

# Scotland faces temporary booze ban as virus rules ramp up

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Scotland ordered a two-week closure of pubs on Wednesday in the central part of the country including the main cities Glasgow and Edinburgh, as ministers try to curb a rise in coronavirus cases.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the measures, to last for 16 days from Friday, were designed as "short, sharp action to arrest the worrying increase in infection".

The Scottish National Party (SNP) leader had previously ruled out using a two-week "circuit-breaker" national lockdown.

In most of Scotland, indoor hospitality venues such as pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes will only be allowed to operate between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, serving food but not alcohol.

Outdoor venues will be allowed to stay open until 10:00 pm and sell alcohol.

But in five areas across the so-called Central Belt, from Glasgow in the west to capital Edinburgh in the east, all licensed indoor and outdoor premises will be shut from October 9-25.

Takeaways would still be permitted, Sturgeon told the Scottish parliament, calling the decision "difficult but necessary".

Most of the country's 5.5 million people live in the Central Belt.

"We know that more than one-fifth of people contacted by test and trace report having visited a hospitality setting," said Sturgeon.

"Significantly restricting licensed premises for 16 days temporarily removes one of the key opportunities the virus has to jump from household to household."

## **'Total catastrophe'**

The UK's devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern

Ireland all have powers to set [health policy](#).

Should they follow Scotland, it could put pressure on the national government in London to do the same for England, given a similar spike in positive cases.

Opposition parties have said the early closing of English pubs at 10:00 pm has had little effect on cutting transmission rates.

Sturgeon announced funding of £40 million (\$51.5 million, 44 million euros) for businesses affected by the closures.

But Willie Macleod of trade group UKHospitality called the move "a total catastrophe" and said even more support was needed for the beleaguered sector.

"Scottish hospitality is already on the brink and is unable to look ahead with any degree of confidence. Forced closures will spell the end for many, many venues," he said.

"It is likely to be the final straw for many that were only just hanging on. We are going to see businesses fold and many jobs lost."

Other measures included a call to restrict use of public transport, wider use of face coverings indoors and reintroduction of two-metre social distancing in shops.

"Without them (the restrictions), there is a risk the virus will be out of control by the end of this month," Sturgeon said.

"But with them, we hope to slow its spread."

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has warned the country is tracking

other European countries and facing a second wave of the coronavirus.

More than 42,000 people have died in the UK after testing positive—the worst toll in Europe. In Scotland, 2,533 people have died.

Scotland recorded a record 1,054 new [coronavirus](#) cases in 24 hours to Wednesday, with case numbers growing by an estimated 7 percent every day, according to government figures.

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