# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **Review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restriction) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations 2020** |
| **DATE** | **18 November 2021** |
| **BY** | **First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS** |

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 require a review of the coronavirus restrictions is undertaken every three weeks. The most recent review was due by 18 November.

Overall cases of COVID-19 have fallen across Wales since the last review of the regulations, although they remain high at just under 500 cases per 100,000.

Vaccination has helped to weaken the link between infections, serious illness and hospitalisations but it has not broken the link. If high rates of community infection and transmission continue, we are likely to see increased pandemic pressures on the NHS and more people needing hospital care. This is against a background of increased urgent and emergency pressures in health and social care services, comparable to those normally experienced during the most difficult periods of winter.

In considering this evidence, the Cabinet has agreed not to make any changes to the regulations in this three-week cycle. Wales will remain at alert level zero and we will not be extending the use of the Covid Pass to hospitality settings at this time.

The pandemic hasn’t gone away. A fourth wave is sweeping across Europe and many countries are introducing new restrictions to control the spread of coronavirus.

We will do everything we can to keep Wales open and to keep Wales safe. This means that retaining the option of extending the use of the Covid Pass in hospitality settings this winter, if cases and NHS pressures rise.

We will continue to discuss the best way this could be done with the sector, to help bars, restaurants and cafes to stay open and trading through the busy festive period, should this step be considered appropriate.

Vaccines remain our best defence against the virus. We continue to encourage people to take up the offer of the vaccine and booster.

I want to thank everyone for their efforts to help reduce rates of coronavirus across Wales over the last three weeks – we need to continue this work as we plan ahead for Christmas. Only with a collective effort can we continue to keep Wales safe and open.