**UK government Covid19 press conference 08 May 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 DEFRA  
Stephen Powis, Medical Director, NHS England

**Figures**

1,632,561 tests carried out (97,029 tests carried out yesterday)

211,364 positive (4,649 increase since yesterday)

11,788 hospitalised (down from 12,688 yesterday)

31,241 dead

626 increase in dead over last 24 hours

(confusing now as the test numbers reported include tests distributed but not yet completed so the claim these tests were “carried out” is a lie)

**Eustice**

Today is 75th anniversary of VE Day

Events cannot take place as envisaged but today is an imp day to pause and remember

75 years ago pple poured into streets to celebrate

A moment when our whole ctry pulled together

As DEFRA Secretary I want to mark the efforts of pple in non-military way eg farmers and women’s land army

Deepest condolences to those who have died.

Access to food.

Over 1m food parcels delivered to shielded cohort

Priority access to supermarket delivery slots – 400k used this, 1m slots

Wider group also, working with voluntary groups

79k deliveries through Good Samaritan app support

Vulnerability not just physical access

New £16m fund to be used by Fairshare and Wrap to expand capacity – delivering food to around 5k charities

Speculation about roadmap future on Sunday

PM will outline any changes but in meantime continue to abide by current restrictions

**Powis**

Tribute paid to armed forces in WW2 and to NHS

Proud of partnership forged to provide help needed

Nightingale hospitals army worked with NHS

And distribution of equipment

NHS repays service of armed forces with tailored care

Slide

5 tests

(skipped over because “you’ve seen it before”)

Slide

Changes in mobility

Google info

Slide

Daily tests

Increase end April to May

Slide

New cases

Number hasn’t increased dramatically reflecting effectiveness of social distancing

Slide

Hospitalisations

(North West still highest in the UK)

Slide

Critical care neds

Falling since beginning of April, now below 1/3 as proportion

Slide

Deaths

Decline in overall deaths mid to end April

Slide

International comparisons

Usual caveats

(Powis rushed through these slides today)

**Questions**

Alex from Felixstowe

What is happening with Brexit?

Eustice – still going ahead in fact we have already left and will end transition at end of the year

Heidi from Romford

Use of NHS app for older people?

Eustice – imp as we evolve restrictions having accurate local data and self-isolations is very important

Highly effective at 60%, effective at lower rates

Recognise older people may not have access, maybe friends and family could help but many will be in shielded group anyway

(oh great, so old people who can’t use the app are trapped indoors so it doesn’t matter for them)

Powis – true many older people don’t have smartphones but many do

Benefits of technology

App will not be the only way to monitor and trace contacts of infected people

(but he didn’t say what else would be done or how or how this would help older people or anyone who couldn’t use the app)

Welsh govt announced modest changes can we expect these to be mirrored in England and how can you ensure clear message?

Eustice – clear message now to continue with lockdown measures

PM will set out roadmap where some activities might become possible

No dramatic overnight change

Will be very very cautious

Not out of the woods

Will be living with virus for some time to come

Exist and evolve restrictions v carefully

Work closely with devolved administrations

Working together to have broadly similar UK approach

(clear message? Bullshit. The govt obviously briefed the media about releasing lockdown with the PM giving a big announcement on Sunday then the papers ran front pages saying “Freedom at last!” and “Lockdown to end” then the govt panicked and pretended little will change after a backlash – the “messaging” has been chaotic and confused in a failed attempt at media manipulation)

Promised more data on R rate – when will we see this data? R rate need to be consistently low across 4 nations?

Powis – R between 0.5 – 0.9, can’;t give local data, need to stay below 1

Don’t risk second peak

(nothing new)

Disappointed 4 nations don’t have exactly the same approach?

Eustice – devolved administrations have responsibilities we have been in step broadly

Don’t get hung up on timing of announcements

(he won’t say anything – the devolution management is obviously a mess and failing)

If restrictions evolve how will you monitor whether that’s been possible without significantly more testing?

Eustice – any change will be done with utmost caution

PM will set out….

(same waffle)

We do have substantial surveillance programme with ONS and further work on regional basis will help us understand trends

(vague, avoided the question)

Powis – in monitoring infectious diseases imp to have range of measures to monitor situation, slide data we already provide is part of this monitoring and surveillance

Well established surveillance systems need to include other data as it becomes available – range of indicators

(avoided the specific question and waffled)

C4 news revealed millions out of date PPE distributed – why won’t PHE release test results?

Powis – as govt releases PPE equipment any items past original date of expiry re-tested to ensure they keep their standards

(basically, none of your businesses, trust us)

Care homes still desperate for testing – why can’t they get tests they need?

Eustice – 90 mobile tests centres and drive through, inevitable some regions won’t have capacity, possible pple can’t get an immediate test

Testing today 97k

(failure to meet 100k target AGAIN essentially he refused to answer apart from blaming others / users of these wonderful govt services)

6th day still not testing at full capacity and why 10 day delay for results?

Eustice – if you have 50 drive through sites you will have regional variances

Imp we set the target and we have that capacity

Ramp that up further said PM to 200k

Imp to have ambitious targets to continually build capacity

(avoided question and waffled, ignored second part of the question completely)

Like to see more fast food outlets open and could have continued?

Eustice – have had discussions with a number of food to go outlets

We were clear lockdown didn’t cover these companies, a number of reasons they closed eg footfall in town centres, anxiety from staff and strength of message not socially acceptable to stay open

Some started to open in last 2 weeks

Pret a Manger, McDonalds and KFC all looking at opening up in pilots

Poss venue can reopen safely, we never mandated they should close

They should learn lessons from supermarkets and social distancing

(oh, they could / should have stayed open anyway, not our problem essentially)

Presidents of Inst of Biomedical Science says 200k testing target not helpful, focus on setting round number targets not helpful?

600 more care homes have reported outbreaks in a single week – how high is rate of infection in care homes?

Eustice – I don’t acceopt that, imp and helpful to have target to expand capacity in short order 100k and now 200k by end of this month

New infrastructure and additional lab capacity should not distract from delivering existing capacity

Need to have ambitious target and as we roll out track and trace approach with app

(oh, of course, it is important to have targets that you meet once or twice with fiddled figures then even with the fiddled figures you consistently fail to meet

First time a deadline set for 200k tests a day at the end of May

Note these “ambitious targets” are hundreds of thousands fewer test per day than Germany was doing over a month ago)

Powis – imp we get on top of outbreaks in care homes

NHS working increasingly closely with colleagues in social care to provide support

Relatively small number of discharges from hospitals are to care homes

Work done on correlation between discharges and outbreaks and we cannot see a correlation

Support through primary care and infection prevention and control – hospitals also lending their expertise to care sector and training offered

(all this should have been done months ago – gross failure by the govt that has cost thousands of lives)

Vulnerable groups – new deaths in mental health units – why hasn’t NHS England published data they have? Will you commit to doing this?

Powis – pple with learning disabilities, autism and mental health, you know the focus we have on these people

Many mental health patients have been transferred to hospitals

Yes, I can commit we will publish data on learning disabilities, mental health and autism from next week

Many rely on charities for social care, with job losses demand has soared but their funding / income has collapsed and govt package is not big enough – is further funding being considered?

Eustice – we have the £750m fund for charities £16m package announced to day is drawn from this.

Broad and supportive package these are extraordinary times it is welcome and has helped many charities

(Oh right, so the “new £16m package” announced minutes before didn’t even last to the end of the press conference before being revealed as existing money, not new.)

Heart-breaking restriction on mourners at funerals – any prospect of easing those rules?

Eustice – I completely understand this and gatherings stopped for many religions, funerals hardest, we have allowed funerals to continue to immediate family members, not much help for wider family but we will be looking at this closely, incredibly sensitive matter, we have to be cautious, particularly about large social gatherings

(again, hollow laughter after the horrendous events in south Manchester a couple of weeks ago)

(ends with govt warning video)