

Fighting the virus

Yesterday the Commons passed the latest pandemic controls, which had been introduced the previous night. As always the Opposition parties all wanted the current controls and recommended more. The Conservative benches were more divided, with a minority questioning the value and wisdom of these further restrictions on our liberties.

We have now seen that a Labour government in Cardiff and an SNP government in Edinburgh have not been more successful than England at getting case and hospital rates down more and keeping them down by enforcing stricter regulations for longer. The controls are now going on around the world against air travel from southern Africa where the latest variant was first detected, only to discover that the new mutant has already broken out and is present in countries around the world well beyond southern Africa. Some think this new mutant is likely to spread more rapidly but to be mild. Let us hope it is not a new lethal killer.

I have raised the issues of whether the NHS has now improved airflows, introduced more UV filters and cut the chances of cross infection. I have also asked about better treatments. During the debate others raised the question of why past forecasts of rising case numbers and deaths have often been inaccurate, how much virus the masks do actually contain and whether these rules will be lifted before Christmas when Parliament is no longer in session.

The NHS senior management needs to make sure the pace and distribution of more vaccinations is fair and achievable and tell us more about treatments and infection control.