

'Fire breaker' lockdown could last two weeks with the closure of non-essential businesses

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No decisions have been made but discussions are set to continue over the weekend

By
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A so-called "fire-break" set of lockdown restrictions are being seriously considered by the Welsh Government in a bid to stop the rising cases of coronavirus.

It is understood that no decision has been taken but that the move would be introduced on Monday, October 19 and come into force on Friday, October 23 if ministers decide to go ahead with it. [How a circuit breaker would work](#)

Wales' counsel general Jeremy Miles has said further restrictions are required in an effort to curb the resurgence of coronavirus.

Mr Miles said a decision on introducing a potential circuit-breaker lockdown has still not been made, but was one of the options the Welsh Government was currently discussing with local authorities and trade unions.

Shavanah Taj, Wales TUC general secretary, confirmed she had attended an urgent meeting on Thursday afternoon with the First Minister that also included representatives of the Confederation of Business Industry (CBI) and other business representatives.

She told BBC Radio Wales' breakfast show: "Currently we are talking about a stay-at-home fortnight, but the question is what does that look like and how does that actually impact jobs.

"We have asked for clarifications, but it looks like non-essential areas, shops and hospitality, will be shut. We haven't seen the full list, it is being worked up. It looks like two weeks, but if that does happen we need to take the public with us."

The general secretary said her understanding was that discussions would continue over the weekend to work out details ready for an announcement "early next week".

Trade unions and businesses have been asked to submit detail concerns that will be looked at. Council leaders are also reported to have been involved in the discussions.

A spokesperson for the Welsh Government said that the measures being considered in Wales were based on advice from both the UK Government's advisory body Sage and Wales' own Technical Advisory Group of scientists.

He said that the measures being considered for Wales were similar to [the recommendation for a two-week circuit break lockdown the Sage committee minutes from September 21](#) that Prime Minister Boris Johnson did not go ahead with.

He said: "The measures we have put in place at both a local and a national level, with help from the public, have kept the spread of the virus under check.

"However, there is a growing consensus that we now need to introduce a different set of measures and actions to respond to the virus as it is spreading across Wales more quickly through the autumn and winter.

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“We are actively considering advice from SAGE and our TAC Group. A ‘fire break’ set of measures to control Covid-19, similar to that described in the SAGE papers, is under consideration in Wales. But no decisions have been made.”

Jeremy Miles told the PA news agency: “Further restrictions are going to be required. There have obviously been discussions within the Government about whether a circuit-breaker is the right response to that.

“There’s been planning around a range of scenarios, and we’ve been talking to our partners in local government and elsewhere about various options to get their perspectives on that as well.”

He added: “There’s a range of ways of doing those things, if they are done. And some of them involve quite serious restrictions.”

Mr Miles said any announcement, expected next week, would come alongside “support and time to prepare”.

He said no decision had been made on the length of time any restrictions would last.

First Minister Mark Drakeford is due to give the Welsh Government briefing at 12.15pm on Friday, October 16. [Live updates from his speech will be here.](#)

Dr David Bailey, British Medical Association (BMA) Cymru Wales council chair, said he welcomed the travel ban as well as discussions about a potential circuit-breaker.

He said: "Cases are climbing fast across Wales with the latest figures showing that the number of Covid-related patients in the Welsh NHS has risen by 49% in a week, it's clear that the current restrictions are not strong enough to suppress the spread of the virus.

"We welcome the move to introduce a travel ban from Covid hotspots, but at this critical point doctors in Wales support, and are calling for as a matter of urgency, a circuit-breaker lockdown for a number of weeks.

"It is imperative that robust action is taken now without delay to protect the citizens of Wales and the Welsh NHS."

The Welsh Independent Restaurant Collective (WIRC), which represents more than 300 registered supporting cafés, pubs, and restaurants across Wales has sent an urgent letter to [Welsh Government](#) ministers asking for clarity on proposals to impose a ‘circuit-breaker’ shutdown of hospitality.

The letter is co-signed by Brains Brewery and Castell Howell.

They said a circuit-breaker will have "very direct and profound impacts on thousands of

Welsh businesses and jobs and as such urgent and immediate support is now essential to their survival".

Alistair Darby, the chief executive of Brains Brewery, said: "We welcome the First Minister's recent comments, and those of the health minister, which recognised that there is no significant evidence of transmission emanating from hospitality businesses. Yet a circuit-break shutdown of hospitality is now being considered.

"We have written to Welsh Government to raise our grave and urgent concerns that this will be the death knell for many in our sector if immediate support is not provided."



Coronavirus First Minister Mark Drakeford details 'sharp shock fire break' coronavirus lockdown to shut businesses and confine people to their homes
First Minister Mark Drakeford has revealed his plan for a two or three week Wales-wide lockdown to break the rate at which coronavirus infections are increasing



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