

Transport Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 12 June 2020

Good afternoon.

Welcome to today's Downing Street press conference.

I'm pleased to be joined today by Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director of NHS England.

And again by Sir Peter Hendy, Chair of Network Rail, directing the restart of our transport system.

Let me begin by updating you on the latest information from the Government's COBR file.

The first slide shows the latest information on infections.

Results from the ONS infection survey published this morning estimate that the number of people who tested positive for coronavirus in England fell from 152,000 between 27 April and 10 May, to 33,000 between 25 May and 7 June.

This is encouraging progress and suggests that around 1 in 1,700 people in the community had coronavirus during the latest period of the survey.

SAGE has also confirmed today that their estimate of the R rate for the UK is unchanged on last week, at 0.7-0.9. We want to keep the R number below 1.0. R is the average number of additional people infected by each infected person.

The second slide shows cases confirmed with a test:

6,434,713 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out or posted out in the UK. This includes 193,253 tests carried out or posted out yesterday.

292,950 people have tested positive, an increase of 1,541 cases since yesterday. The graph shows a steadily falling number of identified cases on a 7-day rolling average, despite the increase in testing.

The third slide shows the latest data from hospitals.

535 people were admitted to hospital with coronavirus in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 9 June, down from 722 a week earlier, and down from a peak of 3,432 on 1 April.

392 coronavirus patients are currently in mechanical ventilation beds in the UK, down from 571 a week ago, and down from a peak of 3,301 on 12 April.

The fourth slide shows what is happening in hospitals across the country.

There are now 5,607 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down 20% from 7,036 a week ago and down from a peak of 20,697 on 12 April.

As the graphs show, while there is some variation, most nations and regions of the UK are broadly following a similar pattern.

The fifth slide shows the daily figures for those who have sadly lost their lives after testing positive for coronavirus.

Across all settings, the total number of deaths now stands at 41,481. That's an increase of 202 fatalities since yesterday.

When measured by a 7-day rolling average, the daily number of deaths currently stands at 174, down from a peak of 943 on 14 April.

Although the number of deaths is now firmly down, our deepest sympathies go out to all those who have lost loved ones.

Transport is instrumental to our recovery...

To connect people with jobs...

To help level up Britain...

And even to make us a healthier, and more active nation.

But as people start to travel, transport also presents one of our biggest challenges...

How we protect passengers. Prevent the spread of the virus. Even as we become more mobile.

Transport use may be the first occasion since the onset of COVID that we've shared confined spaces with others.

So it's critical that we all take a vigilant and cautious approach over the next few weeks.

I'm just going to say this...

If you can work from home, you should continue to do so.

If you cannot work from home, you should try to avoid public transport.

If you must use public transport, you should travel at quieter times of day.

And if you're an employer, you should do everything in your power to prevent staff from travelling... unless it's absolutely vital...

...and please do allow staff to travel at quieter times.

From Monday, it becomes mandatory in England to wear a face covering on public transport – that includes trains, buses, trams, ferries and planes.

A 'face covering' does not mean a surgical mask.

Face coverings can be made at home and you can find the guidance at GOV.UK.

As we move to recovery, it's more important than ever to protect each other...
Preventing those showing no symptoms from infecting others.

I know there's huge public support for compulsory face coverings...

They show respect for our fellow travellers.

But for clarity, transport operators will be able to refuse permission to travel where someone isn't using a face covering...

And this weekend I am taking powers through the Public Health Act leading to fines for non-compliance too.

We'll take a gentle approach to enforcement during the first couple of days.

And help will be at hand.

In addition to British Transport Police, and staff working for Network Rail, TfL and Transport Operators...

In the coming weeks we'll also deploy Journey Makers to assist and remind commuters of the need to wear a face covering...

Plus the Safer Transport campaign will provide plenty of reminders at bus stops, rail stations and on social media.

Remembering your face covering should be the same as picking up your phone, wallet or purse when you leave home.

Please read the guidance, ensure you have a face covering and protect your fellow commuters.

This crisis has tested our nation. Yet through adversity comes possibility...

A greener transport future within our grasp.

For example, through the [£2 billion investment](#) we're making through the cycling and walking programme.

The challenge is to make transport...

Currently our biggest emitter of greenhouse gases...

Part of the solution, not the problem.

Take the aviation sector, which has had an impossible few months...

Yet, despite the obvious challenges, there's a real determination within the industry to have a greener restart.

So we're bringing together leaders from aviation, environmental groups and government...

To form the Jet Zero Council.

This group will be charged with making net zero emissions possible for future flights.

Our goal – within a generation – will be to demonstrate flight across the Atlantic, without harming the environment...

And today we're backing a company called Velocys who are building a plant for aviation biofuels in Lincolnshire.

I'm also excited about a Cambridge University and Whittle Labs project to accelerate technologies for zero carbon flight.

The shared experience of fighting coronavirus has changed us in many ways.

Although it has forced us apart, it has also brought us together.

Although it has tested us, it has also shown us at our very best.

And although it has made us reflect on the past, it's focussed on those plans for the future.

But now, as we become more mobile, we must not forget that this insidious virus is still a threat.

That not only means avoiding public transport if you can...

It also means from Monday, wearing a face covering on public transport.

Avoiding gatherings of more than 6 people...

Including to protest.

I understand that people want to show their passion for issues that they care deeply about.

And we must never be complacent about stamping out racism and discrimination in this country.

But please. For the sake of your health, and that of your friends and families. Don't attend mass gatherings.

We've come a long way.

As we move towards recovery, let's protect lives, as well as livelihoods.