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## **A STATEMENT ON NEW CORONAVIRUS TIERS**

I am incredibly disappointed by today's announcement that the whole of Cumbria will be in Tier 2 of the new restrictions from 2<sup>nd</sup> December, as I know are many of my constituents.

The narrative for Cumbria's restrictions in the Written Ministerial Statement, laid in parliament by the Secretary of State today, does not properly reflect the situation in Cumbria which has four of its six districts occupying the four places at the bottom of the North West table on latest available positive case data – with all districts reducing. The same narrative acknowledges that spikes in Carlisle and South Lakeland are down to two outbreaks in local schools, while it appears to punish 6 districts for the infection rates in the over 60's in just two, Carlisle and Barrow.

I supported the four week lockdown very reluctantly, with the promise that it would get control of the virus. I was asked to give the government that four weeks. My constituency of Workington, which sits entirely within Allerdale but does not cover the whole of Allerdale, went into that lockdown in Tier 1 – but we emerge after four weeks in a Tier 2 that is stricter than the previous Tier 2.

The last four weeks have been hard – the last 8 months even harder. I am delighted to see vaccines on the horizon that may allow us to get back to spending time with our loved ones, while also protecting them. My constituents have worked incredibly hard to limit their interactions with each other, while continuing to support local businesses. That hard work has driven down case rates significantly, and my constituents deserve more than to have their lives restricted because of relatively small localised outbreaks in places that are more than 90 minutes by car, and the other side of mountain ranges.

I fought hard at a local and national level to ensure that the previous restrictions were determined at a district level, and maintain that the new restrictions should be the same. When I raised concerns about the use of the term 'regional restrictions', I was promised that the data would be looked at in the context of local geography, local movements and travel to work areas alongside authority boundaries. That appears not to have been the case in determining new restrictions.

I have asked the government for the assessment criteria for this tiering – proper, published, weighted assessment – alongside a route map for travelling down the tiers. We need a clear path out of these restrictions, and we need to know what the review in 14 days will be considering.

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