

My speech during the debate on Public Health, 7 January 2020

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham (Con)): I am very worried about the loss of liberty. I am very worried about the economic damage. I am very concerned about all those small businesses that have been shut down, and their livelihoods undermined. I want the Government to introduce a more urgent, convincing exit strategy from these measures, and I think that we are owed more debates and more votes long before the end of March. We need to keep this under constant review, and keep up the pressure to take away those measures that are not strictly necessary or which can be superseded by something better.

I hope that the roll-out of the vaccine will go well and will be speeded up. I would like more information from the Government about why they are not currently using pharmacies, why it has taken so long to welcome back to the health service recently retired people who would like to help out, and whether there is going to be a plan to train suitable volunteers so that we can greatly extend the numbers of people administering the vaccine. It would also be helpful to know more about supplies.

We need to get smarter at dealing with the virus because, unfortunately, we will have to live with it for some months to come, however successful vaccination is. Will Ministers provide more information on medical progress with treatments? We had a great breakthrough in Britain with a steroid helping to reduce the death rate. There are many more things in trial—can we know more about that? Are there supplements that people can take to buttress their immune system and make it less likely that they get the virus, or is that a fiction?

Can we get better at isolating patients and protecting staff in isolation units or hospitals? Why do we not use the Nightingales as covid-19 secure specialist units to take away some of the cross-infection dangers from district general hospitals, and so they do not have the intensity of covid-19 treatment? Can we know more about the capacity of the health service, because there are differing views on how many beds could be made available should the covid-19 wave continue to deteriorate? Can we hear more on improving infection control?

What use are we making of intensive UV under suitably controlled conditions? What have we done to try to improve the cleaning of air recycling or air extraction promptly so that we reduce exposure of people in hospitals and other locations that we might wish to use to dirty air that could spread the disease? Above all, we need much more knowledge and information about the energy that is undoubtedly going into alternative treatments and better infection control. I would like to thank all those in Wokingham and the area who have done so much to help us during this difficult period.