



22nd February 2021, Houses of Parliament & House of Lords

Question 1:

Craig Tracey (Conservative, North Warwickshire):

I welcome the Prime Minister setting out the road map as promised, and it is great that schools will be returning, including, importantly, with their sporting activities. However, with that in mind, 8 March would also have been the optimal time to reintroduce for everyone non-contact sports such as golf, which it is scientifically proven can be participated in safely during the pandemic. Will the Prime Minister set out why it has not been possible to reintroduce those sports at this stage, given that that will leave millions of people having to wait for another five weeks before they can return to their favourite form of exercise?

The Prime Minister replied:

My hon. Friend is quite right to vent his frustration. I share his frustration; as somebody who yearns to go out and play sport myself, I understand completely how he feels. We must face the fact that, by comparison with any period last year, the virus remains very prevalent in our country, and we have to continue to keep it under control. What we are trying to do is a cautious but irreversible approach, and he only has to wait for another three weeks beyond 8 March to be able to hit a golf ball with a friend.

Question: During a debate on Covid-19

Pauline Latham (Conservative, Mid Derbyshire):

We were told by the Prime Minister that we would be driven by the data, not by the dates, but, sadly, we have the dates, and the dates go on for another four months. Businesses cannot cope with it. Let me give a few examples. A friend of mine can walk around a golf course with his wife, but he cannot play golf with her. There is no sense in that. It is outdoors and it is safe. Golf courses and other outside non-contact sports should be opened earlier. Hospitality firms spent tens of thousands of pounds on things to make themselves covid secure, but they are not allowed to use them. In the worst weather, we will be able to meet outside, rather than inside in a covid secure way. That needs to be looked at again, because these businesses are suffering, and we will lose many of them.

Richard Graham (Conservative, Gloucester):

Today's announcement had the great confirmation that almost all education will go back on 8 March. It is hard to tell whether the parents or the children are more excited about this, but thereafter, progress is slow. There are another three weeks, for example, before two people, even from the same household, can exercise outdoors with a golf club. Let me share this message from one mother about the importance of outdoor exercise. She wrote about her son who had come close to taking his life, about how important golf was for him. She said that it gave an area of light, hope and pleasure to help him out of a pit of despair. All over the country, there will be people fighting similar demons for whom some outdoor sport represents a lifeline, promoting good physical health while magically mending hearts and

souls, which will also impact on their family—their partners, parents, and children. I hope that the Government will hear that message and consider carefully whether restrictions on outdoor sport—as important for people who have left school as for those who are still at school—can be lifted earlier.

The House of Lords on the Covid-19: Road Map, Lord Moynihan asked:

My Lords, I congratulate the Government on prioritising the return of children to sport, building on the Daily Telegraph's campaign to keep kids active, and recognising that the country must emerge from this crisis more engaged with an active lifestyle and more involved in sport and recreation than ever before, since these are vital mental, physical and preventive healthcare objectives. Will my noble friend the Leader ask her colleagues whether, if the lockdown and vaccinations continue to deliver anticipated results, socially distanced two-ball golf games and tennis matches can be reopened to the public, as they were many weeks ago in Scotland, without waiting another five weeks in England for their freedom to restart?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (Leader of the House of Lords) replied:

I am sure that my colleagues will have heard my noble friend's question. I will certainly pass it on to relevant colleagues in DCMS.