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Speech

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 3 March 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's statement on the coronavirus action plan.

From:

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Good morning and thank you for coming along, and I am very glad to be joined this morning by the government's Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Advisor.

Today we have published the Coronavirus Action Plan setting out how all four parts of the UK will take all necessary and reasonable steps to tackle this outbreak.

The plan has four strands. Containing the virus, delaying its spread, researching its origins and cure, and finally mitigating the impact should the virus become more widespread. That is, contain, delay, research, mitigate.

And let me be absolutely clear that for the overwhelming majority of people who contract the virus, this will be a mild disease from which they will speedily and fully recover as we've already seen.

But I fully understand public concern, your concern, about the global spread of this virus. And it is highly likely that we will see a growing number of UK cases.

And that's why keeping the country safe is the government's overriding priority. And our plan means we're committed to doing everything possible based on the advice of our world leading scientific experts to prepare for all eventualities.

Let's not forget – we already have a fantastic NHS, fantastic testing systems and fantastic surveillance of the spread of disease.

We will make sure the NHS gets all the support it needs to continue their brilliant response to the virus so far.

The plan does not set out what the government will do, it sets out the steps we could take at the right time along the basis of the scientific advice.

Our country remains extremely well prepared, as it has been since the outbreak began in Wuhan several months ago.

Finally, crucially, we must not forget what we can all do to fight this virus, which is to wash our hands, you knew I was going to say this, but wash our hands with soap and water. And forgive me for repeating this but there will be people who will be tuning into this for the first time: wash your hands with soap and hot water for the length of time it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice.

It's simple advice but it's the single most important thing we can do, as I think our experts would attest.

But at this stage, and with the exception of all of the points I have just mentioned, I want to stress that for the vast majority of the people of this country, we should be going about our business as usual.

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