

Boris Johnson WON'T ban mass gatherings or close schools in fight against coronavirus - despite UK death toll rising to 10 and Scotland and Ireland taking the drastic action

- Boris Johnson is chairing meeting of Cobra emergence committee later as response to the disease escalation
- The PM is moving the UK's focus from the 'contain' phase to desperate efforts to 'delay' the virus spread
- President Donald Trump has dramatically closed the US to travellers from mainland Europe for 30 days
- Republic of Ireland has announced that all schools and colleges will be closed from the start of next week
- Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has said she is 'minded' to bar all gatherings of more than 500 people
- Cabinet minister awaiting result of coronavirus test after colleague Nadine Dorries had diagnosis confirmed
- Four other MPs have put themselves into quarantine after coming into contact with infected individuals

By [JAMES TAPSFIELD, POLITICAL EDITOR FOR MAILONLINE](#)

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Boris Johnson today faces warnings the coronavirus crisis could run out of control unless he takes drastic action immediately - after Scotland, Ireland and the US stepped up their response.

The PM is chairing the emergency Cobra committee where the UK's tactics will shift from 'containing' the killer disease to merely 'delaying' its inevitable spread.

The number of UK cases has risen by 130 and the death toll hit 10 in the last 24 hours, with experts increasingly bracing for turmoil as the overwhelming majority of the

How the UK's coronavirus 'battle plan' could unfold

CONTAIN

Testing individuals reporting symptoms or returning from infected areas, isolating those who have coronavirus.

Tracing how they contracted the virus, and everyone they might have come into contact with while infectious.

population becomes infected and the country develops 'herd immunity'.

The FTSE plunged by more than 9 per cent in response to the dramatic US announcement of a travel ban from Europe overnight, and growing global chaos.

Slowing the progress through the population will be crucial to avoid the NHS being overwhelmed, as has happened in Italy.

However, the UK's tactics look increasingly out of step with other countries. No10 has dismissed suggestions they will emulate Ireland, which announced this morning that it will close all schools and colleges - although the step is being kept in the locker in case the situation escalates.

And by not banning mass gatherings, experts have warned Mr Johnson is risking an explosion of cases of the life-threatening illness in the next fortnight. Italy saw a dramatic rise in the number of patients infected before they took out unprecedented measures to lock down the entire country last week.

In the first sign of splits within the UK, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon today declared that she is 'minded' to cancel mass gatherings of over 500 people from the start of next week, saying that they took up too much time for emergency services.

The government has also made clear it will not follow Donald Trump's dramatic overnight move of closing the borders to travellers from mainland Europe.

Instead Mr Johnson seems determined to take a limited response, asking those with a cold to self-quarantine, and urge vulnerable elderly people to stay indoors.

Former Cabinet minister Rory Stewart this afternoon accused the PM of 'smug insular complacency, warning that without quick action there could be 100,000 cases in the UK within the next 24 days.

'This is at risk of becoming an example of smug insular complacency - refusing to pay any attention to what any other country is doing or the successful public health approach in Asia,' the London Mayor hopeful said. 'We should show some humility, learn from others and act now.'

Chancellor Rishi Sunak, who yesterday unveiled a huge £30billion Budget package to 'vaccinate' the economy from the impact of coronavirus, today said the UK was not following the US example.

'The advice we are getting is that there is not evidence that interventions like closing borders or travel bans are going to have a material effect on the spread of the infections,' he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. 'That is why we have taken the decisions that we have.'

On another day of frantic activity by politicians and health experts around the globe:

- **Irish PM Leo Varadkar has declared that schools, colleges and childcare facilities are to close for two weeks;**

Powers have been taken to force people into quarantine if they refuse to comply voluntarily.

DELAY

Ministers have ordered wider testing to assess prevalence in the community.

People could be advised to work from home if possible, anyone with a cold will be asked to self-isolate, and vulnerable people urged to stay indoors.

Sick pay provision has been bolstered to make the self-employed and low-paid workers more likely to comply.

Further up the so-called 'ladder' of response options, schools could be closed, and sports and public gatherings banned.

Ministers say the scientific advice does not yet support that - although Ireland is closing schools, and Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon says she wants a ban on gatherings of more than 500 people.

The government has also rejected the US approach of banning travellers from mainland Europe for the moment.

MITIGATE

If the outbreak runs out of control, the NHS could cancel all non-urgent activity to focus on treating those affected.

In an extreme situation, troops could be deployed to shore up the police and essential public services.

Recently-retired doctors and nurses would be brought back to help plug gaps in the NHS, with many health workers expected to be infected along with regular members of the public.



- **Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon today declared that she is 'minded' to cancel mass gatherings of over 500 people from the start of next week to avoid them sucking up resources for police and health workers;**
- **The US Congress is shutting the Capitol, House and Senate office buildings to public until April 1 in reaction to coronavirus;**
- **The FTSE 100 fell by more than 9 per cent today as investors were rattled by US travel restrictions imposed by in an attempt to halt the pandemic;**
- **The WHO warned that the travel ban announced by Mr Trump will do little to help combat coronavirus in the UK and could backfire by making people complacent;**
- **Mr Sunak said he made 'no apology' for turning on the spending taps to counter the effects of the virus on the UK economy and society;**
- **A Cabinet minister is awaiting the results of a coronavirus test today, with four other MPs in quarantine after health minister Nadine Dorries became the first politician to be diagnosed with the disease;**
- **Tube and transport systems were quieter than usual as the public preempted the expected advice from government on restricting social contact;**
- **There are claims every football game in England could be held behind closed doors with live streams for ticket-holders;**
- **Sittings in Parliament could be scaled back and the authorities are considering closing to visitors amid fears of spread on the estate.**

Deputy Chief Medical Officer answers PM's coronavirus questions

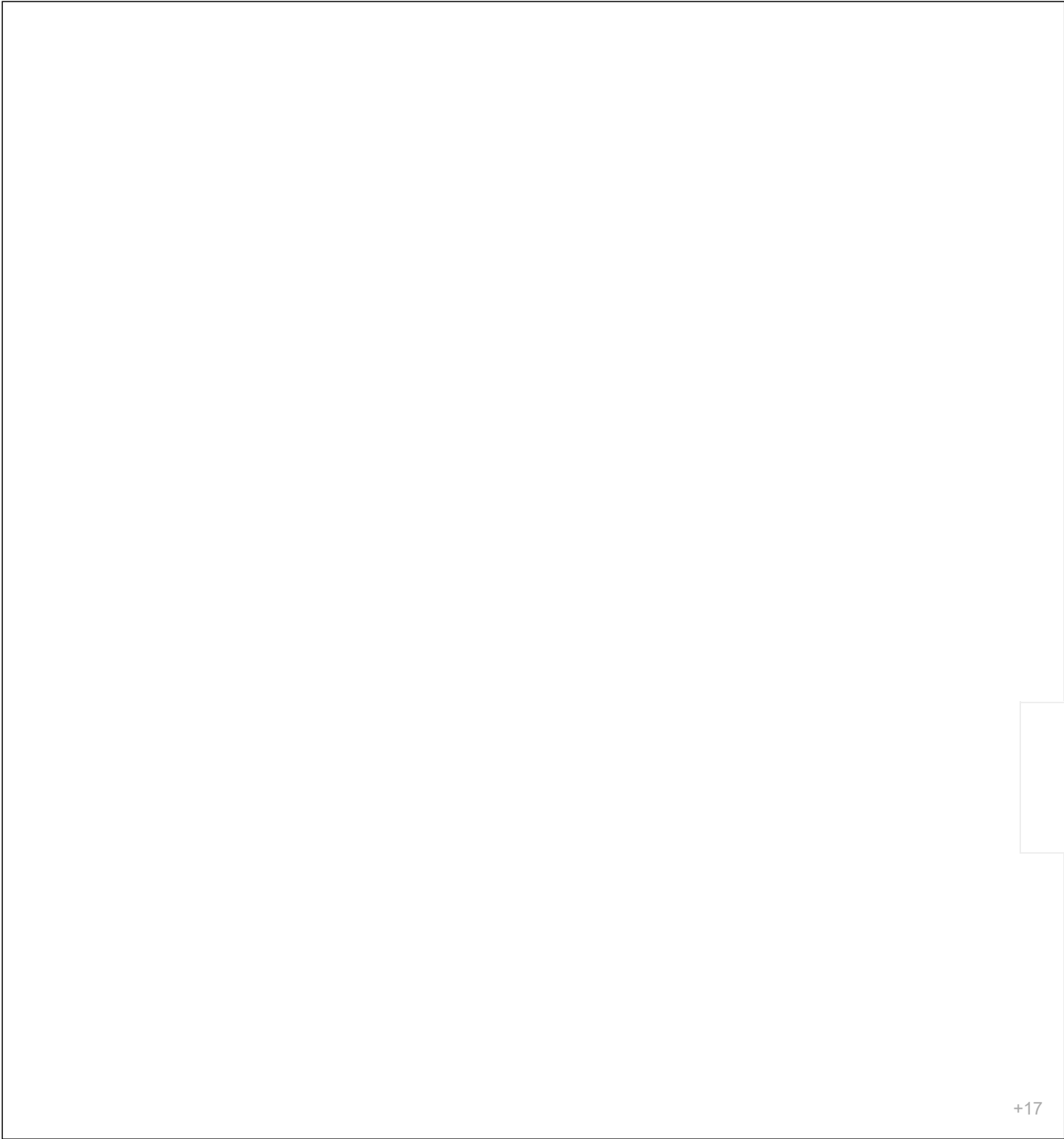


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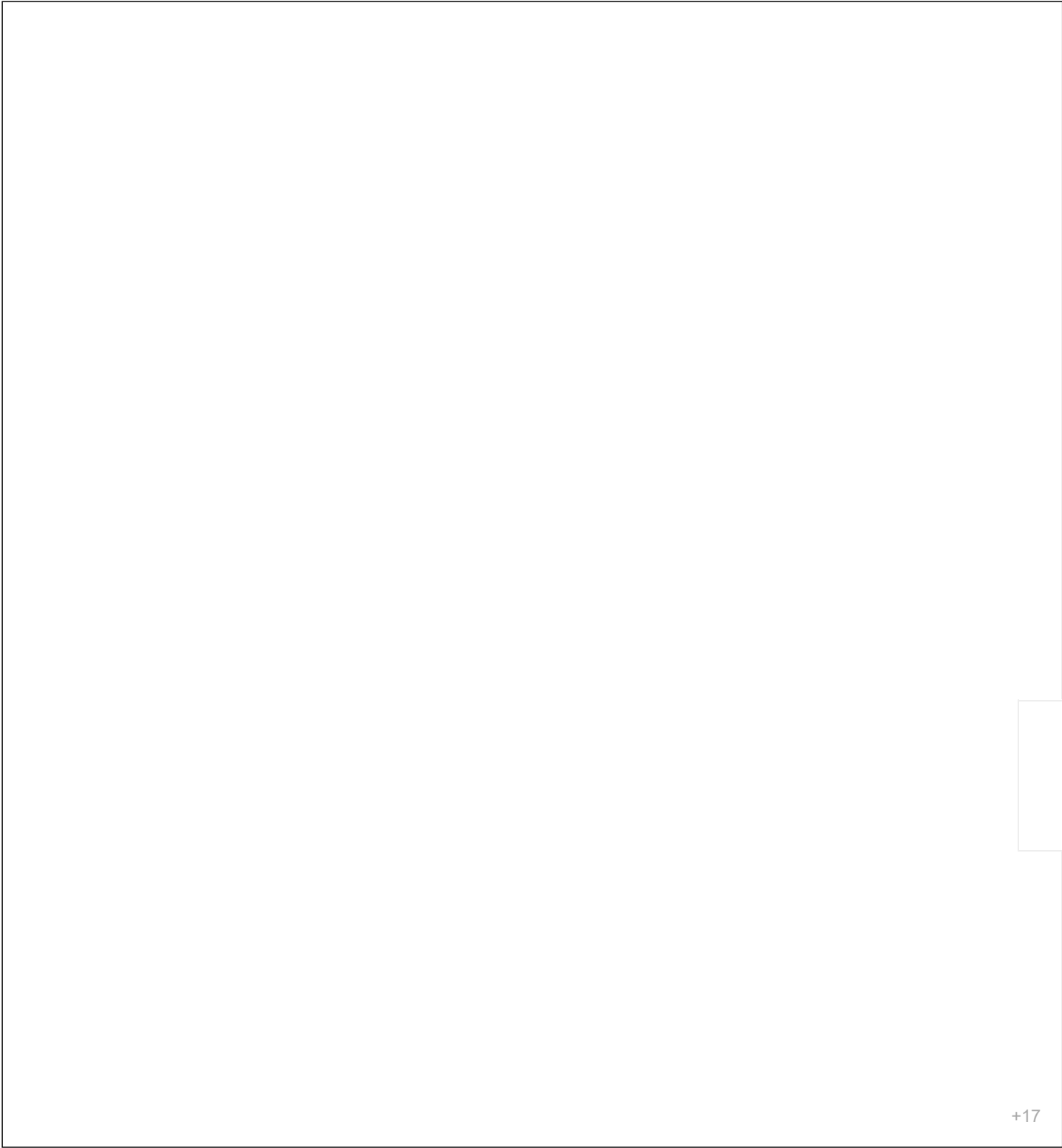


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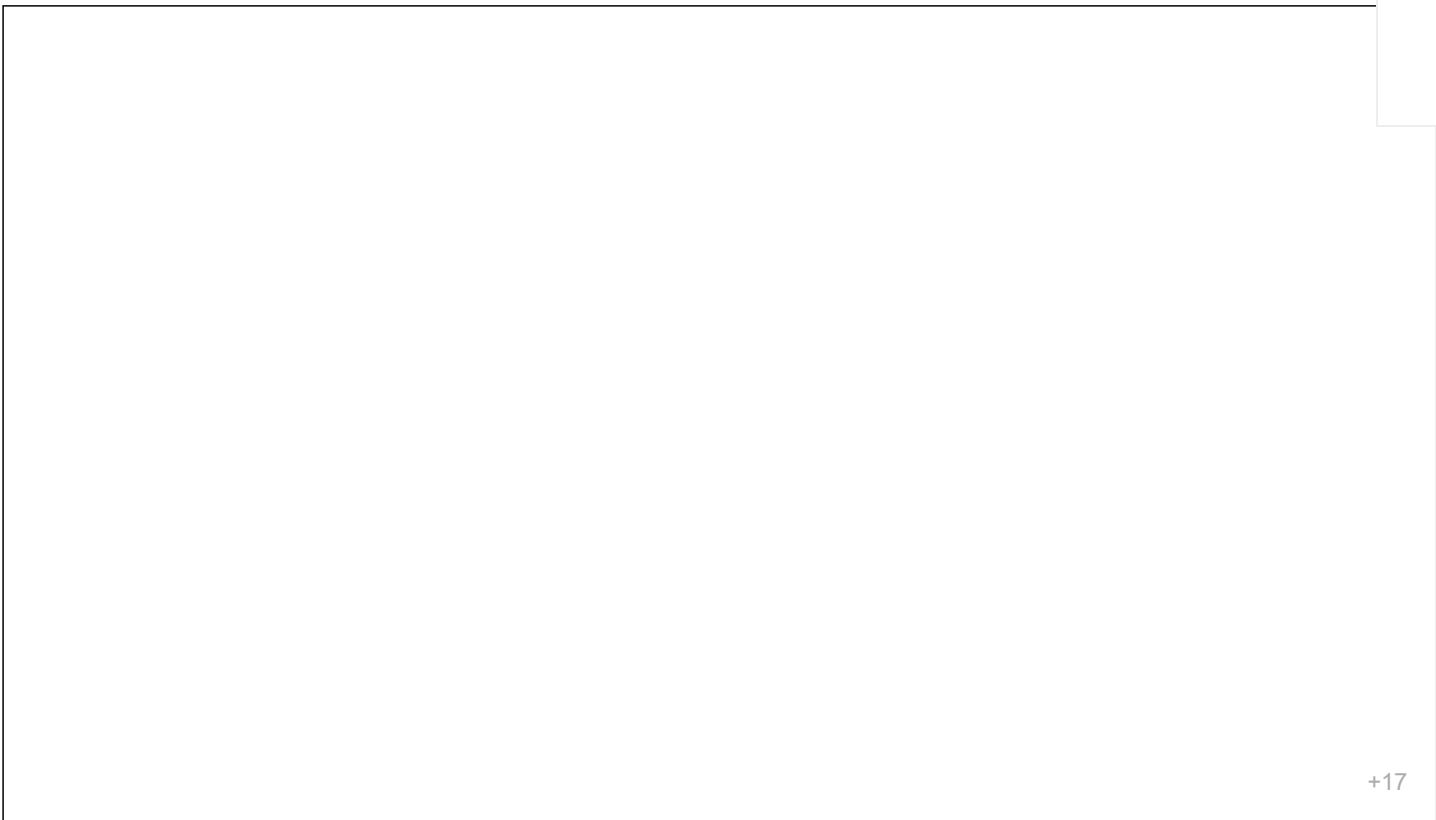


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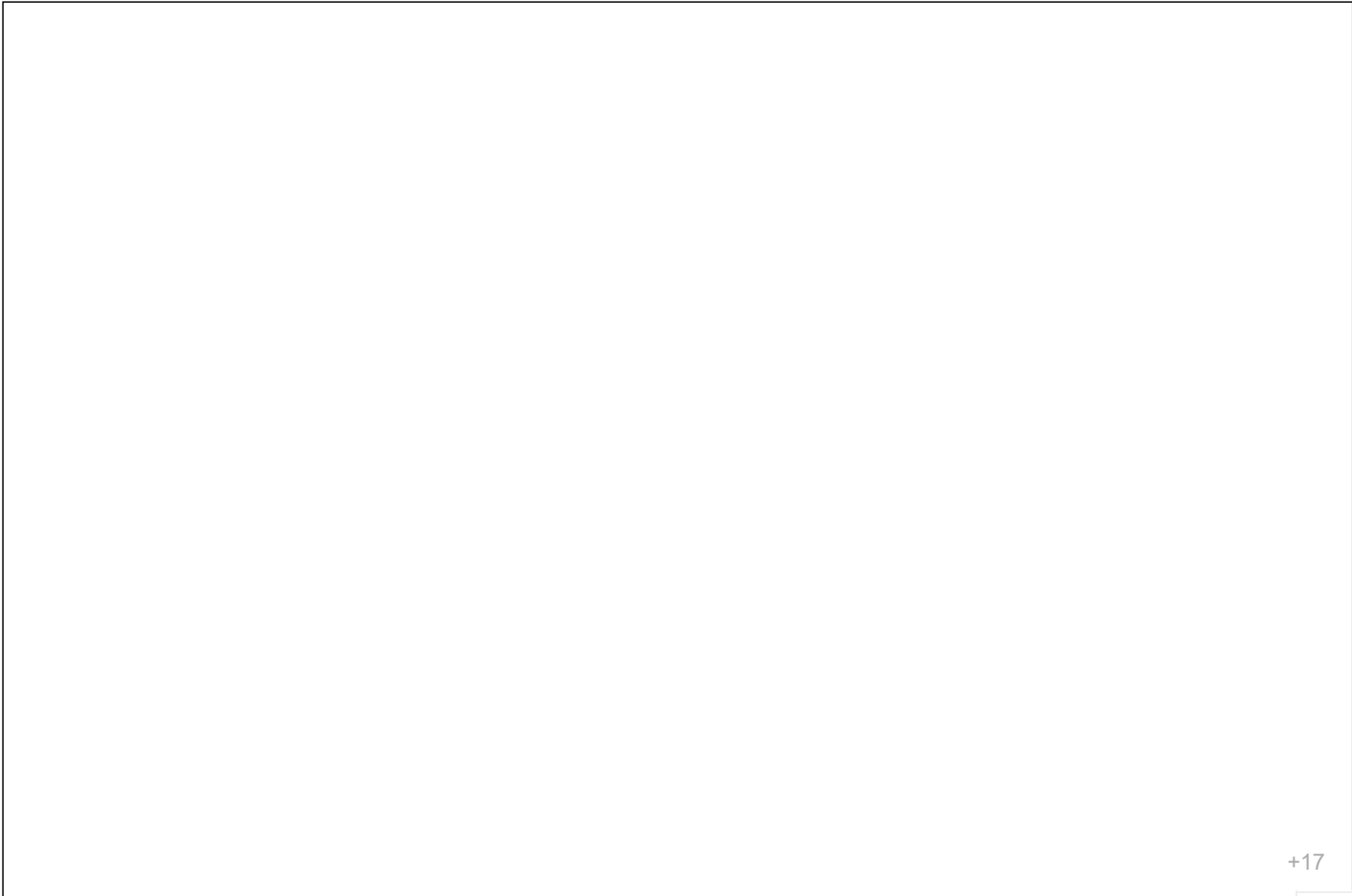
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Face masks have been increasingly in evidence on the streets of London (pictured) as fears over coronavirus spread



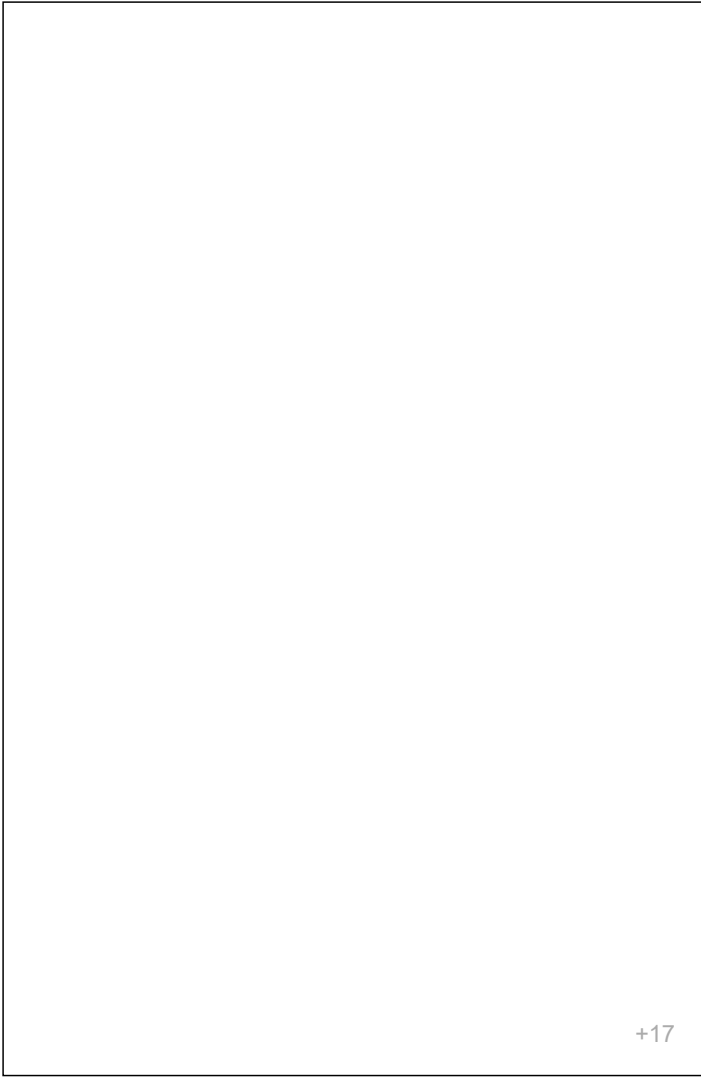
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Oval Office address: Donald Trump finally addressed the nation about the coronavirus crisis from the White House on Wednesday and banned all travel to Europe

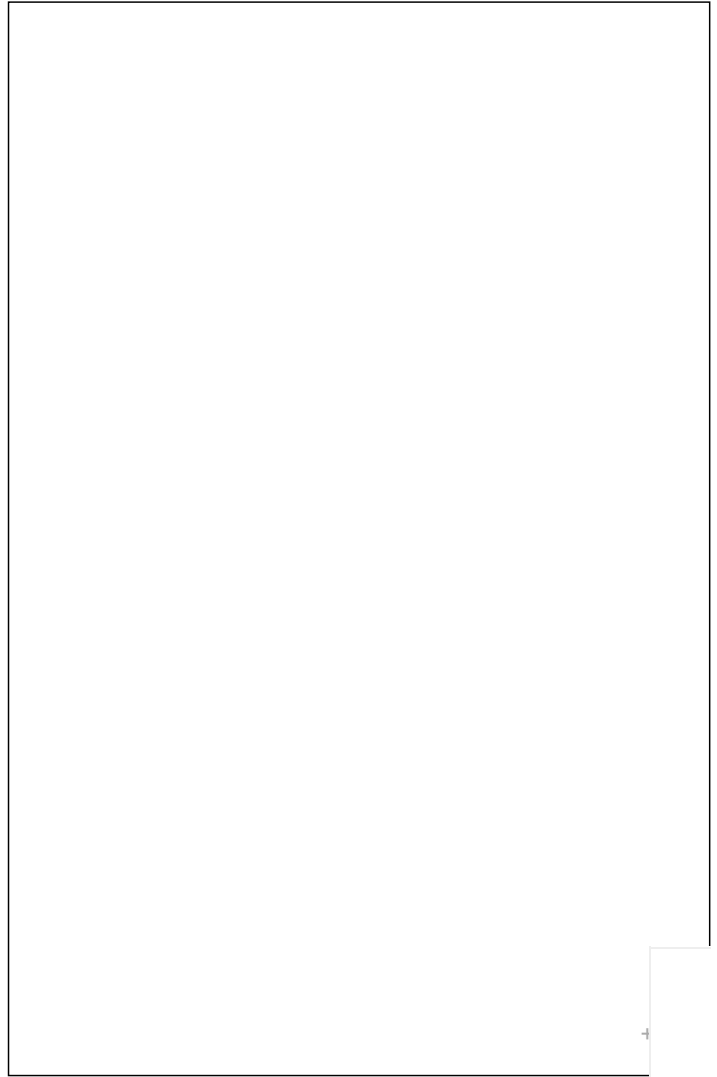


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Leo Varadkar (pictured in Washington today) has declared schools, colleges and childcare facilities are to close for two w



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Trade Secretary Liz Truss (left) and Health Secretary Matt Hancock (right) were among ministers at the Cobra meeting to

Asked whether the PM knew of Mr Trump's escalation in advance, Downing Street said today: 'UK and US officials are in regular contact.'

Meanwhile, Mr Johnson has hinted that the UK will not impose heavy restrictions yet, and swiped at political leaders who do not 'follow the science'.

In comments made before Mr Trump's announcement, he said many leaders were 'under a lot of pressure to be seen to act'.

To fight what is now officially a global pandemic, the Budget handed hospitals a £5billion fighting fund while thousands of firms will be given a business rates holiday to help avert the risk of bankruptcy.

Sick pay will be reformed to ensure that employees are not penalised for going into quarantine.

In a round of interviews today, Mr Sunak told the BBC: 'I make absolutely no apology for responding in the short term in scale to the immediate threat that we face from coronavirus.'

Trump bans travellers from Europe to the US

Donald Trump has ordered an immediate shut-down of all travel from Europe.

Speaking hours after world health officials declared the coronavirus a pandemic, Trump repeatedly defended his own actions and vowed the nation would prevail in countering the virus and getting treatment on the market.

'We will be suspending all travel from Europe to the United States for the next 30 days,' Trump announced, in a speech from the Oval Office to the nation.

'The new rules will go into effect Friday at midnight,' he said.

The move was so sudden the acting Homeland Security secretary said he would issue full guidance on how to carry it out within 48 hours.

The White House said the travel restrictions would apply to foreign nationals who have visited 26 European

'I think that's the right thing to do for the economy, we need to help businesses have a bridge to get to the other side.'

His package came as the Bank of England's base rate was slashed to an historic low of just 0.25 per cent.

Mr Johnson will confirm today that the UK is switching from a strategy of trying to contain the outbreak to one of trying to delay its worst effects in order to give the NHS more time to cope.

The Prime Minister – one of whose Cabinet ministers went into self-isolation last night along with five other MPs – is also likely to announce a range of social-distancing measures.

However, the government is not expected to go as far as Donald Trump, who yesterday told Americans he was ordering an immediate shut-down of all travel from Europe.

Irish PM Leo Varadkar has declared that schools, colleges and childcare facilities are to close for two weeks.

He made a live statement to the nation from Washington DC, where he is due to meet Mr Trump later as part of the annual St Patrick's Day programme of events.

'Unfortunately we must face the tragic reality that some people will die,' he said.

Mr Varadkar said he was acting on fresh advice from the country's National Public Health Emergency Team.

'The virus is all over the world, it will continue to spread but it can be slowed,' he said.

Ms Sturgeon told the Scottish Parliament she would recommend the cancellation of gatherings of more than 500 people from Monday.

The decision is set to come into force the day after Rangers host Celtic in one of this weekend's Ladbrokes Premiership fixtures, with the champions currently 13 points clear of their rivals.

It also looks likely to affect Scotland's Nations League play-off against Israel on March 26. A 50,000 sell-out crowd had been expected at Hampden.

Speaking ahead of a Cobra meeting with other UK leaders, Sturgeon said: 'Mass gatherings are required to be policed, they require to have emergency ambulance cover, they require the services of our voluntary health services, and at a time when we need to be reducing the pressures on these front-line workers in order to free them up on the significant challenge that lies ahead, I do think it is inappropriate that we continue as normal.'

Dr David Halpern, head of the UK's Behavioural Insights Team dubbed Britain's 'Nudge Unit' who reports directly to Mr Johnson, has suggested the 500,000 people in UK care homes or with respiratory conditions could be the only people protected.

countries - but excluding the UK and Ireland - in the past 14 days.

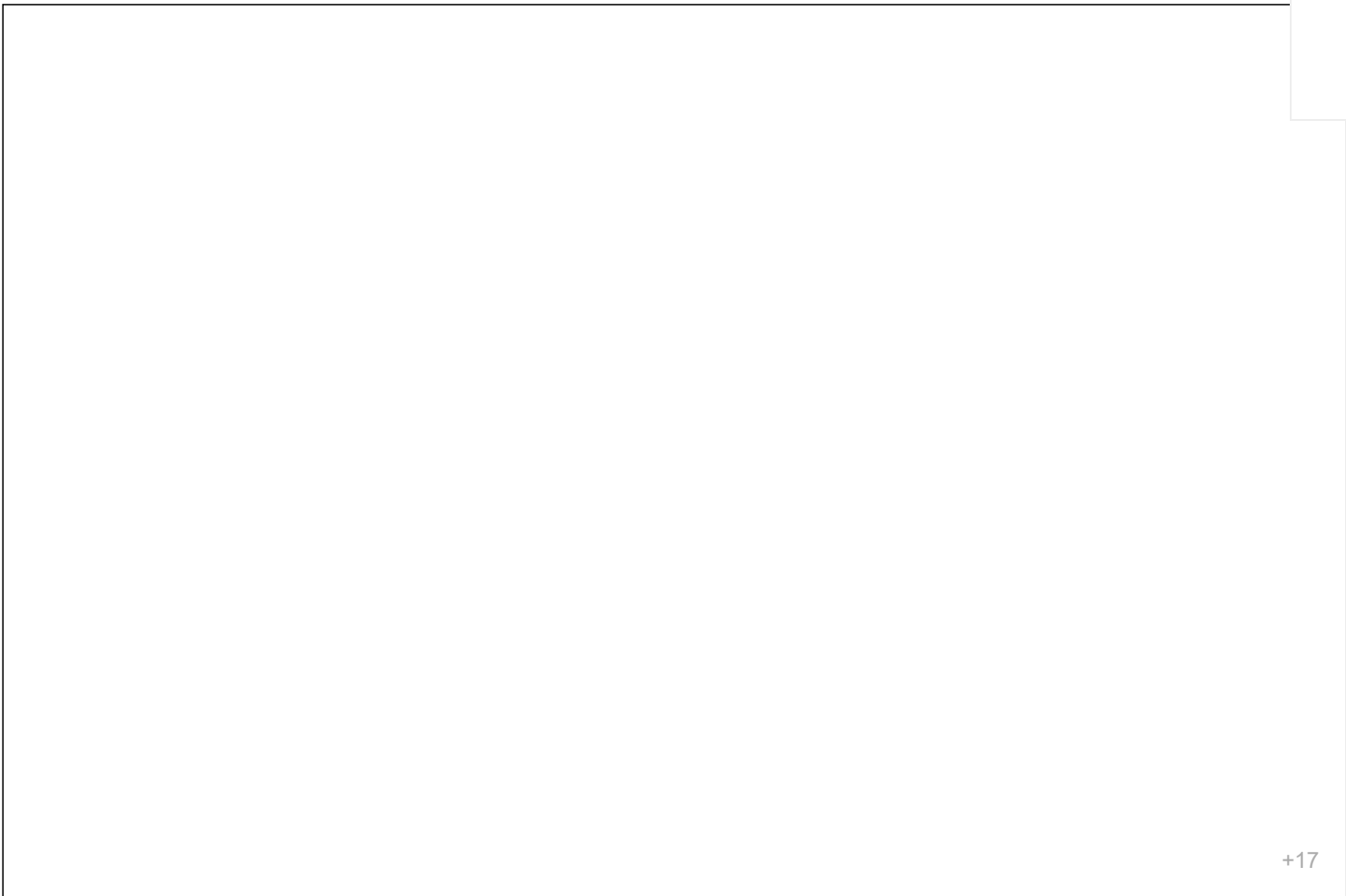
It will not apply to US citizens, their 'immediate' family members or legal permanent residents. But confusion remained over how exactly the rules would apply and in what time zone the deadline would be introduced.





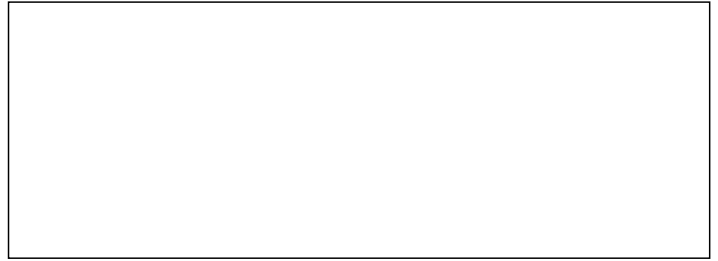
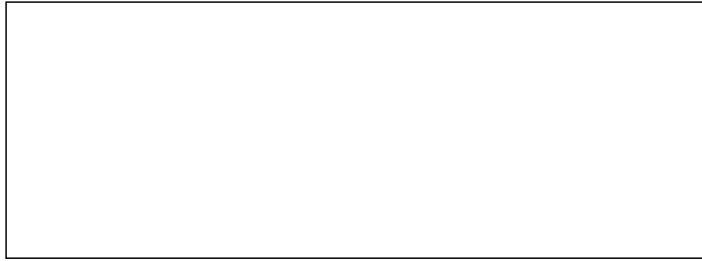
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Chief scientific adviser Sir Patrick Vallance (left) and Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty (right) were at the Cobra meeting



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Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab (right) was at Cobra after testing negative for coronavirus himself, despite having a cold



Former Cabinet minister Rory Stewart this afternoon accused the PM of 'smug insular complacency, warning that without quick action there could be 100,000 cases in the UK within the next 24 days.

He has suggested the virus can be beaten by letting it spread through healthy people to kill it off rather than a nationwide lockdown that could allow coronavirus to rise again later in the year.

Dr Halpern has revealed ministers are considering a policy of keeping high-risk groups such as the elderly or those with underlying health conditions isolated in care homes or in their own homes over the coming months.

He said: 'There's going to be a point, assuming the epidemic flows and grows as it will do, where you want to cocoon, to protect those at-risk groups so they don't catch the disease.

'By the time they come out of their cocooning, herd immunity has been achieved in the rest of the population'.

Deputy chief medical officer Jenny Harries was asked on the BBC if 'pretty much everyone will get it eventually'.

'The thing about a new virus is, of course, nobody has antibodies ready-made to it. This virus is having a field day, the desire will be to infect as many people as it can,' she said.

Dr Harries said it was possible that 'up to 80 per cent of the population' could contract the virus, but added that it was a 'very high estimate'.

Scottish First minister Nicola Sturgeon said it was not possible to make the virus 'go away'.

'This is a serious situation. We cannot make this virus go away. It is highly likely now that significant numbers of us are going to get this virus,' she said.

'The vast majority will have very mild illness and the clear focus right now is on doing everything we can to protect those who are more susceptible to serious illness, but we cannot make this go away, we need to focus on how we manage this outbreak, delay the spread and reduce the numbers infected at any one time.'

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack told BBC Radio Scotland's Good Morning Scotland programme there is 'no doubt we are not going to be able to contain it for very much longer' and that efforts will now focus on delaying the spread of the virus to 'put less pressure on the NHS'.

Speaking hours after world health officials declared the coronavirus a pandemic, Trump repeatedly defended his own actions and vowed the nation would prevail in countering the virus and getting treatment on the market.

FTSE tumbles again on fears of economic chaos

The London Stock Exchange's leading index of companies has plummeted as much as 9.7%, wiping almost £143 billion off the value of its constituents.

Early in the day investors reacted to the World Health Organisation's upgrade of the Covid-19 outbreak to a global pandemic.

However the index fell further still in the afternoon, hitting an eight-year low after markets opened down in the US and the European Central Bank unveiled a coronavirus stimulus package, but kept interest rates steady.

Within moments of the FTSE 100 opening, it sank more than 300 points, to levels not seen for eight years. More than £520 billion has been wiped since February 21 - a fall of 28%.

It means the index is technically in a 'bear market' where the value of shares has fallen by more than 20%.

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It will not apply to US citizens, their 'immediate' family members or legal permanent residents. But confusion remained over how exactly the rules would apply and in what time zone the deadline would be introduced.

A video posted on the No10 Twitter feed yesterday shows Mr Johnson chatting with Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jenny Harries.

Mr Johnson said: 'It's noticeable that there are some countries where they have banned big sporting events and stopped mass gatherings of one kind or another. Tell us why so far the medical advice in this country is not to do that?'

Dr Harries replied that 'expert modellers' had looked at what would happen with the virus.

'In general those sorts of events and big gatherings are not seen as something that is going to have a big effect. So we don't want to disrupt people's lives,' she said.

The FTSE index of Britain's leading companies fell 365 points or 6.22 per cent to 5,511 shortly after opening to its lowest level since February 2016.

The falls were in reaction to Mr Trump's intervention, and came despite the Bank of England slashing interest rates from 0.75 per cent to 0.25 per cent and the Budget plan.

02.30pm, 12 Mar 2020 [FTSE 100 \(UKX\)](#)

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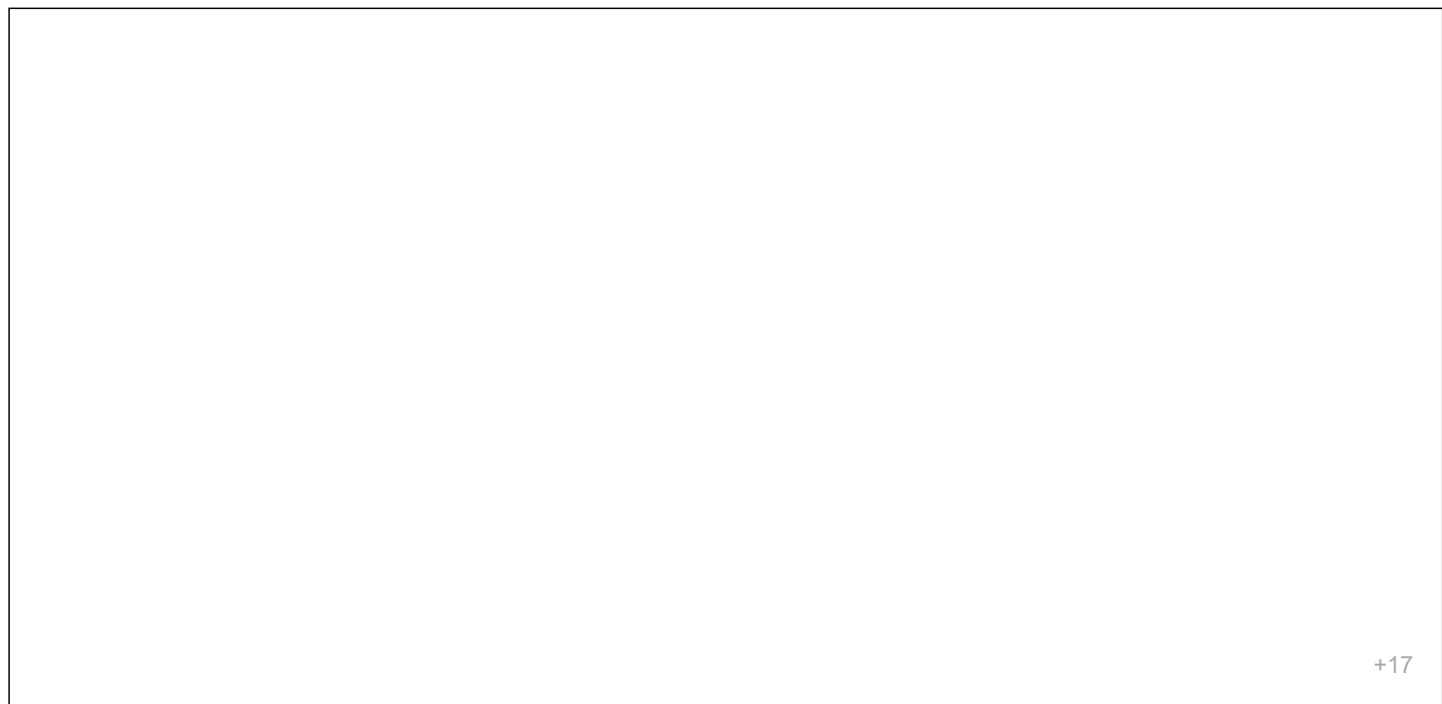
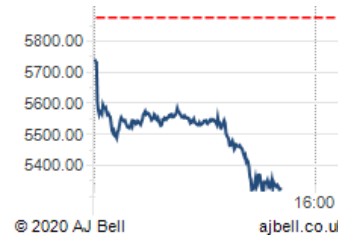
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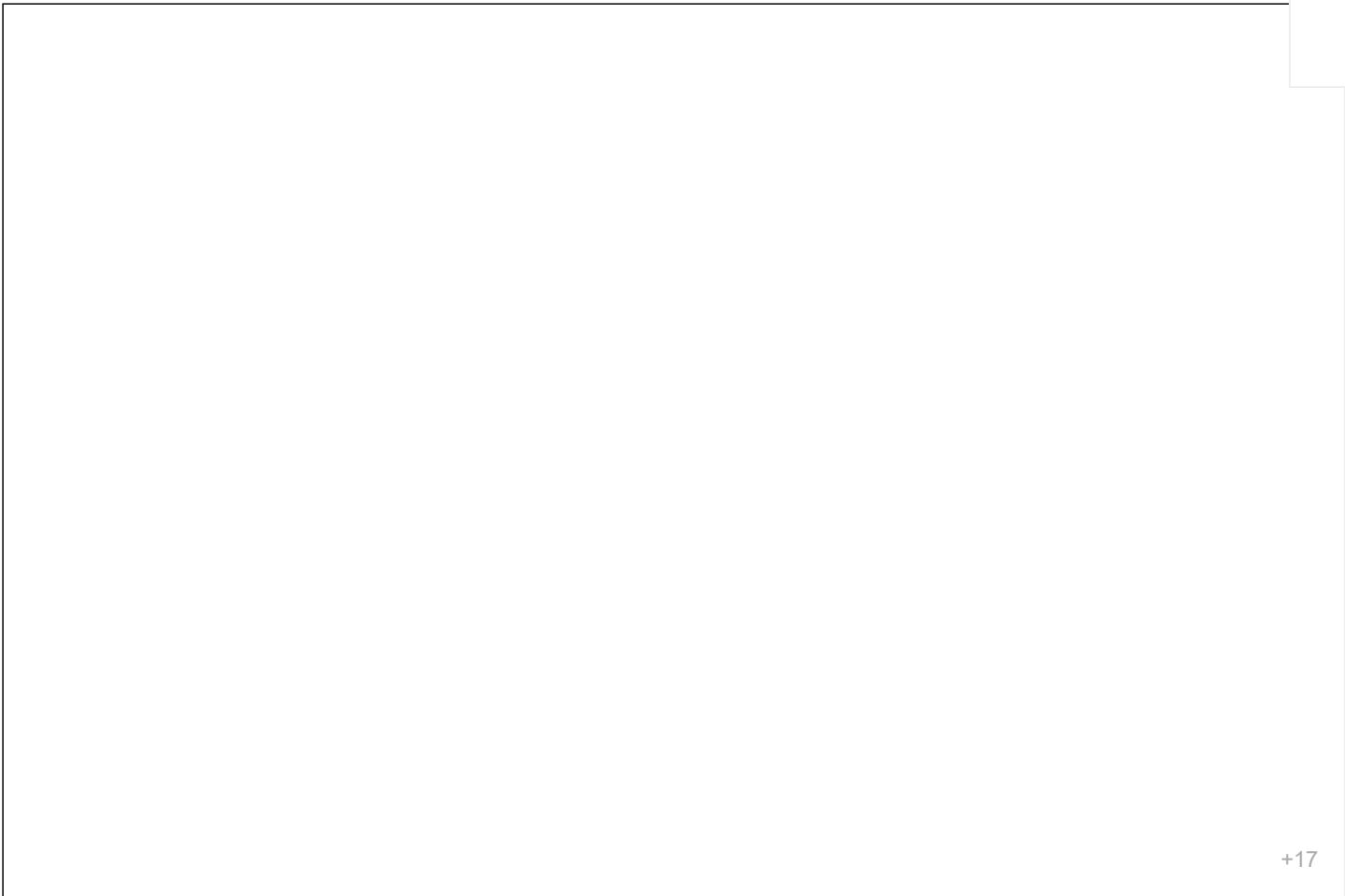
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Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon (pictured at Holyrood today) said she was 'minded' to ban public gatherings of more than 500 people



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Chancellor Rishi Sunak (pictured on a visit to Leeds General Infirmary today) said he made 'no apology' for turning on the spending taps to counter the effects of the virus on the UK economy and society

Traveller captures Haneda Airport in Tokyo 'silent as a grave'

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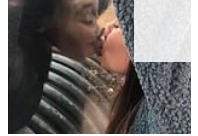
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Speaking before Mr Trump's speech last night, Mr Johnson said: 'There's obviously people under a lot of pressure - politicians government around the world under a lot of pressure to be seen to act. So they may do things that are not necessarily dictated by the science.'

Dr Harries said: 'I am absolutely delighted that we are following the science and the evidence.'

She added: 'We have got very clear advice about when we should intervene and that is exactly what I think we should do.'

Mr Sunak admitted yesterday that the epidemic was now likely to cause 'temporary disruption to the economy', with millions of workers having to take time off sick, firms struggling with supply problems and shops and restaurants hit by a dramatic fall in trade.

'The combination of those effects will have a significant impact on the UK economy,' he said. 'But it will be temporary. People will return to work.'

'Supply chains will return to normal. Life will return to normal. For a period, it's going to be tough. But I'm confident that our economic performance will recover.'

The emergency package, which was only finalised in the early hours of yesterday, overshadowed a series of massive spending decisions that set the Government's economic course for the next four years.

Mr Sunak pledged to increase total spending by 22 per cent by 2024, taking the size of the state to more than £1trillion for the first time.

Much of the spending will be fuelled by borrowing, with the national debt now on track to top £2trillion by the time of the next election.

Boris Johnson swipes at leaders who don't 'follow science' on coronavirus

Boris Johnson has swiped at political leaders who don't 'follow the science' on coronavirus.

The PM said many leaders were 'under a lot of pressure to be seen to act', as he suggested the UK will not impose dramatic restrictions yet.

The comments - which pre-date Donald Trump's ban on travellers from mainland Europe last night - came in a video posted on the No10 Twitter feed yesterday shows Mr Johnson chatting with Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jenny Harries.

Mr Johnson said: 'It's noticeable that there are some countries where they have banned big sporting events and stopped mass gatherings of one kind or another. Tell us why so far the medical advice in this country is not to do that?'

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Mr Johnson said: 'There's obviously people under a lot of pressure - politicians government around the world under a lot of pressure to be seen to act. So they may do things that are not necessarily dictated by the science.'

There will be a rise in the threshold for paying national insurance that delivers an immediate £100 tax cut for 31million workers.

The OBR yesterday warned that the coronavirus could lead to a prolonged slowdown, adding: 'Recession this year is quite possible if the spread of coronavirus causes widespread economic disruption.'

Mr Sunak said he was ready to make further interventions to ensure that good businesses were not driven to the wall.

He said yesterday's £30billion package comprised £12billion of direct spending and £18billion of broader stimulus to the economy.

'While the world may slow down, we will act here with a response that is brave and bold, taking decisions now for our future prosperity,' the Chancellor added. 'We are investing in world class infrastructure, and to lead the world in the industries and technologies of the future.'

Mr Sunak said the 'central decision' was to increase spending over existing plans by £175billion.

The overall tax burden will not rise, mainly because of a decision to abandon a cut in corporation tax. The Treasury admitted the spending might not meet earlier fiscal rules.

Some senior Tories voiced reservations. Theresa May said the Conservatives must never fall into Labour's trap of believing that all problems could be fixed by unconstrained spending.

The former prime minister added: 'While spending a lot of money may be popular and may seem the natural thing to do, there is of course that necessity of having a realistic assessment of the longer-term impact.'

'[There is] a necessity to ensure that we have that restraint and caution that enables us to make sure the public finances continue to be strong into the future.'

Revealed: How phase two of the UK's coronavirus battle plan to delay the outbreak could affect YOU

Daily life could be about to change for millions of Britons as Prime Minister **Boris Johnson** gets set to declare war on the **coronavirus** today and move to the second phase of the Government's coronavirus action plan – 'Delay'.

Declaring this move will effectively admit efforts to prevent an outbreak have failed and that people must now work to slow down its spread across the UK.

At least 460 people have been diagnosed with the coronavirus in Britain already and eight people have died.

Moving to the Delay phase of the battle means the start of social distancing measures – efforts to keep people apart and stop the virus spreading inside the country.

Here's what the dramatic escalation, which may begin as soon as today, could mean:

Dr Harries said: 'I am absolutely delighted that we are following the science and the evidence.'

She added: 'We have got very clear advice about when we should intervene and that is exactly what I think we should do.'



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Anyone who gets sick should stay at home

Self-isolation, which has become a buzzword since the outbreak began, could be extended to anybody who falls ill, even if they don't think they have coronavirus.

The Government's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, said earlier this week: 'We are now very close to the time, probably within the next 10 to 14

WHAT IS HERD IMMUNITY?

Herd immunity is a situation in which a population of people is protected from a disease because so many of them are unaffected by it that it cannot spread.

days... where we should move to a situation where we say "everybody who has even minor respiratory tract infections or a fever, should be self-isolating for seven days afterwards".'

The advice could apply to people who have colds, flu or chest infections, regardless of whether they have travelled to coronavirus-hit areas.

Worst-case scenario predictions suggested up to one in five people could be off work at the peak of the epidemic.

Staff will be told to work from home

People with office jobs will increasingly be asked to work from home to stop them catching the coronavirus at the office.

The Government is keen for companies to help their employees work remotely, to reduce the amount of people who are out in public and travelling around. Firms may also be urged to stagger shift patterns to reduce crowds in rush hour.

Companies which cannot operate remotely – such as construction sites, maintenance workers, supermarkets and drivers – will have to continue to work as normal, but workforces may end up being reduced or projects put on hold.

No more football matches shown in pubs

Pubs could be banned from showing football matches or other big sporting events on TV, to stop crowds gathering in their bars.

All matches are expected to be played behind closed doors under new plans to combat the spread of the virus.

According to *The Times*, the current season will not be postponed but games will be contested with no supporters present. All **Premier League** ticket holders for individual clashes will be able to stream coverage of matches in their homes instead.

With the response to the pandemic moving imminently, no games will be shown in pubs to avoid congestion of people, and Premier League fixtures will not be shown live in the Saturday 3pm slot.

Broadcasters are believed to be permitted to screen more than one top flight game during the lunchtime and tea-time slots - and this would apply across the weekend and on Mondays.

To cause an outbreak a disease-causing bacteria or virus must have a continuous supply of potential victims who are not immune to it.

Immunity is when your body knows exactly how to fight off a certain type of infection because it has encountered it before, either by having the illness in the past or through a vaccine.

When a virus or bacteria enters the body the immune system creates substances called antibodies, which are designed to destroy one specific type of bug.

When these have been created once, some of them remain in the body and the body also remembers how to make them again. This provides long-term protection, or immunity, against an illness.

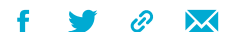
If nobody is immune to an illness – as was the case at the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak – it can spread like wildfire.

However, if, for example, half of people have developed immunity – from a past infection or a vaccine – there are only half as many people the illness can spread to.

As more and more people become immune the bug finds it harder and harder to spread until its pool of victims becomes so small it can no longer spread at all.

The threshold for herd immunity is different for various illnesses, depending on how contagious they are – for measles, around 95 per cent of people must be vaccinated to it spreading.

For polio, which is less contagious, the threshold is about 80-85 per cent, according to the **Oxford Vaccine Group**.





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Social distancing measures – attempting to keep people between three and six feet apart from one another – have already been brought in in Italy (pictured, a queue outside a supermarket in Palermo) and could soon be on the streets of Britain

Supermarket shelves still barren during coronavirus outbreak



Watch the full video

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Walk or cycle to work to avoid cramped public transport

Public Health England said people should cycle or walk to work if they can.

It said public transport services will continue to run but there may be fewer services and routes could be cut or cancelled in specific areas if there are bad local outbreaks.

Close proximity of passengers on trains and buses makes them likely places for the virus to spread from commuters who don't know they're ill, especially in cities.

The coronavirus can spread from person-to-person if people are within six feet (1.8m) of one another, according to the US Centers of Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), so people

It can also live on hard surfaces like buttons and handrails for up to 72 hours, during which time it remains infectious if someone touches it then touches their face.

One economist from the University of Warwick, Roger Farmer, told MailOnline he had already stopped using the London Underground and that he expects other people will do the same to avoid getting ill.

'I would expect potentially fewer trains and bus services and suspect people will stop using them,' he said.

Schools and universities could close

The Government's coronavirus action plan admits that it could close schools and universities if the outbreak in the UK gets bad.

Officials have so far been reluctant to admit they will do this and appear to be very against the idea. Public Health England wrote in a blog: 'Closing schools can be disruptive for both children and parents so this is something we would need to consider very carefully.'

The coronavirus does not seem to be infecting children anywhere near as much as it affects adults, for reasons that scientists don't yet understand.

If schools were to be closed, pupils may be set work to do at home or given online lessons through video tutorials or special school networks. Children in other countries such as Italy are still taking part in hours of school lessons even from isolation.

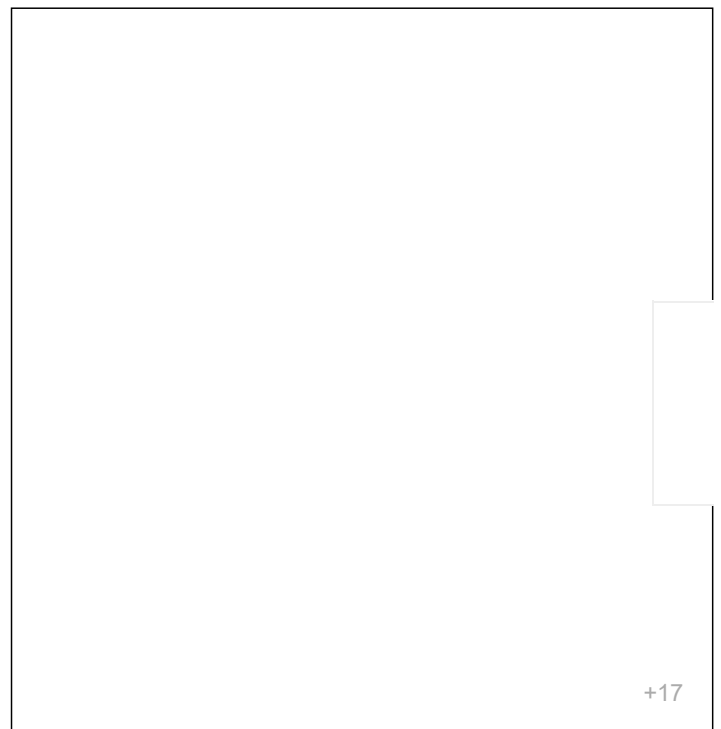
Concerts, cinemas and football matches could be off-limits

If outbreaks get bad in particular areas people might be stopped from holding any events which would draw large crowds – this has happened across the whole of China and Italy.

Concerts, theatre shows, cinemas, sports games and museums could be off limits.

Football matches are expected to be played with no crowds present and fans will have to watch the games on television at home.

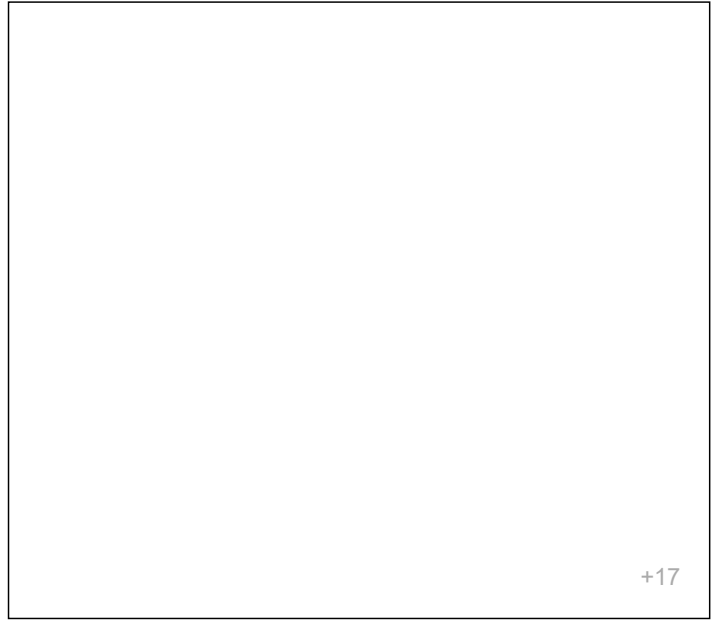
Watching them in pubs could also be banned because it would attract large crowds of people.



Schools and universities could close and students be told to work at home (Pictured, Bonnygate Primary School in Essex closed last week because of a coronavirus case)



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Events which attract large crowds like concerts (left) and football matches (right) could be cancelled to stop people spreading the virus

Bars and restaurants could be forced to space out customers

Although not in British Government guidance, Italian authorities have required that bars, restaurants and cafes slash their opening hours and make sure customers can be kept far apart.

Establishments are only allowed to open between 8am and 6pm, a government decree said, and only if a distance of at least three feet (1m) could be kept between each customer.

Similar rules could apply to other busy places such as supermarkets, gyms, spas, community centres and hotels.

Old people could be 'cocooned' in care home lockdowns

Hundreds of thousands of old people – who are most at risk of dying if they catch the coronavirus – could be shut in the care homes they live in, with visitors not allowed in case they bring the coronavirus in.

The 'cocoon' strategy was confirmed by Government officials and would rely on an army of volunteers to help care for the vulnerable population.

Scientific adviser to Number 10, Dr David Halpern, told the BBC the idea was that 'by the time they come out of their cocooning, herd immunity has been achieved in the rest of the population.'

Herd immunity is when so many people in a population have already had a virus – and become immune to it as a result – that the illness stops spreading because there are not enough potential victims for it to infect and move through.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 'DELAY' AND 'CONTAIN' PHASES OF THE ACTION PLAN?

The Government will today consider upgrading its efforts to stop the coronavirus.

It is using a four-point scale taken from an official 'coronavirus action plan' which was launched by Prime Minister Boris Johnson at 10 Downing Street last week.

Efforts are currently in the first phase, named 'contain', but could escalate to 'delay'.

Future efforts in the Delay phase could include school closures, encouraging people to work from home and cancelling large public gatherings such as the London Marathon.

The efforts would be added on to a public information campaign which launched last week and is urging people to wash their hands more often – increasing engagement with the public is an element of the Delay phase which was started early.

And efforts from the Contain phase, such as isolating people confirmed to have the virus and updating travel and health advice, will be continued.



Plans in motion to bring in retired doctors and the military to help

Retired doctors and nurses are expected to be drafted back in to help overloaded hospitals if the outbreak becomes too big to handles.

Plans could start to be drawn up soon to legally allow these qualified medical workers to return to the frontline and treat patients. If an outbreak like Italy's happens in the UK, or if huge numbers of people start to be diagnosed in relatively small areas, already-stretched hospitals could come under immense strain.

Extra medical staff will be needed to pick up the work left by staff who will inevitably be off ill or in quarantine themselves, and to cope with surging patient numbers.

The military could also be drafted in later in the outbreak to help enforce movement restrictions or quarantines if the situation gets that bad.

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