

Joint Biosecurity Centre: Greens sound alarm over civil liberties, data protection and scientific expertise



Green Party

28 May 2020

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, has written to Health Secretary Matt Hancock raising a series of concerns about the role of the Joint Biosecurity Centre. [1]

It follows the announcement yesterday of the need for local lockdowns and the role the centre would play. [2]

It has previously been reported that centre would closely follow the UK's anti-terrorism national security system. [3]

Bartley said:

“Rather than relying on the established expertise of Public Health England, Matt Hancock has chosen to establish a totally new body, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, about whom we know next to nothing but would play a significant part in local lockdowns.

“Such lockdowns would clearly impact fundamental civil rights and so it is vital that there is clarity and political accountability about who is making decisions about when and how such restrictions should be imposed and then lifted, and how they will be scrutinised

“It is essential that its membership is made public, together with information about its members, how they have been selected, on what basis and particularly whether they have scientific or medical expertise.

“So far the only public information is that the body will be led by Tom Hurd. We know very little about him, other than that he is a leading candidate to take over as the next director general of MI6.

“Putting this together with concerns about the acquisition and storage of highly personal health data rings alarm bells about our civil liberties.”

ENDS

Notes

1

A copy of the letter is [available to view here](#).

2

On Wednesday 27 May, the Health Secretary raised the issue of local lockdowns in response to flare-ups of the Coronavirus and the role of the Joint Biosecurity Centre in deciding when they should be implemented in particular settings..

3

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/12/former-counter-terror-official-tom-hurd-put-in-charge-new-uk-biosecurity-centre-coronavirus>

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