

No escaping from Wales: UK police to enforce travel ban

October 24 2020, by Danica Kirka



A matrix sign on the A48(M) heading towards Cardiff informing motorists to Wales entering a "firebreak" lockdown, Friday, Oct. 23, 2020. A police force in England says it will try to stop people from leaving Wales, which has started a 17-day lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19. The Gloucestershire Constabulary says it will patrol routes from Wales and pull over drivers they believe are making long journeys. Travelers without a good excuse will be asked to turn around. (Ben Birchall/PA via AP)

A police force in England says it will try to stop people from leaving Wales, which has started a 17-day lockdown to slow a surging rate of coronavirus infections.

The Gloucestershire Constabulary will patrol routes from Wales and pull over drivers they believe are making long journeys. Travelers without a good excuse will be asked to turn around. If they don't comply, officers will inform their Welsh counterparts so they can take action because Gloucestershire police don't have the authority to fine people traveling from Wales, the department said.

The situation illustrates the patchwork of [coronavirus](#) restrictions imposed by authorities throughout the U.K., which has Europe's deadliest coronavirus numbers, with 44,661 confirmed virus deaths. Some 1,756 of those occurred in Wales, which has a population of about 3 million.

Under the U.K.'s system of devolved authority, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have established their own public health rules. Meanwhile, the [national government](#) in Westminster has created a three-tiered virus alert system that applies to England alone.

South Yorkshire on Saturday became the latest region to enter Tier 3—the tightest level of virus risk restrictions in England—following Liverpool, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.



Customers sit in the outdoor seating of bars and cafes in Cardiff prior to Wales entering a "firebreak" lockdown, Friday, Oct. 23, 2020. A police force in England says it will try to stop people from leaving Wales, which has started a 17-day lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19. The Gloucestershire Constabulary says it will patrol routes from Wales and pull over drivers they believe are making long journeys. Travelers without a good excuse will be asked to turn around. (Ben Birchall/PA via AP)

But it is the Welsh government that has imposed one of the U.K.'s strictest lockdowns, including a ban on non-essential travel. Under rules that took effect Friday evening, Wales also closed most businesses and restricted high schools to online instruction.

Another English police force, West Mercia, also said it will be working

with their Welsh counterparts to "enforce, where necessary, the relevant rules for the area we serve."

New infections are continuing to rise across Britain. Professor Neil Ferguson, whose modelling led to the U.K.'s original lockdown in March, told the BBC that the current situation was "worrying."

"We are in a critical time right now," he said. "The health system will not be able to cope with this rate of growth for much longer."

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