



November 2020

I want to start by saying that I appreciate the frustration and understand the disappointment at the prospect of further restrictions.

For the last 7 months I have been hearing first-hand the troubles that businesses, employees and individuals have faced. Many stories are heart-breaking.

It was for this reason that a more nuanced tier system was initially pursued. Different areas of the country were experiencing different rates of infection. It was right to do everything possible to tackle this locally and give every area the opportunity to continue as normally as possible given their individual context. Nobody wants to impose measures unless absolutely essential.

However, it has become clear that in England, as it has in Europe, the virus has returned with the same vigour as before and the strategy must follow the data.

Currently, the virus is spreading even faster than the reasonable worst-case scenario of our scientific advisers. Models now suggest that unless we act we will see deaths in this country running at several thousand a day - a peak of mortality far bigger than the one we saw in April. Despite being better prepared than before the virus is doubling faster than anyone would like. The sheer weight of demand from those with COVID could put at risk not only treatment of COVID patients by our National Health Service, but also to non-COVID patients wanting to access NHS services.

With this in mind, the Prime Minister feels he has been left with no option but to take the difficult decision to place the country under more rigorous restrictions until 2nd December.

I have many concerns about having a new lockdown and in the build up to this decision have spent time questioning and probing local and national Public Health, NHS officials and Ministers.

I have spoken and corresponded with large numbers of local businesses, many of whom are concerned about what a lockdown does to their future prospects and thus our local economic prospects. I've also heard from a huge number of people struggling already with the mental health consequences of the pandemic and fearful about what a new lockdown means for them.

And, to be frank, I would have liked to have seen clearer data to better understand the justification behind some of the guidance and this is something I have raised with Ministers.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

Member of Parliament for Daventry  
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This has not been a simple decision for me, but based on all of the advice I have received from experts within Public Health England and the NHS I feel I have to support the Prime Minister today and vote in favour of a time-limited second lockdown.

Let me set out what the new restrictions involve:

The law will set out that people must stay at home, and only leave home for specific reasons, including:

- For education;
- For work, if you cannot work from home;
- For exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household or on your own with one person from another household;
- For medical reasons, appointments and to escape injury or harm;
- To shop for food and essentials; and
- To provide care for vulnerable people.

For a full and comprehensive list of the new restrictions please do take a look at the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

It is important to caveat this with a couple of important points.

Firstly, I want to stress that these new restrictions look demonstrably different than those we experienced back in Spring in some very important ways, in light of what we have learnt since then:

- Childcare, early years' settings, schools, colleges and universities will all remain open. Senior clinicians still advise that school is the best place for children to be. We cannot let this virus damage our children's futures even more than it has done already and we should absolutely resist any calls for these to close;
- Churches and places of worship will remain open, albeit for private prayer rather than communal worship;
- Unlimited exercise is permitted, and single person households can form a support bubble;
- Guidance for the clinically vulnerable will be released shortly, this will be less restrictive however should be treated with the same level of seriousness and caution.

Secondly, we are under no illusion about how difficult this will be for business which is why the furlough scheme will be extended through to March.

Finally, I want to divert your attention to a cause for optimism. We know so much more about this virus than we did back in March, this includes medicine and therapies. Dexamethasone has proven effective and shown that one in three deaths could be prevented among patients on ventilators.



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The prospect of many millions of cheap and rapid turnaround tests is within sight. Trials have shown how effective these can be. These tests identify those who have the virus and must self-isolate and those who can continue in relative normality. This programme will begin in a matter of days.

And of course, the prospect of a vaccine come Spring time next year.

However, the steps we take now determine how our country will look come Christmas. Whilst of course challenging, I have no doubt if we each take the responsible steps necessary we can once again get on top of this.

As ever, myself and my office is at my constituents' disposal for the difficult months ahead and will assist in any way we practically can.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**