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Welsh Sports Association response to Welsh Government easing of restrictions

Responding to the Welsh Government's roadmap out of lockdown that was announced to the press overnight, the Welsh Sports Association's Chief Executive, Victoria Ward has said :

"We are hugely disappointed at the news about Wales' path out of lockdown, we really wanted to see Welsh Government emphasise the importance of physical activity as we unlock society. Whilst a timetable for the reopening of sport and leisure allows us to put in place firm plans, the announced dates are later than we and our colleagues had hoped and anticipated. Our sector has consistently proved our ability to adapt and respond to the pandemic and put in place the measures required to operate safely and this doesn't seem to have been reflected in the news today. We are perplexed at the decision made by the Welsh Government and we would urge them to reconsider the timetable.

"We can't pretend not to be puzzled by the timetable. The First Minister and Health Minister have repeatedly warned about the link between alcohol consumption and increased transmission of the virus. Given this we do not understand the return date for outdoor activity for adults, including organised sport, coming behind a limited reopening of outdoor hospitality. This leaves us in the extraordinary position that any sports club with an outdoor bar area will be able host members and guests for drinks before it will be able to host a socially distant game of cricket or bowls. Sport and exercise are key for a healthy recovery from the pandemic and we can't understand the logic of this decision.

"Indoor facilities will also be opening later than we'd hoped. This will have a disproportionate impact on groups that are dependent on these venues for participation. Evidence suggests that women and girls, disabled people and those from BAME backgrounds are much more likely to participate indoors, and their return will now be much later than we'd hoped. This, coupled with the evidence that the First Minister has received from his own officials at Public Health Wales, that visiting 'facilities such as...gyms and leisure centre also did not appear to increase risk of infection' leaves us wondering how these decisions were made.

"Sport and leisure will continue to work constructively with the Welsh Government as we begin to emerge from lockdown. The accelerated timetable for test events gives us some hope of a return to larger grass roots competitions and spectator events in our stadiums this year and this is very welcome news.

"We are also hopeful that a slower initial pace might allow us to proceed more quickly as we move through summer, just as we have seen with vaccine rollout. We look forward to welcoming the public back for a summer of sport."