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Minutes

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet  
held at The National Glass Centre (Sunderland) onFRIDAY 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020  
At 1445 PM  

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## P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime MinisterThe Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
Chancellor of the ExchequerThe Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs and First Secretary of StateThe Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State for the Home DepartmentThe Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of LancasterThe Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for JusticeThe Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP  
Secretary of State for Exiting the European UnionThe Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP  
Secretary of State for DefenceThe Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social CareThe Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and  
Industrial StrategyThe Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade and  
President of the Board of Trade and Minister for  
Women and EqualitiesThe Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP  
Secretary of State for Work and PensionsThe Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP  
Secretary of State for EducationThe Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural  
AffairsThe Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and  
Local GovernmentThe Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Secretary of State for TransportThe Rt Hon Julian Smith CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland



Coronavirus

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said that two cases of coronavirus had been confirmed in the UK. 177 potential cases had tested negative. It was a very serious problem in China where there were 9,700 cases and where there had been 213 fatalities. The rate of spread was similar to that of SARS disease, with one person typically infecting two and a half to three people, but the mortality rate, at two per cent, was much lower. The plane evacuating British nationals from Wuhan province was due to land that afternoon. There were no signs of symptoms among those on board, though they would be taken to a hospital for a period for monitoring. He was grateful to the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Defence and their officials for their support. If China succeeded in containing the virus, there would not

be a problem, but if China did not grip the situation it could become global. That would be very serious, including for the UK.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS said that the Government had moved quickly, and more quickly than others, in securing flights to leave China, and had brought home some Europeans as well as British nationals. There was a problem in that the Government had not yet persuaded the Chinese authorities to allow dual nationals to leave, and that was causing understandable distress to families who were having to separate. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Health and Social Care were working together very well. Travel advice was under review.

In discussion, the following point was made:

- n) the Department for International Development was examining developing countries where the risk of spread of the disease was high. Spread of the disease globally would be a big problem for these countries, and could also mean further evacuation of British nationals overseas.

Summing up, THE PRIME MINISTER said that the tone of the Government should be reassurance, given the low mortality rate. People should not panic.

The Cabinet:

- took note.