

Now what?

Winning a difficult vote will come as an unsurprising relief to the government. They had to rely on the Opposition and on this occasion it worked. It does not however solve the underlying problems.

If the virus continues to spread the government will be told by its ever cautious scientific advisers to lock down more. They are bound to say that as it is the safest thing to say if your one task is to curb the disease. The measures taken this week are unlikely to arrest its progress. Indeed one of the main arguments against the vaccine passports is vaccinated people can get and pass on the virus so how does it help as a device to control Night clubs and large events?

If the virus turns out as some think to be milder so there is no surge in serious cases the governments critics will claim the measures were needless.

More seriously Ministers have to rebuild trust with a large number of MPs who voted against, abstained or wanted to vote against but responded to persuasion or coercion. Ministers need to grasp both the scepticism about some of the forecasts and measures proposed, and the concern that every time a new variant appears there could be more lockdowns.

Government needs to balance freedoms and economic needs against pandemic control. It needs to recognise that anti pandemic rules can cause more mental health problems, loss of jobs, businesses and income and damage to the social life of communities. There needs to be more evidence about which measures do most at least collateral damage to contain the spread of the virus.

We could do with more information on what progress has been made with air extraction and cleansing in public buildings, more information on approved and potential treatments and more on disinfection.

Government also needs to ensure extra resources going into the NHS can be used to tackle the many non covid health problems that do not go away because of the virus.