

# Tory MPs urge the Government to 'come clean' over new Covid strain

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21 December 2020

**Tory MPs urge the Government to 'come clean', recall Parliament and present them with ALL of the evidence about the mutant coronavirus strain as they blast scientific advisers for 'stepping back into the shadows when it suits them'**

- **Tory MPs are demanding the Government recall Parliament to debate new rules**
- **Backbenchers want ministers to 'come clean' over the new strain of coronavirus**
- **Tory MPs also accused scientific advisers of 'stepping back into the shadows'**
- **Comes as countries impose travel bans due to fears over mutant Covid variant**

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[Boris Johnson](#) is facing a mounting Tory rebellion over his latest [coronavirus](#) crackdown as Conservative MPs demand the Government recall Parliament so ministers can 'come clean' over the new mutant strain of the disease.

Senior Tory figures have blasted the Government's decision to tighten Covid curbs over Christmas and to impose a new Tier 4 [lockdown](#) after MPs went on holiday.

They claimed the timing of the announcement by the Prime Minister on Saturday was 'convenient' amid accusations [Number 10](#) knew last week it was going to increase restrictions.

Tory MPs said this morning the Government had again been 'bounced by the science' despite experts having previously got their forecasts and modelling wrong.

They accused Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance of 'stepping back into the shadows when it suits them' to leave ministers to take the flak for controversial decisions.

The growing revolt came as Mr Johnson held crisis talks with ministers after France banned lorries carrying freight from the UK and countries around the world ended flights to Britain amid fears of the new coronavirus variant.



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Boris Johnson is facing mounting Tory fury over his decision to announce a new Covid crackdown after MPs went on holiday



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Tory MPs have blasted the Government's scientific advisers, including Sir Patrick Vallance and Professor Chris Whitty, for 'stepping back into the shadows when it suits them'



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Tory former leader Sir Iain Duncan Smith is leading calls for the Government to recall Parliament

The Prime Minister will chair a meeting of the Government's Cobra civil contingencies committee this morning after warnings of 'significant disruption' around the Channel ports in Kent.

Hauliers were urged to stay away from the area because of potential problems as the end of the Brexit transition period also looms on December 31.

Kent Police said they were implementing Operation Stack in a bid to ease potential congestion, while the Department for Transport said Manston Airport was also being prepared as another contingency measure against the anticipated level of disruption.

Countries including France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Austria, Denmark, Ireland, and Bulgaria announced restrictions on UK travel following the disclosure that the highly infectious new strain is widespread across the South East of England.

The international crackdown came amid rising Tory anger over the Government's latest coronavirus curbs as MPs demanded Parliament be recalled this week.

Former minister Sir Desmond Swayne said 'it does have all the characteristics of the Government being bounced by the science, as it was right at the beginning of the arrangements when we first went into lockdown last March'.

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He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: 'The arrangements for Christmas were explicitly voted on by Parliament. If they're to be changed then in my view, Parliament should vote again.'

He added: 'Parliament voted explicitly for a certain set of arrangements, it seems to be perfectly proper therefore that Parliament should be consulted when those are changed, irrespective of the Government acting in an emergency, nevertheless it's perfectly proper to recall Parliament at the beginning of this week to at least ratify those changes.'

'Explain to us – we are after all a democracy, explain to the elected representatives the evidence that they have and why they've reached this decision.'

Sir Desmond suggested the Government had known for a while it was going to launch a fresh crackdown but waited for MPs to break for Christmas before announcing the measures in order to avoid a Commons backlash.

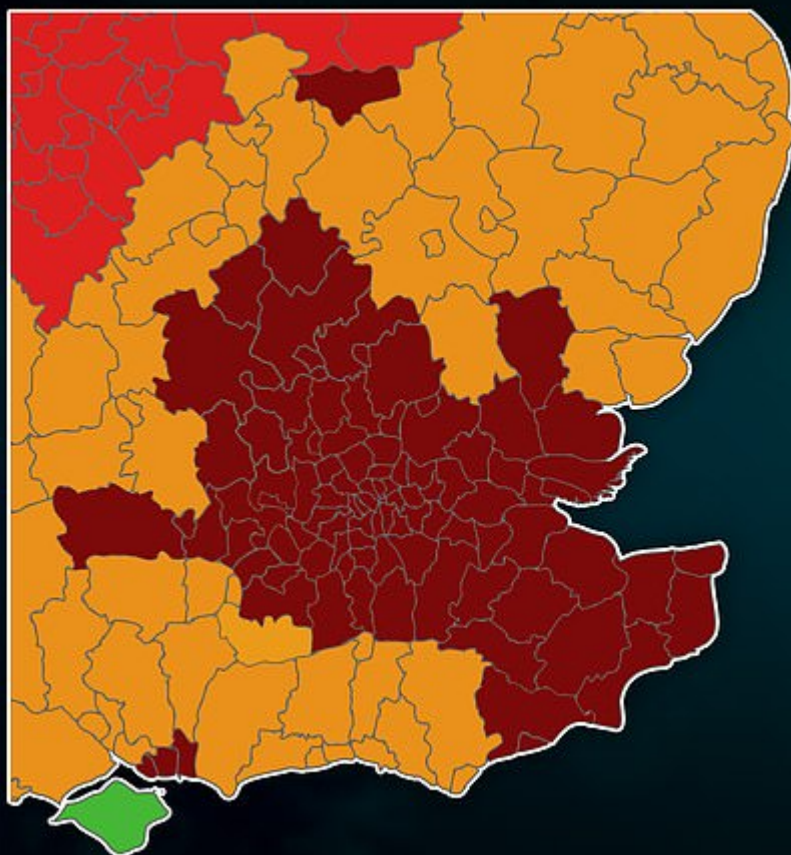
He said: 'Yes, they've been looking at it [the new variant] since September and how convenient when Parliament went into recess on Thursday suddenly they were then able to produce this revelation.'

'Let's see the evidence then, let's have Parliament back and show us and convince us, come clean.'

## ENGLAND'S NEW TIER-4 AREAS

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- New Tier 4 from Sunday

Bedfordshire  
Buckinghamshire  
London(All boroughs)  
Kent  
Parts of Essex  
Berkshire  
Peterborough  
Hertfordshire  
Surrey (Not Waverley)  
Hastings  
Rother  
Portsmouth  
Gosport  
Havant



+4

'I want Parliament to be recalled so we can scrutinise properly in a democracy decisions that are being made which affect our economy radically and our liberty.'

He said a failure to recall Parliament would demonstrate the Government is 'frightened of its Parliament'.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith, the former Tory leader, said it is 'clear that Tier 4 is much the same as a third lockdown' and the decision should be urgently debated by MPs.

Writing in The Telegraph he said: 'It's too easy just to blame Government ministers for all these decisions - what about their scientific advisers, who have a vital role in deciding these restrictions but are adept at stepping back into the shadows when it suits them?'

He added: 'Why did they not alert ministers to the dangers earlier? Especially when, as we now know, scientists learnt about this mutation back in September.'

Sir Iain pointed to previous mistakes made by the Government's scientific advisers and said that 'when epidemiologists try to produce forecasts they are no more accurate than economists'.

Sir Charles Walker, the vice chairman of the influential 1922 Committee of Tory MPs, echoed a similar sentiment yesterday as he said: 'The Government, in my view, knew on Thursday, possibly even Wednesday, that they were going to pull the plug on Christmas

but they waited till Parliament had gone.

'That, on top of everything else, is a resigning matter. I am not asking for the Government to collapse. I am asking for a secretary of state to take some responsibility.'

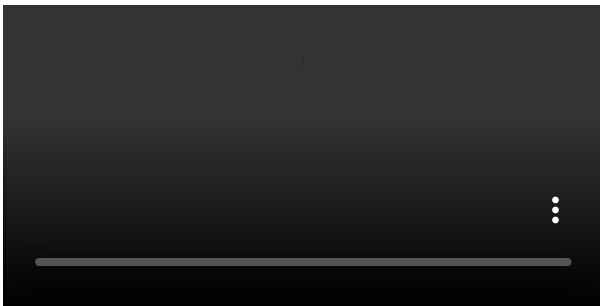
Health Secretary Matt Hancock said yesterday that ministers were only informed on Friday that an increase in infections in London and the South East of England was linked to a mutant new strain of coronavirus.

Mr Johnson then announced the new Tier 4 measures and tighter Christmas rules yesterday.

The new Tier 4 restrictions mean more than 16 million people across London, the South East and East of England have now been told to stay at home as much as they can.

Whitehall sources suggested the stay at home message could last until most over-50s have received a coronavirus vaccine - a timeline which would likely take the country to Easter or beyond.

Christmas is cancelled! Boris plunges millions into Tier 4 lockdown



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The Government is desperately trying to slow the spread of the new variant which is approximately 70 per cent more transmissible than its predecessor.

One government source told The Telegraph: 'Essentially we are looking at spring as the time when we can move out of this difficult place we're in - something like March, the point at which everyone in the 'at risk' groups has been offered the vaccine.'

The UK is increasingly being cut off from the rest of the world as other countries try to stop the new strain from being imported from Britain.

The US administration is under growing pressure to impose its own flight ban after Andrew Cuomo, the governor of New York, slammed 'reprehensible' inaction which 'continues to let in six flights a day' from Britain.

He told reporters: 'Right now, this variant in the UK is getting on a plane and flying to JFK. Right now. Today. Literally six flights a day. And all it takes is one person.'

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[Driver, 39, 'killed woman in crash when she was stung by wasp and lost control of her car'](#) [Helen Shaw, 39, has claimed she was 'stung by a wasp' that caused to lose control of a Seat Leon before a fatal collision on the A67 near Kirklevington that killed Rosina Ingram.](#)



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