

PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 29 March 2021

Good afternoon and welcome to this press conference on what has been a big day for many of us –

with the first chance to see friends and family outdoors, whether as six people or two households.

And I want to congratulate the members of Ilkeston cycling club in Derbyshire that set off at midnight,

the swimmers who broached the chilly waters of the Hillingdon Lido at the crack of dawn,

and more than anything I know how much it will have meant to millions of people to have joined someone else for a cup of tea in the garden.

And I must stress that it is only because of months of sacrifice and effort that we can take this small step to freedom today.

And we must proceed with caution.

It is great to see that yesterday we recorded the lowest number of new infections for six months

deaths and hospital admissions across the UK are continuing to fall.

But that wave is still rising across the Channel

and it is inevitable as we advance on this roadmap

that there will be more infections, and unavoidably more hospitalisations and sadly more deaths.

So what we need to do is continue flat out to build the immunity of our population

build our defences against that wave when it comes.

And now that we have vaccinated more than 30 million adults across the United Kingdom

it is more vital than ever to protect the most vulnerable.

the evidence seems pretty clear that vaccinating the elderly and vulnerable has helped to drive down rates of hospitalisation and death

and now we want to reinforce that protection with a second dose

so for many people April will be the “Second Dose Month”

and please take up your appointment when it's your turn.

And at the same time as we push forwards with our programme to offer a vaccination to all adults by the end of July

we're building up our own long-term UK manufacturing capabilities.

I've already told you that Novavax

– a potentially significant new weapon in our armoury against Covid –

is going to be made at Fujifilm in the North East.

And I can today announce that the Vaccine Task Force has reached an agreement with GlaxoSmithKline

to finish and bottle this precious fluid also in the North East

giving us between 50 and 60 million doses of UK made vaccine subject to the right approvals from the MHRA.

And then, of course, there is one other way we can all build our own individual defences against Covid

and enjoy ourselves at the same time –

and that is to take more exercise.

So I am personally thrilled that I will be able to play tennis for instance

And without being remotely preachy I do hope that we can take advantage of this moment

and the beautiful weather –

to play sport, to take exercise, to have fun and build our national resilience in that way too.

And remember that outdoors is generally much safer than indoors

and the way to continue on our cautious but irreversible roadmap to freedom is to follow the rules

and remember hands, face, space and fresh air.