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2nd November 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I recognise and would like to thank you for your continuing work engaging with officials across Scottish Government on the recovery of the culture sector and, as sector representatives and employers, for helping us to reinforce our efforts to keep safe. I am writing to you as the Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for Major Events and Culture as we reach another critical time in our efforts to control the Covid-19 pandemic and in light of COP 26, one of the most important gatherings in some time.

The hosting of COP 26 would always have been a significant challenge given the scale of the event for the UK and Scottish Governments and for Glasgow City Council. However, given the additional challenges of hosting this within a global pandemic we are going to face the risk of increased transmission.

Although the situation is greatly improved since August, it does remain fragile as we head into the winter period as the prevalence of the virus is still evident.

The fact that cases had declined in such a way since August without the need for tougher restrictions has been extremely welcome. This shows that increased compliance with mitigations, together with increased immunity through vaccination, previous infections, or, in some cases, both, had been capable of stemming infection. There is clear clinical evidence that double vaccination significantly reduces the likelihood that a person will get Covid-19. It does not eliminate the risk of becoming infected, however, it does significantly reduce the risk of severe illness and hospitalisation.

Scotland's health and care service is under considerable pressure and there is a risk that if there is a surge in cases as we enter the winter months – increasing pressure on hospital beds and ICU admissions – then we cannot rule out having to reimpose some restrictions.

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We do not want to return to more stringent measures, but this is yet another potentially pivotal moment in our journey through the pandemic.

With this in mind we are again asking all sectors as part of a collective wider effort to ensure they maintain and where possible, step up their efforts to reduce the spread of the virus. I know that this is something that you have been continuing to strive for and that you are in regular contact with my officials on compliance and have also discussed these matters over recent months at meetings with me, the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development or the Deputy First Minister.

Stepping up our efforts means taking all possible proactive steps to promote and reinforce the baseline measures, the promotion of advisory precautionary measures and sector specific good practice for the culture and events sectors.

Since the summer, vaccine certification has been introduced in many settings across the sector. While we do not underestimate the challenges that poses for the events sector, it is important to recognise that vaccine certification is intended to be a proportionate alternative to the risk of further periods of closure. As with other Covid measures set out in those regulations, we are under a legal duty to review the necessity of the regulations every three weeks.

In addition to vaccine certification there are three other areas that are still required by law:

- it continues to be the law (unless for some specific exemptions), that face coverings must be worn in most indoor settings and continue to be required on public transport;
- as before, hospitality (restaurants, cafes, bars, pubs, hotels where food/drink consumed on the premises) and also now since the opening of the night-time sector, entertainment venues (nightclubs, dance halls, discos and sexual entertainment venues) are required to collect the contact details of customers so that Test & Protect can continue to contact-trace positive cases;
- as before, businesses, services providers and places of worship must have regard to SG guidance about measures to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus relating to their business, service or premises.

For the culture sector this means continuing to promote the legal requirement to wear a face covering and following relevant guidance for the sector, including [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): reopening of cultural performances and events guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/reopening-of-cultural-performances-and-events-guidance).

Alongside this we urge businesses to continue implementing measures which will help us suppress the virus including:

- support staff to self-isolate if they are asked to do so by the NHS;
- regular testing of staff to help break the chains of transmission;
- support staff to work from home where possible to reduce the ability of the virus to transmit, recognising that for events and venues there will be some tasks that can only be done on site;

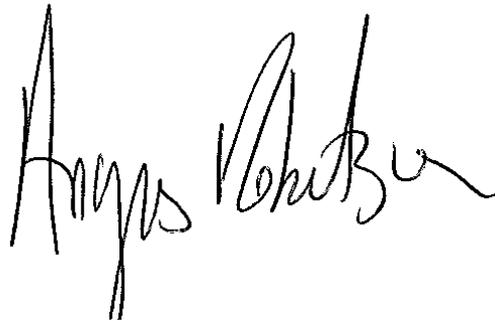
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- keep your premises as well ventilated as possible.

Knowing the challenges ahead, I would welcome your advice on what further measures might practicably be taken by the sector to keep case numbers down and enable events to continue to operate safely over the winter months. By working together, we can ensure businesses remain open and our economy recovers from the effects of the pandemic.

I would be grateful if you could share this correspondence with your colleagues and members, and if you could consider how you can support cascading this important message to the broader culture sector.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angus Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Angus Robertson

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