

Time to trust people more. Time to control people less.

I will post this morning the text of my speech yesterday in Parliament about the planned extension to the lockdown. I joined with others to vote against the measures, and spoke in favour of an alternative approach.

Yesterday with full Opposition backing Parliament voted to delay the return of a full Parliament. All the time we are encouraged to join remotely, all the time seats are very limited in the chamber, all the time you need to bid for a speaking slot in advance and find your name on a published list, the scope for spontaneity and more challenge to government is limited. Parliament thrives on the momentum of causes, on the noise of support and opposition, on the heat of the moment remark or intervention. Much of this is lost with a largely remote Parliament.

The Opposition parties supported the government and most Labour MPs did not bother to join the debate. The few who did just wanted to exploit the latest Cummings Revelations. It fell to Conservative MPs to question the policy and to make the case for a restoration of Parliament.

Now the government has said we will have to live with the virus, and has stated it cannot be completely eradicated, the question is why not start doing that now? We accept all sorts of other risks in our lives. We all know there is no guarantee of immortality, and no government can protect us from all harms. Every time we cross a road, drive a car, fly in a plane, prepare food, stay in a railway carriage or on a bus with people with flu we run a risk of harm. It is important to let people decide for themselves how much risk of this virus they want to run, and offer them several ways of minimising that risk.

We n ow want to get on with our lives. We now need to let people go to work and rebuild our prosperity.