

Letter from Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster: 22 April 2020

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

COP26 President closing remarks at Placencia Ambition Forum

COP26 President Alok Sharma gave closing remarks at the Placencia Ambition Forum by video on 22 April 2020.

The focus of the forum was to drive climate action and ambition in Nationally Determined Contributions in the lead up to COP26 and beyond in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to, of course, thank the Government of Belize for bringing us together under, what we all recognise are challenging circumstances. Of course we are all engaged in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, in our countries to support our peoples.

At the same time, and I think many colleagues have remarked on this, we also need to keep a very clear focus on tackling climate change.

And of course, small island states are very much on the very front line of climate change as we all know.

When I was in New York recently a representative of one of the Small Island Developing States said to me that "tackling climate change is absolutely an existential issue, because if we don't get it right, we will no longer have a place to call home." Those are the words of a representative from the Small Island Developing States.

Now, whether we live in the South or the North, the East or the West, we share one life-giving but fragile planet. It is important, as we come

together on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, that we remember that all our futures are intrinsically linked.

As the Presidency of COP26, alongside our Italian partners, as you've heard from Minister Costa, the UK is committed to putting the voices of those most affected by climate change front and centre of the discussion.

That is why I met early on in the Presidency with the Permanent Representatives of the Small Island Developing States, the Least Developed Countries, and of course others who are on the front line of climate impacts, to hear from them how failure to act will cause irreversible consequences for the places they call home.

The UK and Italy will of course continue to champion their voices in the lead up to COP26.

As you will all know the Bureau took the difficult decision to postpone COP26. But of course we are busy consulting with all of you to identify a new date. In doing so our priorities are very much about the health of our participants, the representation of all parties who are engaged in this dialogue, and of course very importantly allowing the work to be done to enable an ambitious outcome, which is what, I believe, we all want.

Some partners understandably fear that a postponement might impact momentum. Let me give you this very clear reassurance – we are determined to make sure that climate change remains a priority for all of us. That is why events like this forum are so important.

Undoubtably COVID presents many challenges, not least how we recover from the pandemic, and every country around the world will face a choice, between laying the foundations for sound, sustainable and inclusive growth or locking-in polluting emissions for decades.

As I think every speaker that we've had on this panel has remarked, we must collectively support a green and resilient recovery that helps us deliver our existing commitments.

As the incoming Presidency, we continue to press for much greater ambition around the world – more ambition to reduce emissions, more ambition to build resilience, and more ambition to cooperate and support each other.

Let me take each of those in turn. First, we do need more ambition to reduce emissions. The science on climate change is clear and we all are going to have to play our part. Every country must submit a credible and ambitious nationally determined contribution and long-term strategy to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

All of us have a competing priority right now in tackling the global coronavirus pandemic. But 2020 remains a critical year for climate ambition. And I'm deeply encouraged that governments, the UN and other partners have been working together to support new climate plans.

The people of the world expect us to put forward our highest possible

ambition as we committed to in Paris.

And those with the most capacity to develop NDCs and the most capacity to reduce emissions, must lead the way. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Marshall Islands, Suriname, Norway and the current COP Presidency Chile who have all set an example with their NDC.

The UK will submit its own ambitious NDC to complement our net zero commitment – and we will continue to support developing countries to develop their NDCs as we also respond to the urgent needs arising from COVID-19.

Second, we need more ambition on adaptation and resilience. Helping people, economies and the environment adapt and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

This was a personal priority for me when I was International Development Secretary in the UK Government, and working with friends from Egypt, Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Malawi, St Lucia and the UN we launched a call for action in this area, where 118 nations and over 80 organisations committed to raising their ambition.

On my most recent visit back to New York, I met the Permanent Representatives, the UN and NGO's to discuss how we can translate these political commitments into on the ground action.

In March, I had the opportunity to co-chair the first governing council of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure with Mr PK Mishra, Prime Minister Modi's Principal Secretary. And we reaffirmed the UK and India's deep commitment to improving global resilience. And we will continue to work with countries, financial institutions, and civil society so that adaptation and resilience receives greater political attention.

Third, we need more ambition to cooperate and support each other. Which I believe everyone this panel has outlined.

We must deliver and move beyond the \$100 billion per year climate finance goal and look to align finance flows with low carbon, resilient development. From solar panels to electric vehicles and tree planting, it is often finance that turns good intentions into action.

In February I joined the Governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney for the launch of the COP26 Finance Action Plan.

I can confirm that our Presidency will push for greater clarity on post-2020 climate finance, by working with major donor countries, multilateral development banks and other public and also private sources to step up ambition.

The UK itself has already committed to doubling our climate finance to £11.6 billion from next year to 2025.

In conclusion, from the latest cutting edge global technology and innovation to tried and tested indigenous knowledge, we all have much to learn from each

other.

That is why I am very pleased that over the last two days you've got into the nuts and bolts of practical solutions.

I will take the messages from this conference and apply them to the work that I just outlined on finance, and on adaptation and resilience, but also to our other COP campaigns.

We will work with countries and communities to protect and restore the natural habitats and ecosystems, as we are reminded of on the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, are absolutely crucial to preserving both the planet's biodiversity and climate.

We will work with business, countries and international organisations to support the transition to renewable energy sources. And we will seize the economic and social benefits of innovations in clean energy and energy storage.

We will work to clean up the air we breathe by seeking to accelerate the global transition to zero emission vehicles and phasing out petrol and diesel engines.

My duty is to spread your message around the world – starting with the Petersberg Dialogue next week. And to work tirelessly to help parties reach a constructive negotiated outcome that results in practical action on the ground.

We will work night and day to encourage everyone to raise their ambition on tackling this threat of climate change.

I look forward to welcoming you all at COP26 and working with you on the road to that summit.

Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 22 April 2020

Welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference.

I'm pleased to be joined by Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and also our Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Nicholas Carter.

Before CDS talks through the fantastic work that our brilliant armed forces have been doing during this crisis, let me give you an update you on the latest data from the COBR coronavirus data file.

I can report that through the Government's ongoing monitoring and testing

programme, as of today:

559,935 people have now been tested for the virus.

133,495 have tested positive.

Of those who have contracted the virus, 18,100 have very sadly died.

We express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of these victims and my heart goes out to every single one of those who have lost a loved one throughout this crisis.

As a Government, we continue to take the steps necessary to slow the spread of this virus.

The social distancing measures that people have overwhelmingly adhered to have meant that fewer people have needed hospital treatment.

That has protected our NHS capacity as we continue through the peak of this virus and it has undoubtedly helped to save lives.

At every point in this crisis, we have considered the scientific and the medical evidence that we have received very carefully.

And we have been deliberate in our actions so that we take the right steps at the right time.

Now I know it has been tough going for businesses, for families and for vulnerable members of our communities up and down the country.

It's been a physical strain as we adapt to living and working at home while not seeing our family and our friends in the usual way we'd like to.

It's been an economic strain as businesses have had to furlough staff which is why the Chancellor launched the various business support measures to help see businesses and workers through these difficult times.

But it has also been an immense mental strain on everyone: people stuck at home, families worried about their finances and the elderly more isolated than we'd ever want them to be.

We're making progress through the peak of this virus, but we're not out of the woods yet as SAGE advised last week.

That's why the measures we introduced must remain in place for the time being.

The greatest risk for us now, if we eased up on our social distancing rules too soon, is that we would risk a second spike in the virus with all the threats to life that would bring, and then the risk of a second lockdown which would prolong the economic pain that we're going through.

That was a point that Andrew Bailey, the Governor of the Bank of England, also made earlier on today.

So with that in mind, last Thursday, I set out the five principles that will guide our approach going forward to the next phase, and which must be satisfied before we are willing and in a position to make any changes, which will of course be based on the advice that we receive from SAGE.

That way we will ensure that our path out of this crisis is sure-footed, protecting both the public's health but also our economy.

If we stick to our plan, if take the right steps at the right time, we can get through this crisis, and I know we will.

There's no hiding the scale of this tragedy.

But even in our darkest moments, the crisis has also shone a light on the best amongst us.

The nation has come together to applaud our heroic NHS staff, our carers every week, and we pay tribute to their dedication and their professionalism and care with which they look after those who have fallen sick.

With General Carter here, today, I think it is only fitting to pay tribute to the amazing work of our fantastic armed forces and the whole MoD led by Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

They have been there every step of the way, helping us to build the new NHS Nightingale hospitals to reinforce our critical care capacity. Supporting our Local Resilience Forums in delivering Personal Protective Equipment where it's needed most.

And helping also deliver the mobile labs which are critical to ramping up of testing capacity right across the country.

As a result of those efforts and that team work, hospitals have been able to treat more patients, as result they save more lives and we have ensured that the peak of this virus has not overwhelmed the NHS.

And, today, our armed forces are again part of that team as we announce two new deployments to the NHS Nightingale facilities in Harrogate and Bristol.

Across the UK, this extra hospital capacity which itself comes on top of the 33,000 additional beds we've managed to free up across the NHS.

That is the equivalent of building an extra 50 district general hospitals. And as I said, that has safeguarded the capacity in our hospitals to care both for coronavirus patients but also make sure other people get the urgent care or the emergency treatment they need.

People used to joke in this country that you could never build a hospital that quickly.

Well, we didn't just build one, we built seven and we thank our armed forces for helping to make that happen.

And, you know, for many countries around the world, including modern democracies, the sight of their military on the streets in a national emergency could be a cause for concern or even trepidation.

But for the British people, the sight of our armed forces working side by side with our brilliant NHS staff offers a calm reassurance that the task is at hand, that we will come through this crisis.

Now I make no bones about it.

There have been challenges, there still are challenges.

We're not there yet. We continue to ramp up the testing capacity, which will play a really important role in the next phase of the crisis.

Amidst a global shortage in Personal Protective Equipment, we've distributed over a billion items to the front line, where its needed most.

We've just brought in Lord Deighton who helped organise the London Olympics to boost our domestic supply even further.

And I am on the phone every day pursuing the next batch of deliveries from abroad with the support of our tireless diplomatic service. The first of several new deliveries landed from Turkey in the early hours of this morning.

We will only come through this global pandemic, if we come together as a nation, and if we bring other countries around the world together so that we can rise to this international challenge.

As we work with our partners abroad to get the PPE we need, to get the ventilators we need to pursue a vaccine for this terrible virus, we're also working night and day to return stranded British nationals from all four corners of the world.

We've kept airports open and airlines running to bring over a million Brits home on commercial flights. A massive endeavour.

On top of that, at the FCO, we set up a £75million special charter arrangement with the airlines and that's already brought home over thirteen thousand people back on 63 flights from more than a dozen countries.

And, we're organising more charter flights in the days ahead from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

So at home and abroad, we're meeting the whole range of challenges that coronavirus presents.

And if we stick together, and if we stay the course, we will defeat this virus for good.

Business to receive almost £10 billion in rates relief

- Businesses are set to receive a discount of £9.7 billion on their rates bills this financial year in response to coronavirus
- Support comes after Budget 2020 increased business rates retail discount to 100% from 50% for 2020 to 2021
- Part of comprehensive package of measures to support businesses during the coronavirus pandemic

Businesses are expected to receive almost £10 billion in business rate relief as part of the government's comprehensive package of support for the economy during the coronavirus pandemic.

[New statistics published today](#) (22 April 2020) by the government show the business rate relief predicted by councils for businesses across England in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector.

It means that those which may be the hardest hit by the pandemic, such as eligible shops, restaurants, cafes and pubs will pay no business rates whatsoever this financial year.

Businesses are benefiting from this scheme right now with discounts on their rates bills helping them with their cashflow. The government has committed to compensating local authorities in full for the business rate relief with payments due to begin shortly.

The news follows the announcement that £3.2 billion of extra funding is being given to councils, helping them continue to provide essential services and support to those who need it most. This includes getting rough sleepers off the street, supporting new shielding programmes for clinically extremely vulnerable people and assistance for our heroic public health workforce and fire and rescue services.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Today's figures demonstrate that, through working with local authorities, we are giving businesses the support that they need during this national emergency; an unprecedented nearly £10bn in business rates relief.

The government was clear that we would do whatever it took to support local business and that is exactly what we are doing. We stand behind them and their employees as we work to protect the NHS and save lives.

Minister for Local Government Simon Clarke MP said:

This government has announced a comprehensive programme of support for business to help them deal with the economic impact caused by the Covid19 pandemic, including providing 100 per cent rate relief for the retail and leisure industry.

It is great that councils estimate they will provide almost £10 billion in additional business rate relief this financial year. This will provide businesses with a much-needed boost at this unprecedented time and builds on over £6 billion already awarded to business in grants announced earlier this week.

In the Budget last March, the government announced it would take the exceptional step of increasing the Business Rates Retail Discount to 100% from 50%. This, and the measures announced in response to the Coronavirus, take the value of the Expanded Retail Discount and the Nursery Discount to £10.1 billion in 2020/21.

This support comes as part of a wider package of measures to help businesses to deal with the economic impact of Coronavirus.

It includes a £12.3 billion package for local authorities to deliver grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses and the commitment to pay the wages of millions of employed and self-employed people by covering 80% of monthly incomes through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

- Some properties are eligible for discount from their business rates bill – this is called business rates relief. Local authorities bill businesses a standard rate with a total on how much they have to pay in a certain year. Today's announcement means that local authorities will issue updated bills to business that reduce their bills substantially.
 - Businesses do not need to take any action as their local council will apply the discount automatically.
 - See [more information](#) on which businesses are eligible for the relief.
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Coronavirus (COVID-19): letter to councils about extending the statutory audit deadlines for 2019 to 2020

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