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The postponement of the Government's planned announcements on the final stages of the Covid "roadmap" will be a disappointment to many. Despite the retreat of the pandemic, what should be a cause for optimism has morphed into inexplicable hesitancy.

For one group in society this protracted unlocking is baffling and infuriating. The millions involved in choirs had expected to resume their activities last week after more than a year of silence or making do with online alternatives. They watched thousands of fans singing their hearts out at the FA Cup Final recently and imagined that it would not be long. Many had already resumed rehearsals and booked venues for performances, looking forward to the sense of well-being and camaraderie afforded by singing together.

Then out of the blue the Government issued new guidance that put a halt to all their plans. It stated that in England non-professional singing indoors could take place only in groups of up to six people. It is now possible to go to a pub or a crowded restaurant but not sing Handel's Messiah or Mozart's Requiem in a large, well-ventilated hall.

Who draws up these ridiculous rules and based on what evidence? In Wales, indoor rehearsals of up to 30 people are permitted so why only six in England? Moreover, if an amateur choir charges for entry, is it professional and able to perform with more than six members? No one seems to know.

Oliver Dowden, the Culture Secretary, says the decision was based on "very clear public health guidance". But his department, also responsible for sport, seems keener to meet the requirements of football than of an amateur pastime enjoyed by some 2.2 million people in 40,000 choirs.