

**The Prime Minister  
(Boris Johnson)**

Today marks the 16th anniversary of the 7/7 London bombings. We remember the 52 innocent people who lost their lives and those who were injured, and pay tribute to the city's emergency services for their heroic response.

I am sure the whole House will wish to join me in sending condolences to the family and friends of Sislin Fay Allen, who died earlier this week. She was the UK's first black female police officer, and she served in the Metropolitan police.

I am sure colleagues will also want to join me in wishing the England football team the best of luck for tonight's semi-final against Denmark.

This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

**John McNally (Falkirk) (SNP)**

Prime Minister, we hear a great deal in this place about the rule of law and injustice. Can the Prime Minister tell me what he is going to do about the injustice that my constituents in Falkirk, and indeed families up and down the UK, are facing every day because of the retrospective loan charge, which is fast turning into the next Post Office scandal? The hounding by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs—clearly out of control, accountable to no one—has managed to hoodwink and mislead his own Treasury Ministers and now, according to the head of HMRC, the retrospective loan charge appears to be without any legal basis or justification. Therefore, will the Prime Minister accept that this matter needs further and immediate investigation?

**The Prime Minister**

I am acutely aware, as I think all colleagues are around the House, of the pain suffered by those who entered into loan charge schemes. I think, alas, that they were misguided to do so, but I think that the line taken by the Treasury, I am afraid, is right on this.

**John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con)**

It is very true of the United Kingdom that there is more that unites us than divides us, but improved connectivity is vital to ensuring we remain united. The Government's recent interim connectivity review has suggested some improvements. If this is really going to happen, then improvements must be made

to the A75, the A69 and the extension of the borders railway. Does the Prime Minister support such investment and what is the timescale for such investment?

**The Prime Minister**

I thank my hon. Friend for his excellent question. I think he should not have too long to wait for the final recommendations from Sir Peter Hendy about the A75 and other great features of Union connectivity that this Government hope to support, but we have already agreed £5 million from the UK and the Scottish Governments to support the extension of the Edinburgh-Tweedbank borders railway to Carlisle.

**Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)**

May I join the Prime Minister in his remarks about the 7/7 anniversary? I remember where I was on that day and will never forget it, and I am sure that is the same for everybody. We will never forget all those affected, especially the family and friends of all those who died.

May I join the Prime Minister in his comments about Fay Allen as well, and also about football, and wish the very best of luck to the England football team this evening? I am sure the whole country, with the possible exception of the Conservative MP the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson), will be watching this evening and cheering England on.

May I also extend a special welcome to the new Member for Batley and Spen (Kim Leadbeater)? I hope Conservative Members will forgive me if I turn around to look at my new hon. Friend, as she sits on these Benches beneath the plaque for Jo Cox, her sister? That is a special and emotional moment for all of us on the Labour Benches and I think for everybody across this House. It takes incredible courage and bravery to stand in that constituency and to sit on these Benches beneath that plaque.

We all want our economy to open and to get back to normal; the question is whether we do it in a controlled way or a chaotic way. The Health Secretary told the House yesterday that under the Government's plan,

“infections could go as high as 100,000 a day.”

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A number of key questions fall from that. First, if infections reach that level of 100,000 per day what does the Prime Minister expect the number of

hospitalisations and deaths and the number of people with long Covid will be in that eventuality?

**The Prime Minister**

There are a number of projections, and they are available from the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling graphs. It is certainly true that we are seeing a wave of cases because of the Delta variant, but scientists are also absolutely clear that we have severed the link between infection and serious disease and death. Currently there are only one thirtieth of the deaths that we were seeing at an equivalent position in previous waves of this pandemic, which has been made possible thanks to the vaccine roll-out, the fastest of any European country, and I think what people would like to hear from the Labour party, because I was not quite clear from that opening question, is whether or not it will support the progress that this country is intending to make on 19 July. The right hon. and learned Gentleman says it is reckless to go ahead; does that mean he is opposing it?

**Keir Starmer**

We know that the link between infection rates and deaths has been weakened but it hasn't been broken, and the Prime Minister must, and certainly should, know the answer to the question I asked him. That he will not answer it here in the House hardly inspires confidence in his plan. Let us be clear why infection rates are so high: it is because the Prime Minister let the Delta—or we can call it the Johnson—variant into the country. And let us be clear why the number of cases will surge so quickly: it is because he is taking all protections off in one go. That is reckless. The SAGE papers yesterday made it clear that with high infection rates there is a greater chance of new variants emerging, and there will be greater pressure on the NHS, more people will get long Covid and test and trace will be less effective. Knowing all that, is the Prime Minister really comfortable with a plan that means 100,000 people catching this virus every day and everything that that entails?

**The Prime Minister**

I really think we need to hear from the right hon. and learned Gentleman what he actually supports. We will continue with a balanced and reasonable approach, and I have given the reasons. This country has rolled out the fastest vaccination programme anywhere in Europe; the vaccines—both of them—provide more than 90% protection against hospitalisation and by 19 July we will have vaccinated every adult with all having been offered one vaccination and everybody over 40 having been offered two vaccinations. That is an extraordinary achievement and

that is allowing us to go ahead. Last week, or earlier this week, the right hon. and learned Gentleman seemed to support opening up and getting rid of the 1 metre rule—he seemed to support getting back into nightclubs and getting back into pubs without masks—but if he does not support it, perhaps he could clear that up now: is it reckless or not?

### **Keir Starmer**

We should open up in a controlled way, keeping baseline protections such as masks on public transport, improving ventilation, making sure the test and trace system remains effective, and ensuring proper payments for self-isolation. The Prime Minister cannot just wish away the practical problems that 100,000 infections a day are going to cause; he cannot wish them away.

The next obvious one is the huge number of people who will be asked to isolate. If there are 100,000 infections a day, that means hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of people are going to be pinged to isolate. The Financial Times estimates this morning that that could be around 2 million people per week. The Daily Mail says 3.5 million people a week. Either way, it is a massive number. It means huge disruption to families and businesses just as the summer holidays begin. We know what the FT thinks. We know what the Mail thinks—we know what their estimates are. Can the Prime Minister tell us: how many people does he expect will be asked to isolate if infection rates continue to rise at this rate?

### **The Prime Minister**

I want to thank everybody who self-isolates. They are doing the right thing. They are a vital part of this country's protection against the disease. We will be moving away from self-isolation towards testing in the course of the next few weeks. That is the prudent approach, because we will have vaccinated even more people.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He says it is reckless to open up, yet he attacks self-isolation, which is one of the key protections that this country has. Let me ask him again. On Monday, he seemed to say he was in favour of opening up on 19 July; now he is saying it is reckless. Which is it, Mr Speaker?

### **Mr Speaker**

Maybe I can help a little. Just to remind us, it is Prime Minister's questions. If we want Opposition questions, we will need to change the Standing Orders.

**Keir Starmer**

The question was simply how many people are going to be asked to self-isolate if there are 100,000 infections a day, and the Prime Minister will not answer it. We know why he will not answer it and pretends I am asking a different question. He ignored the problems in schools; now there are 700,000 children off per week because he ignored them. Now he is ignoring the next big problem that is heading down the track and is going to affect millions of people who have to self-isolate.

It will not feel like freedom day to those who have to isolate when they have to cancel their holidays and they cannot go to the pub or even to their kids' sports day, and it will not feel like freedom day, Prime Minister, to the businesses that are already warning of carnage because of the loss of staff and customers. It must be obvious, with case rates that high, that the Prime Minister's plan risks undermining the track and trace system on which he has spent billions and billions of pounds.

There are already too many stories of people deleting the NHS app. The Prime Minister must have seen those stories. They are doing it because they can see what is coming down the track. Of course we do not support that, but under his plan it is entirely predictable. What is the Prime Minister going to do to stop people deleting the NHS app because they can see precisely what he cannot see, which is that millions of them are going to be pinged this summer to self-isolate?

**The Prime Minister**

Of course we are going to continue with the programme of self-isolation for as long as that is necessary. I thank all those who are doing it. But of course we are also moving to a system of testing rather than self-isolation, and we can do that because of the massive roll-out of the vaccine programme. It is still not clear—I think this is about the fourth or fifth time, Mr Speaker—whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman is actually in favour of this country moving forward to step 4 on the basis of the massive roll-out of vaccines. This is unlike the law, where you can attack from lots of different positions at once. To oppose, you must have a credible and clear alternative, and I simply do not hear one. Is he in favour of us moving forward—yes or no? It is completely impossible to tell.

**Mr Speaker**

Once again, it is Prime Minister's questions and the Prime Minister answers questions.

**Keir Starmer**

If the Prime Minister stopped mumbling and listened, he would have heard the answer the first time. We want to open in a controlled way and keep baseline protections that can keep down infections, such as mandatory face masks on public transport. We know that that will protect people, reduce the speed of the virus and the spread of the virus, and it will not harm the economy. It is common sense. Why can the Prime Minister not see that?

**The Prime Minister**

Of course we can see that it is common sense for people in confined spaces to wear a face mask out of respect and courtesy to others, such as on the tube, but what we are doing is cautiously, prudently moving from legal diktat to allowing people to take personal responsibility for their actions. That is the right way forward. I must say that if that is really the only difference between us, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman supports absolutely everything else—opening pubs, opening nightclubs, getting rid of the 1 metre rule, getting people back to work—and it is all about the difference between making face masks mandatory or advisory on the tube, then that is good news, but I would like to hear him clarify that.

**Keir Starmer**

The Prime Minister agrees it is common sense because it protects the public, but he will not make it mandatory—it is ridiculous. It is clear what this is all about: he has lost a Health Secretary, he has lost a by-election and he is getting flak from his own MPs, so he is doing what he always does—crashing over to the other side of the aisle, chasing headlines and coming up with a plan that has not been thought through. We all want restrictions lifted. We want our economy open. We want to get back to normal. But we have been here too many times before. Is it not the case that, once again, instead of a careful, controlled approach, we are heading for a summer of chaos and confusion?

**The Prime Minister**

No, is the answer to that. Of course these are difficult decisions. They need to be taken in a balanced way, and that is what we are doing. Throughout the pandemic, to do all these things, frankly, takes a great deal of drive, and it takes a great deal of leadership to get things done. If we followed the right hon. and learned Gentleman's advice, we would still be in the European Medicines Agency and we would never have rolled out the vaccines as fast. If we followed his advice, we would never have got schools open again, with all the damage to kids' education. Frankly, if we had listened to him, we would not now be proceeding cautiously,

pragmatically, sensibly to reopen our society and our economy, and giving people back the chance to enjoy the freedoms they love. We are getting on with taking the tough decisions to take this country forward. We vaccinate, they vacillate. We inoculate, while they are invertebrate.

**Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con)**

Last week I visited Penketh South Community Primary School in Warrington to talk to year 6 children about how we can generate cleaner energy in the future. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that, as well as backing electric vehicle production in the north-west, there is a great opportunity to shift towards low-carbon hydrogen by providing support for projects such as HyNet North West, which by 2030 will secure thousands of green jobs in the north-west, as well as cutting emissions to the same level as taking 4 million cars off the roads?

**The Prime Minister**

Yes, I believe that the north-west, in addition to the rest of the country, will be a world leader in hydrogen technology. The HyNet project is an excellent example. We have already put £45 million into supporting the HyNet project, kickstarting our hydrogen capture and storage, and I thank my hon. Friend for his support.

**Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)**

Can I wish England all the best for the football match tonight against Denmark? I associate myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister on the tragedy of the 7/7 bombing, which we all remember so vividly. Also, yesterday was the 33rd anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, where 167 people cruelly lost their lives. Our thoughts are very much with friends and family who are still grieving over the terrors of that event. Finally, before I move on, this is also Srebrenica Memorial Week. We should remember those who have suffered genocide, whether in Bosnia, the holocaust, Rwanda or in many other places. Perhaps the Prime Minister will meet me to discuss how we can help the Srebrenica charity here in the UK.

This week, the Tory Government introduced their so-called electoral integrity Bill. In reality, the Bill is designed to do anything but increase the integrity of our elections. It is a solution in desperate search of a problem that simply does not exist. What the Bill will do is to impose, for the first time, Trumpian voter ID laws in the UK. The Electoral Reform Society says it could lead to voter

“disenfranchisement on an industrial scale”,

disenfranchising people from working-class communities, black and minority ethnic communities, and others already marginalised in society, creating barriers to vote. Prime Minister, why are the Tory Government trying to rob people of their democratic right to vote?

**The Prime Minister**

What we are trying to protect is the democratic right of people to have a one person, one vote system. I am afraid that I have personal experience and remember vividly what used to go on in Tower Hamlets, and it is important that we move to some sort of voter ID. Plenty of other countries have it. It is eminently sensible, and I think people will be reassured that their votes matter. That is what this Bill is about.

**Ian Blackford**

Goodness gracious, Prime Minister, come on! There were 34 allegations of impersonation in 2019. This is a problem that does not exist. It is a British Prime Minister seeking to make it harder to vote because it is easier for the Government to get re-elected if they can choose the voters rather than letting the voters choose their Government. Three and a half million people in the United Kingdom do not have a form of photo ID, and 11 million people do not have a passport or driver's licence. Those millions of people will be directly impacted by seeing their right to vote curtailed. It is not just the Opposition saying that. Members of the Prime Minister's own party have called his plans

“an illogical and illiberal solution to a non-existent problem”.

Will he withdraw these vote-rigging proposals immediately or continue down the path of being a tinpot dictator?

**The Prime Minister**

The right hon. Member is making a bit of a mountain out of a molehill, if I may I respectfully suggest. Councils will be under an obligation to provide free photo ID to anybody who wants it, and I do think it reasonable to protect the public in our elections from the idea of voter fraud. Nobody wants to see it. By the way, I do not think that elections in this country should be in any way clouded or contaminated by the suspicion of voter fraud. That is what we are trying to prevent.



**Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con)**

I was pleased to see my right hon. Friend in Cornwall for the very successful G7 summit. While he did not manage to get to South East Cornwall, I assure him that Looe is a very beautiful coastal town. The problem is Looe floods—regularly. Will he speak to Government Departments to get this sorted?

**The Prime Minister**

Through my hon. Friend, I thank again the people of South East Cornwall and everywhere in Cornwall. The G7 had wonderful hospitality. I assure her that I am aware of the problem of flooding in Looe. I can tell her that my right hon. Friend the Environment Secretary has met Cornwall Council to discuss the matter, and we will do everything we can to sort it out.

**Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Alba)**

On behalf of the Alba party, I add my voice to the comments about 7/7. On the morning of 7/7, I was in a meeting at University College London Hospital A&E as the information started coming through, and I pay tribute to every single one of the frontline staff I worked alongside on that day. It was a long shift and it was a long walk home that evening.

The Prime Minister talks about vaccines. Accurate surveillance is also really important—it is equally important. On 15 March, the Department of Health of Social Care Minister Lord Bethell said on Twitter that Omega Diagnostics and Mologic were in line for an order of 2 million lateral flow devices per week by the end of May, and promised jobs and security. Will the Prime Minister explain why his Government are undermining superior domestic diagnostics tests while propping up discredited Chinese imports to the tune of £3 billion?

**The Prime Minister**

I do not think that is an entirely fair characterisation of what the Government are doing. On the contrary, we have worked night and day to build up our domestic lateral flow capacity and continue to do so.

**Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)**

Last week President Xi cheerily threatened that any foreigners attempting to influence China “will have their heads bashed...against the Great Wall of steel”. Of course, he is still in denial about human rights violations and the genocides in Xinjiang and Tibet, as recognised by this House, as a result of which five of us remain sanctioned. Will the Prime Minister therefore support our motion, to be debated in the House next Thursday, calling for a diplomatic boycott of the 2022

winter Olympics—incredibly awarded to Beijing—until and unless this dangerous regime abides by basic international standards of decency?

**The Prime Minister**

This country has led the world in condemning human rights abuses in Xinjiang, in putting sanctions on those responsible and in holding companies to account that import goods made with forced labour in Xinjiang. I will certainly consider the proposals debated, but I must say that I am instinctively, and always have been, against sporting boycotts.

**Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD)**

May I associate myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister and others on the anniversaries being marked today? This Sunday, 11 July, marks two years since the Government committed to reforming a cruel aspect of the welfare system that forces terminally ill people to prove that they have six months or less to live before they are granted fast access to benefits. The Motor Neurone Disease Association and Marie Curie estimate that, in that time, 7,000 people have died waiting for a decision on their benefits claim. With the pandemic, and with the NHS managing it and the backlog of diseases, the situation will become only more acute. When will the Government publish their review and finally scrap the six-month rule, as they have committed to do so?

**The Prime Minister**

I am aware of the issue that the hon. Lady has raised. To the best of my knowledge, we are making that change, but I will write to her as soon as I have that information.

**Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con)**

While the extension of the grace period for the supply of chilled meat from Great Britain to Northern Ireland is welcome, Lord Frost is entirely right to say that it amounts in truth to no more than a temporary “sticking plaster”, so can my right hon. Friend please confirm that, unless the European Union adopts a more proportionate approach to the application of the Northern Ireland protocol, this country will do whatever is necessary, legislative or otherwise, to fix the problem permanently?

**The Prime Minister**

My right hon. Friend is, sadly, completely right in his analysis. There remain very serious problems in what I believe is the misapplication—the excessively legally purist application—of that protocol. What we are hoping for is some progress

from the European Commission—some repairs that I think that they should make to the way this is working—but to echo what he has said, we certainly rule nothing out in our approach.

**Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP)**

One in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage. Does the Prime Minister agree that parents' grief for this profound loss is not an illness and therefore that parents should receive formal miscarriage leave rather than resorting to sick pay or unpaid leave if their miscarriage occurs before 24 weeks? Will he support my private Member's Bill and introduce paid miscarriage leave for parents?

**The Prime Minister**

I sympathise deeply with anybody who has suffered the loss of a baby by miscarriage, of course. What I can tell the hon. Lady is that we did introduce, in 2020, paid parental bereavement leave. That entitles those who lose a child after 24 weeks of pregnancy to some payment, but, of course, nothing I can say, and no payment we could make, would be any consolation to those who experience a miscarriage in that way.

**Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)**

The Serious Fraud Office achieved a rare success in Southwark Crown court in April with the successful prosecution of GPT Special Project Management Ltd, which resulted in £28 million of penalties for corruption. The key whistle-blower in this case was my constituent Ian Foxley, without whom the prosecution would never have happened, yet he has been totally hung out to dry by the Serious Fraud Office, despite 10 years of financial devastation. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, unless we properly compensate whistle-blowers, they simply will not come forward, and will he consider making a payment out of the £28 million received by Her Majesty's Treasury to compensate him for his losses?

**The Prime Minister**

I thank my hon. Friend for his excellent question. I want to thank Mr Foxley for his whistleblowing, because he has seen justice done. The trouble is that we do not normally compensate whistle-blowers in the way that my hon. Friend recommends, but I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor General has offered to meet my hon. Friend to discuss the matter further.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Streatham) (Lab)**

On Monday, we celebrated the 73rd birthday of the NHS—one of the very best things about our country. Many Opposition Members, and our constituents,

remain committed to protecting the fundamental right to universal healthcare, free at the point of delivery, but this Government remain a constant threat to our public health service, with no staff pay rise, a 25% cut in the number of mental health beds, and the widespread sell-off of GP practices, such as the Edith Cavell Surgery in my constituency to American private insurance giant Centene. There is also the Health and Care Bill, which will only open the doors wider for privatisation. Why is the Prime Minister continuing to eviscerate our most essential public services, and why will he not listen to the thousands of essential workers who demonstrated on Saturday to end NHS privatisation, chronic underfunding and understaffing, and to keep the NHS public?

**The Prime Minister**

With great respect to the hon. Lady, I do not think that I have ever heard a question that was more inversely related to reality. This is a Government that from the beginning invested the biggest amount in the NHS for a generation. Then, in the last year, we put another £92 billion into frontline care. We have increased nurses' starting pay by 12.8% over the last three years. Above all, not only are we building 48 more hospitals, but there are another 59,000 people working in the NHS this year than there were this time last year. This is a Government who are putting our NHS first.

**Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con)**

I am sure that the whole House welcomes the fantastic news of Nissan's investment in an electric battery gigafactory in Sunderland, but does the Prime Minister agree that batteries are only part of the solution in pursuit of net zero by 2050, and that zero-carbon hydrogen combustion engines, such as those recently developed by Midlands-based JCB, have an important role to play in our country's decarbonisation plans?

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is completely right. The investments that we have seen in just the last week or so—Nissan's investment in a gigafactory in Sunderland and what Stellantis is doing at Ellesmere Port—are tremendously exciting for battery-powered vehicles. It is fantastic, but we must not forget hydrogen. As I said in an earlier answer, we want this country to be a world leader in hydrogen technology as well.

**Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con)**

I know that the Prime Minister is aware of the fatal and serious road accidents that have taken place on St Albans Road and Redbourn Road in my constituency.

Will he advise the House on what more the Government are doing to improve road safety, not just in the case of fatal accidents but where there are serious accidents or near misses, because this is an issue that is of growing concern to many of my constituents and, I believe, to many across the country?

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is right to raise this. Although the number of those who have been killed or seriously injured on the roads has been coming down over a long period, it is vital that we invest in this area. We have put another £100 million through the safer roads fund to invest in 50 of the most dangerous stretches on A roads. I also draw his attention to the THINK! campaign, which can play a huge role in reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

**Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)**

To their bitter disappointment, and despite the assurances given during the passage of the Fire Safety Act 2021 that it would do so, the Building Safety Bill, published on Monday, does little to help the hundreds of thousands of leaseholders who right now face financial ruin as a result of the building safety crisis. My question to the Prime Minister is a simple one: why are his Government seemingly intent on failing to honour the commitments given to those leaseholders, and to Members of this House, by refusing to legislate to fully protect all the blameless victims of this scandal?

**The Prime Minister**

That is not accurate. We are continuing to support all those who have to remediate their buildings. I remind Members that the £5 billion that we have provided is five times what Labour offered for support in their last manifesto. We will ensure that all the leaseholders—the people who have suffered from the consequences of the Grenfell conflagration—get the advice and support that they need.

**Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)**

My right hon. Friend will recognise the huge service done by independent hospices to those at the end of their lives, to their families and to the NHS, because those people would be likely to otherwise be in hospital. He will also understand the huge impact that the covid pandemic has had on the fundraising capacity of those hospice charities, so may I ask him to consider carefully and personally the case that is being made by independent hospices for greater Government support for their clinical costs—costs which, if they were no longer there, would undoubtedly be borne by the taxpayer and by the hard-pressed NHS?

**The Prime Minister**

My right hon. and learned Friend is totally right to draw attention to the incredible selfless work of hospices up and down the country. Charitable hospices receive £350 million of Government funding annually, but he is also right to draw attention to the difficulties they have had in fundraising this year and over the pandemic. That is why they have received an additional £257 million in national grant funding arrangements.

**Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab)**

In January, the Prime Minister promised me that he would listen to the calls of those that the Government had excluded from vital support to protect their jobs, businesses and incomes during the coronavirus pandemic, yet over the last six months many of my constituents have still been coming to tell me that they have been shut off and ignored, and millions across the country continue to be excluded. I have to ask the Prime Minister: why did he give those who have been excluded false hope instead of the support they desperately needed?

**The Prime Minister**

Of course I know how tough it has been for millions of people up and down the country and for business. That is why this Government put in an extraordinary £407 billion to support jobs and livelihoods across the country throughout the pandemic. The single most important thing we can do now for the individuals and families that the hon. Gentleman represents and is rightly talking about today is to help our country to get back on its feet by cautiously opening up in the way that we are on 19 July, if we can take that step, which I very much hope we will. I hope that it may command the support, if not of the Leader of the Opposition, then at least of the hon. Gentleman.

**Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)**

The River Test is one of the finest chalk streams in the world, but since May, diesel has been spilling into the river. What matters most is that the flow is stopped and that there is an effective clean-up, but there are many agencies involved, which has made a co-ordinated response challenging. Please will my right hon. Friend ensure that the Environment Agency, Natural England, Southern Water, local authorities and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are all involved in solving this environmental catastrophe together?

### **The Prime Minister**

My right hon. Friend is completely right. All those bodies are involved, but the lead agency is the Environment Agency, and I know that it is in touch with her. I must say that I have a very high regard for the agency and for its work.

### **Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab)**

I am not sure that the Prime Minister actually welcomed my hon. Friend the new Member for Batley and Spen (Kim Leadbeater), but perhaps he will want to correct the record after this. They say that where there's a will there's a way, and the public will clearly welcome the Government's move to introduce emergency legislation tomorrow for pubs and bars to be able to stay open later on Sundays. However, the public will wonder why the hon. Member for Delyn (Rob Roberts) will be allowed to return to this House tomorrow and not be subject to a recall, despite there being a serious case of sexual harassment. The public do not understand why there should be one rule for Conservative MPs and another for the rest of us. Will the Prime Minister therefore allow time tomorrow for a motion to close this loophole and make the hon. Member for Delyn the subject of a recall?

### **The Prime Minister**

First of all, the gentleman in question's sanction has come to an end. Secondly, the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Matt Western) is in error: the hon. Member for Delyn (Rob Roberts) is not a Conservative MP.

### **Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con)**

This year thousands of children will die because of the Government's dramatic cuts in international aid. Top lawyers in the country advise us that this policy is unlawful, and it has never been presented to this House for approval. When the Prime Minister was previously asked about this by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), he suggested that the estimates vote would be the appropriate vote, but that does not allow us to increase the amount of spending on this aid. I ask the Prime Minister again: when are we going to get a binding vote on the Government's aid policy?

### **The Prime Minister**

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, but I am assured by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that the House was given a chance to vote on this matter in the estimates votes, but it mysteriously chose not to.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab)**

When my grandmother, whom I loved dearly, was lying on her hospital deathbed, none of us was allowed to be there to comfort her in her final moments. I could not even carry her coffin on my shoulders. I also had to endure the agony of watching alone, online, the funeral of my fun-loving uncle, and we were not there to comfort my brother-in-law's father, who had somehow contracted covid in a Slough care home during his final moments—all this because we followed Government guidance. After we had experienced such painful personal sacrifices, like many others, imagine our collective disgust when, to curry favour with a Prime Minister's chief adviser, we saw sycophantic, spineless, hypocritical Government Ministers lining up to defend the indefensible, saying, "It's time to move on." Some even had the gall to tell us that they, too, go for a long drive when they need to get their eyesight tested. What an absolute disgrace! They should all be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. When is the Prime Minister finally going to apologise to the nation for not mustering the courage and integrity to do the honourable thing and sack his chief adviser, who so shamelessly flouted his own Government guidance? He could have regained that lost public trust and confidence, and demonstrated that it was not one rule for him and his elite chums and another for the rest of us plebs.

**Mr Speaker**

This is a very emotional issue.

**The Prime Minister**

Perhaps the best thing I can say is how deeply I, the Government and everybody sympathise with those who have gone through the suffering described by the hon. Gentleman. No one who has not been through something like that can imagine what it must feel like to be deprived of the ability to mourn properly and to hold the hands of a loved one in their last moments in the way that the hon. Gentleman describes. I know how much sympathy there will be with him.

I take the hon. Gentleman's criticisms of the Government and everything we have done most sincerely, but all I can say is that we have tried throughout this pandemic to minimise human suffering and to minimise loss of life. He asks me to apologise and, as I have said before, I do: I apologise for the suffering that the people of this country have endured. All I can say is that nothing that I can say or do can take back the lost lives and the lost time spent with loved ones that he describes. I am deeply, deeply sorry for that.