

Tourism boss says Welsh Government must roll back restrictions if data continues to show Omicron less severe

The Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance says Welsh Government's latest Covid rules should be "withdrawn as quickly as they have been introduced" if data continues to show Omicron causes less serious illness than previous variants.

Studies this week have shown the early data is pointing towards a significant overall reduction in hospitalisations with Omicron compared to the Delta variant – although the data is not as clear cut for those who have not been previously infected or had a booster jab.

This has been a welcome boost and prompted questions about whether Wales has moved too early to impose restrictions although UK health chiefs are still warning about the risk to the NHS due to the sheer number of cases of the highly transmissible variant.

Welsh Government has been asked to publish the evidence supporting the tightening of rules for leisure and hospitality from Boxing Day – with the rule of 6 and 2m social distancing if it is "reasonably possible or viable".

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Suzy Davies, Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance, said: “We recognise that protection from Covid is the number one concern at the moment. Our argument has always been that you can protect the public without damaging a major source of jobs and communities’ small businesses.

“We are pleased that the response this year is more measured, with smaller holiday accommodation largely unaffected and a more realistic approach to the application of the rule of six in hospitality venues with the removal of the family bubble requirement.

“However, it is also welcoming to hear today that early data is trending toward Omicron taking over from Delta with less

severe consequences.

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“We therefore hope that the Welsh Government rolls back the new measures as quickly as they have been introduced, if this trend continues.”

She added: “It has also been an important recognition by government that tourism businesses are key players in the livelihoods of many communities: It is their residents who ultimately lose out not just the business owners themselves.

“However, there is no doubt that these measures reduce capacity and it is absolutely right that businesses are duly compensated.

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“There is also no doubt that confusion and anxiety built into both governments' messaging has contributed widespread cancellations throughout his Christmas period.

“I am pleased, then, to see the WTA’s call for the pre-restrictions period being recognised in the funding package announced.

“Although applications can be made from January, support for losses from mid-December are being taken into account.

“We were very pleased to see that money coming to Wales on the back of Treasury announcements to support hospitality and retail are being applied in a very similar way by Welsh Government.”

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