**UK government Covid19 press conference 26 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

(press conference now preceded by advice video with trancey dance music)

**Attending**

George Eustice, Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Prof Stephen Powis, NHS England

**Figures**

669,850 tested (29,058 since yesterday)

152,840 positive

15,953 hospitalised

20,732 dead

413 increase in dead over last 24 hours

**Eustice**

Deepest condolences to families and feriends of victims

Panic. Buying seen early but food supply now back to normal

Supermarkets have social distancing in place

Absences reduced

500k food parcels delivered to shielded group

Supermarkets prioritising delivery slots to shielded group – 300k+ deliveries made

Others may be in need of help through disability or medical condition or other

Working with Las to allocate volunteer shoppers

AgeUK can make direct referrals on the Good Samaritan App

Supermarket delivery capacity has expanded

Referrals system used by some supermarkets

Next stage in our battle

(oh, please shut up with the war the rhetoric you dipshit)

5 tests etc.

Stay at home etc.

**Powis**

Slide

Transport

Continue to see great reduction

hint of increase in motor vehicles

Slide

Apple Maps data - Decline but hint of increase recently

Slide

New cases - Benefits of social distancing beginning to be reflected

Slide

Hospitalisations - Definite trend of reductions

Slide

Critical care beds - Can see that is declining

(slide actually shows significant rise recently)

Slide

Deaths in hospital - Starting to decline

Slide

Global comparisons. - Looking at ways to do all deaths reporting

**Questions**

Reopening schools has one of the least imkpact on infection rates – will you. Consider this?

Care homes still not getting testing – can you give a date when they’ll get what they need?

Eustace – Raab addressed schools this morning

Ramping up tests, invited large numbers of care homes to take part

(who the Hell cares what somebody else said elsewhere – answer the sodding question you talentless nobody)

Powis – can’t take action that would threaten r level

SAGE and experts looking at range of measures

Diff combinations of measures

Track and tracing

Scientists advise govt and govt makes decisions

Testing is expanding

Serious concerns about lack of public health experts who have managed infectious disease outbreaks on SAGE, now know Cummings and Warner attended but if you won’t tell us who attended how can we get idea of balance of

Govt data not being shared which makes analysis diff – when will this change?

Eustice – SAGE convened in response to specific emergencies, imp they can have discussion free of. External influence and also we must protect thjeir security but minutes published

(ignored second qtn and avoided the first. Clearly govt refuses point blank to say why political flunkies are attending SAGE or. What their involvement is)

Powis – I am on SAGE, I have no problem with names being published

Contact tracing tried and tested way of managing outbreaks takes a lot of resource and time, can be aided by technology

Lower number of cases, easier to do tracing

Getting infection rate low as poss enables more effective contact tracing

Continue to comply with social distancing to get r rate down

(avoided the actual question on sharing data)

Given PM’s return tomorrow when will you start to share plans for reducing lockdown?

Number of care homes deaths claimed to be coming down at same rate as hospitals, what’s the evidence for this and can you share this info?

Eustice - PM has been in all our thoughts as he has been unwell

Very diff encounter with virus

Delighted he will be back at the helm tomorrow

Govt has set out tests, will review in a couple of weeks

That will be the =right time to set out what we might do at that time

That is our position

I’m sure during the week ahead you will be hearing from the PM at some stage

(arse-licking waffle)

Powis – approach will evolve over time

Need more info eg how many develop immunity and how long does it last? Won’t know this for some time / months

(both completely ignored the care home evidence qtn)

You’ve talked about some of the changes supermarkets have introduced but still very diff to get delivery slot and food shortages of some basic products common – are food shortages the new normal?

Eustice –

(repeated what he said in introductory comments)

dramatic improvement seen from 3-4 weeks ago

Isolated cases of trade disruptions eg from India

Supplies from near neighbours in Europe fine

About to see British season in fresh produce soft fruits salad

Estimate only 1/3 of migrant labour here

Will work with industry to encourage furloughed workers to take second job to get harvest in in June

Reports of passengers arriving having to quarantine for 2 weeks – how will you enforce that?

Death figures lowest this months – previously spoken about green shoots are we turning a corner?

Eustice - in’l travel only tiny proportion of outbreak

No decisions taken as yet

Conscious decision taken not to close borders

Wld reconsider if advice changes

Powis – a few weeks ago I was pointing out reductions in transport that if that was sustained it would translate into reduction in cases, hospitalisations and deaths

Over last few weeks because of cosial distancing adherence those curves have started to changed

There are now plateaus or declines in deaths around the ctry

Followed the science – straightforward if we can reduce the infection rate to below 1 virus goes into decline and social distancing does this

Efforts will then pay off but will only continue if we continue to comply

Danger of rise and second peak

Not the time to say we have done a good job and can stop complying with social distancing

Slight upticks on slides need to keep close eye on that

(Powis is rewriting history here and avoiding his ref to green shoots which did NOT refer to social distancing specifically when he said it)

Thousands on frontline of delivering. Social care during this pandemic, govt promised £3.2bn to local govt but Conservative ccl told me that is just a sticking plaster, leaders warning of catastrophic cuts to services so will you commit to fully reimbursing ccls for their losses?

(bloody hell, be more sodding brief, Jen Williams. Thought you’d mention the funeral mob of hundreds breaking lockdown and social distancing this week – did you forget that?)

Care home deaths – what is the evidence these are falling and why deaths in care. Homes not factored in from the start?

Eustice – govt recognises extraordinary times and why additional package of support for LA’s we think this is right approach in diff time

Ccls also have their own emergency response arrangements

(complete waffle – ignoring the qtn, refused to commit to fully reimburse councils. “Doing whatever is necessary” exposed as fragile and limited)

Powis – imp differences between NHS and other settings, hospital deaths confirmed cases

Care home sector, many thousands operated by many diff operators, the daily rhythm of reporting doesn’t happen the same way

ONS gathers care home / community data, that takes several days

Longer time to record those deaths c/w quick daily reporting in NHS

Death positive cases in hospitals

Eustice – we are out of time

I’d like to pay tribute to all working throughout food supply chain, response has been phenomenal

(no, you weren’t “out of time”, you ended the press conference. Also, Eustice never came back to any of the journalists for a follow on after their qtn)

(Eustice seems to be about as useful as a wet flannel to fight a blazing house fire)

(ends with govt warning video)