**FROM THE OFFICE OF CHRIS LODER MP**

Member of Parliament for West Dorset

**PRESS RELEASE**

West Dorset MP makes a powerful case in the House of Commons for rural Dorset to come down to Tier 1 in this week’s Government review

**West Dorset MP calls on the Health Secretary, Care Minister and Business Minister to bring Dorset down to Tier 1:**

* **Makes a plea to the Health Secretary on Monday, asking him to consider reducing rural Dorset to Tier 1 at Wednesday’s review**
* **On Monday, tells the Care Minister of the diligent approach by people and businesses in West Dorset, resulting in a very low case rate**
* **Asks the Business Minister on Tuesday to use his influence for Tier 1 and for additional support for West Dorset’s businesses and self-employed**

West Dorset MP Chris Loder has made a powerful case to the Government that rural Dorset should come down to Tier 1 at Wednesday’s tier review.

In the last 24 hours, the MP has made not one but three major submissions in the House of Commons, hammering home the point that not only should rural Dorset come down to Tier 1; but that, if that is not possible, small businesses and the self-employed should be offered fair financial support from the Government.

Chris Loder asked a question in the House on Monday (14th December), to the Health Secretary following his Ministerial Statement on Covid-19; he followed this with a speech during a Parliamentary debate with the Care Minister; that West Dorset and the wider rural Dorset area should be moved down to Tier 1 in the Government’s review on 16th December. On Tuesday, he challenged the Business Minister on what additional financial support would be made to West Dorset’s small and micro-sized businesses in the event that rural Dorset was forced to stay in Tier 2.

In his speech on Monday, the MP said that at its western extremity, West Dorset is 55 miles from the main commercial centre of Bournemouth, which is influencing the tier that rural Dorset is in. He said that today in Dorset (7 day rolling rate to 8th December), Dorset had 43.1 cases per 100,000, which is a considerable reduction on previous weeks.

That figure is lower than that in Cornwall and the Isle of Wight when the decision was made to place those two areas into Tier 1; they were at 58.5 and 56.4 respectively. On 12 December, one case of Covid-19 was reported in rural Dorset, while on 9 November, 85 cases were reported – making it clear, according to the MP, that there has been a considerable reduction in cases, with just one patient with Covid-19 in Dorset County Hospital last Friday.

The MP said that the good people of rural Dorset and, indeed, of West Dorset have been diligent. They have been self-responsible and respectful not only of themselves and their families, but of others in the community. On the vaccination programme he said: “I am particularly pleased that the Government has made huge strides with a vaccine. We in Dorset are blessed by Dorset County Hospital having a hub for the new vaccine. Indeed, to the north of our constituency, just over the border in Somerset, so does Yeovil District Hospital. West Dorset, I am certain, will be served well.”

He also asked the House to recognise the effect on wider business and West Dorset’s economy, saying that shops, pubs and breweries have very, very diligently taken that responsibility of being Covid-secure and invested a lot of money in doing so. With 6,525 businesses in West Dorset, 97% of which are micro or small-sized businesses, the MP says this means that they face the most difficult of circumstances and are the most affected by the situation.

Chris Loder concluded: “I’m doing absolutely everything I can to get rural Dorset into Tier 1 this week; pressing the Government on this as I have been doing rigorously since November 26th. On Wednesday, the Government has a considerable opportunity. Not only to respect the diligence of those who have worked so hard to reduce the local case rate here; but also, to support the very survival of West Dorset’s economy.”

-ENDS-

*Issued 15th December 2020*

EDITOR’S NOTES:

1. **14/12/20 YouTube: Chris Loder’s Question to the Secretary of State for Health following the Covid-19 Ministerial Statement**

<https://youtu.be/5-VPM1kD-WI>

*Hansard record:*

https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-12-14/debates/1E935A24-A8B4-4862-B8B5-C471D5CB40F1/Covid-19Update#contribution-33531974-EDEF-46B4-A787-711617AFFB10

1. **14/12/20 YouTube: Chris Loder’s speech in the House of Commons during the Covid-19 debate**

<https://youtu.be/uJahqQ0rmdA>

*Hansard record:*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-12-14/debates/FAA70344-296F-48EA-BCAB-FC612A113CF4/Covid-19#contribution-714084F1-A46B-491D-80A1-920C3A7A04D4>

1. **15/12/20 YouTube: Chris Loder’s Question to the Business Minister in the House of Commons, on fair financial support for West Dorset’s businesses**

<https://youtu.be/1HNkrBazb8k>

*Hansard record not yet available*

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