

P-05-979 Adopt the policies of UK government with regard to easing of lockdown rules, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 29.08.20

Thank you for your email inviting my comments on the petition I raised, hoping to address the divergence of the Welsh government lockdown policies from the approach taken by Westminster.

The letter attached to your email did not even begin to address the central issue, and was a masterful example of classic politician's waffle.

At a time of crisis I believe it is deeply unhelpful for the devolved nations to impose separate measures. Not only is it deeply confusing, but it is done for no other reason than to make a statement to Westminster, and without regard to the economic consequences. The United Kingdom would have emerged sooner, and in better shape from this crisis if the regional assemblies had not been bickering on the sidelines and imposing their own measures.

The measures announced by Westminster as we began to emerge from lockdown were focused on economic recovery - something Mr Drakeford does not have to worry about because the economy is not a devolved issue. He was therefore free to announce measures that may have had some merit if the only issue facing us was stopping the spread of the virus, but in doing so he decimated parts of the Welsh economy, and particularly tourism and the hospitality industry. This clearly has had a financial impact on the UK as a whole in lost tax revenues, but with no political consequences for Mr Drakeford, he did not need to concern himself with it.

It is disingenuous for Mr Drakeford to talk about pumping money into the Welsh economy. Wales has no tax raising powers, so all that funding will come directly from Westminster, leading to a situation where Wales, having resisted measures to lessen the economic impact of the virus, is now demanding extra funding to deal with the severity of the consequences..

The fear that has been generated by the virus has been compounded by different governments sending different messages and it is a fear that is a great deal more pernicious and damaging than the virus itself. If the regional governments stopped their posturing and bickering, and deferred to Westminster, there would be a good chance that the level of fear could be allayed, and our citizens would have the confidence to send their children back to school and to return to work. As it is the different messages are causing confusion and mistrust of motive, and the economy is suffering.

I am not under any illusion that my petition will have any effect on Welsh Assembly policy under this administration, but I really do hope that the majority of Welsh voters have the capacity to understand the damage that has been done by Mr Drakeford, and that they have long memories.

Georgina Stanger