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The Scottish Government recognises and greatly values the economic, social and health benefits the sport and leisure sector provides. We are also grateful for the important role the sector has played to date in helping to contain the virus.

I would like to thank you for continuing to play your part in suppressing the spread of the virus. Your efforts are hugely valuable in the continued efforts to save lives and safeguard the NHS.

Like you, we want to see sport and leisure return in full as soon as it is safe to do so. While I understand the challenges the continued wait will present for some organisations, including those operating and utilising indoor facilities, I hope the details announced today by the First Minister will reassure you and give you a clear basis on which to plan. We will continue to review the situation to see if earlier reopening is possible, with the intention to provide a further update in three weeks' time.

These are not decisions we take lightly, given the potential impact on the leisure facilities and the livelihoods of those working in the sector. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been working with the UK Government to provide a range of financial support mechanisms for businesses across the country and continue to explore what more can be done.

We've been working collaboratively with the sector for some time now to develop strong guidance that will allow the necessary protocols to be put in place to allow indoor facilities to open, providing members and staff with the confidence to return to gyms and swimming pools safely. Thank you for being part of that collaborative process – it has been incredibly valuable. I hope to be able to publish that shortly.

Thanks again for the valuable contribution you continue to make and I am fully committed to continuing to engage with you on this shared priority.



JOE FITZPATRICK

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