, physical distancing routes, controlled access, ventilation, and strict cleaning regimes. Best practice in Wales is shared across the sector via a portal funded by Sport Wales, and we are committed to ensuring that all operators meet the highest standards of compliance with Coronavirus

regulations. In short, our facilities and organised sport and leisure activities are Covid secure, and our experience demonstrates this.

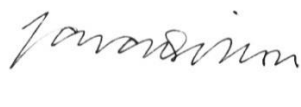
With systems in place to know who has been in a facility, we are also able to work with Track, Trace and Protect to isolate any possible outbreaks very quickly.

We must also stress some of the consequences of lost access to indoor facilities. As summer approaches we will see more people swimming in the sea, lakes and rivers across Wales. However, with the significant degree of lost pool time, many young people will not have had a swimming lesson in the last 12 months. It is now urgent that we can begin swimming lessons for young people again.

Sincerely



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Association



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