

PM statement in Downing Street: 27 April 2020

I am sorry I have been away from my desk for much longer than I would have liked

and I want to thank everybody who has stepped up
in particular the First Secretary of State Dominic Raab
who has done a terrific job

but once again I want to thank you

the people of this country

for the sheer grit and guts

you have shown and are continuing to show

every day I know that this virus brings new sadness and mourning to households across the land

and it is still true that this is the biggest single challenge this country has faced since the war

and I in no way minimise the continuing problems we face

and yet it is also true that we are making progress

with fewer hospital admissions

fewer covid patients in ICU

and real signs now that we are passing through the peak

and thanks to your forbearance, your good sense, your altruism, your spirit of community

thanks to our collective national resolve

we are on the brink of achieving that first clear mission

to prevent our national health service from being overwhelmed

in a way that tragically we have seen elsewhere

and that is how and why we are now beginning to turn the tide

If this virus were a physical assailant

an unexpected and invisible mugger

which I can tell you from personal experience it is

then this is the moment when we have begun together to wrestle it to the floor

and so it follows that this is the moment of opportunity

this is the moment when we can press home our advantage

it is also the moment of maximum risk

because I know that there will be many people looking now at our apparent success

and beginning to wonder whether now is the time to go easy on those social distancing measures

and I know how hard and how stressful it has been to give up

even temporarily

those ancient and basic freedoms

not seeing friends, not seeing loved ones

working from home, managing the kids

worrying about your job and your firm

so let me say directly also to British business

to the shopkeepers, to the entrepreneurs, to the hospitality sector

to everyone on whom our economy depends

I understand your impatience

I share your anxiety

And I know that without our private sector

without the drive and commitment of the wealth creators of this country

there will be no economy to speak of

there will be no cash to pay for our public services

no way of funding our NHS

and yes I can see the long term consequences of lock down as clearly as anyone

and so yes I entirely share your urgency

it's the government's urgency

and yet we must also recognise the risk of a second spike
the risk of losing control of that virus
and letting the reproduction rate go back over one
because that would mean not only a new wave of death and disease but also an economic disaster
and we would be forced once again to slam on the brakes across the whole country
and the whole economy
and reimpose restrictions in such a way as to do more and lasting damage
and so I know it is tough
and I want to get this economy moving as fast as I can
but I refuse to throw away all the effort and the sacrifice of the British people
and to risk a second major outbreak and huge loss of life and the overwhelming of the NHS
and I ask you to contain your impatience because I believe we are coming now to the end of the first phase of this conflict
and in spite of all the suffering we have so nearly succeeded
we defied so many predictions
we did not run out of ventilators or ICU beds
we did not allow our NHS to collapse
and on the contrary we have so far collectively shielded our NHS so that our incredible doctors and nurses and healthcare staff have been able to shield all of us
from an outbreak that would have been far worse
and we collectively flattened the peak
and so when we are sure that this first phase is over
and that we are meeting our five tests
deaths falling
NHS protected
rate of infection down

really sorting out the challenges of testing and PPE

avoiding a second peak

then that will be the time to move on to the second phase

in which we continue to suppress the disease

and keep the reproduction rate, the r rate, down,

but begin gradually to refine the economic and social restrictions

and one by one to fire up the engines of this vast UK economy

and in that process difficult judgments will be made

and we simply cannot spell out now how fast or slow or even when those changes will be made

though clearly the government will be saying much more about this in the coming days

and I want to serve notice now that these decisions will be taken with the maximum possible transparency

and I want to share all our working and our thinking, my thinking, with you the British people

and of course, we will be relying as ever on the science to inform us

as we have from the beginning

but we will also be reaching out to build the biggest possible consensus

across business, across industry, across all parts of our United Kingdom

across party lines

bringing in opposition parties as far as we possibly can

because I think that is no less than what the British people would expect

and I can tell you now that preparations are under way

and have been for weeks

to allow us to win phase two of this fight as I believe we are now on track to prevail in phase one

and so I say to you finally if you can keep going in the way that you have kept going so far

if you can help protect our NHS

to save lives

and if we as a country can show the same spirit of optimism and energy shown by Captain Tom Moore

who turns 100 this week

if we can show the same spirit of unity and determination as we have all shown in the past six weeks

then I have absolutely no doubt that

we will beat it together

we will come through this all the faster

and the United Kingdom

will emerge stronger than ever before