

## **Written Evidence Submitted by Dr Andrew Watt (CLL0122)**

In this Written Evidence I seek briefly to comment on three matters relevant to the Joint Inquiry:

1. The hopelessly inadequate approach taken by the Committees in the Joint Inquiry.
2. Closure of the UK Border in January 2020 would have saved tens of thousands of lives.
3. Matt Hancock seriously misled the House of Commons on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020

Given the foregoing I urge the Committees either to postpone publication of the Report of the Inquiry or to designate the Report as an Interim Report.

### **The Joint Inquiry is hopelessly inadequate**

The Joint Inquiry “Coronavirus: Lessons Learnt” is hopelessly inadequate.

The Inquiry has taken a “scattergun” approach to taking evidence, without systematically examining the order in which events took place.

At the risk of stating the obvious, earlier events may be the cause of later events.

Without a detailed timeline, including a timeline of events in January 2020, the Committees cannot credibly draw definitive conclusions as to “Lessons Learnt”.

In addition to the failure of approach, the Committees have abjectly failed to collect evidence regarding information, advice and decisions in January 2020.

I urge the Committees to construct a detailed timeline of events in January 2020, including acts (actions and/or omissions) of UK Government Ministers and advisers to the UK Government.

Without such a timeline it is my view that the Committees’ “conclusions” which it may wish to express in its anticipated Report will, rightly, be open to excoriating criticism due to the fundamental failures in the Committee’s approach briefly outlined above.

Events in January 2020 are of crucial importance in understanding why tens of thousands of people died from Covid-19 in the United Kingdom.

### **The UK Border should have been closed in January 2020**

This Written Evidence may, in part, be viewed as a preliminary examination of the following assertion:

Assertion: If the United Kingdom had decisively closed its Border on or shortly after 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020, entry of the SARS-CoV-2 virus into the United Kingdom would have been prevented or stopped. Tens of thousands of lives would have been saved and the damage to the Public Finances, measured in hundreds of billions of pounds, would have (to a large extent) been avoided.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus first came to public attention in Wuhan.

It is reasonable to assume that early in the developing pandemic the SARS-CoV-2 virus was absent from the UK.

Closing the UK Border completely and in a timely manner would have the potential completely to exclude the SARS-CoV-2 virus from the UK.

If the SARS-CoV-2 virus had successfully been excluded from the UK, the number of cases of Covid-19 would have been zero.

If there were no cases of Covid-19 in the UK, there could be no deaths from Covid-19 in the UK.

The correct decision, from the point of view of Public Health, would have been to close the UK Border decisively on or shortly after 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in order to prevent entry of the SARS-CoV-2 virus into the UK!

I invite the Committees carefully to consider whether decisive early UK Border Closure would have saved tens of thousands of lives.

I also invite the Committees carefully to examine the acts (actions and/or omissions) of individuals and entities in January 2020.

The following list identifies some individuals and entities whose conduct in January 2020 is, I suggest, properly the object of the Committees' Inquiry. The list is not exhaustive.

- Chris Whitty
- Jonathan Van Tam
- The New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG)
- Patrick Vallance
- The Scientific Group for Emergencies (SAGE)
- Matt Hancock
- Boris Johnson
- The Civil Contingencies Secretariat

In addition, I suggest that the Committees examine two important issues which provide broader context:

1. The predictably deadly "Preparedness and Response" strategy of the World Health Organisation and the associated International Health Regulations (2005).
2. The predictably dangerous "United Kingdom Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011" which led, in part, to the disastrously bad so-called "science" in January 2020 with accompanying disastrously bad policy decisions by Ministers.

The failures in January 2020 of UK Government Ministers and their adviser can only, I suggest, be properly understood in the context of World Health Organisation policy and the "Mass Death Policy" expressed in the "United Kingdom Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011".

## **Matt Hancock seriously misled the House of Commons on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 Matt Hancock, in his role as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care made a statement to the House of Commons.

The Hansard record of Mr. Hancock's statement is here:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/38D462B1-70F8-4CC6-AABD-2CCF4E271C34/WuhanCoronavirus>

Mr. Hancock stated,

“The public can be assured that the whole of the UK is always well prepared for these types of outbreaks”.

That is demonstrably untrue.

The UK had no credible policy to protect the Public Health from a novel respiratory virus with the characteristics of SARS-CoV-2.

Indeed, the “United Kingdom Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011”, the UK's current pandemic strategy document envisages deaths measured in the hundreds of thousands!

Mr. Hancock seriously misled both MPs and the public, not least in that he concealed the predictably deadly effect of a New Disease Risk of the kind caused by SARS-CoV-2.

Neither MPs nor the public could find in the totality of Mr. Hancock's words on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 any indication that the Government's “policy” was, in effect, a “Mass Deaths Policy”.

I suggest that, following the construction of a detailed timeline as suggested earlier, that the Committees recall Mr. Hancock to give further evidence as to the basis for his false claims to the House of Commons on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 and his failure to examine the question of whether a “Decisively Closed Border Policy” could have saved tens of thousands of lives in the UK.

Mr. Hancock in his statement on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 explicitly relied on advice from the Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty.

Professor Whitty should be asked for the evidential basis for the assertion that the “UK is always well prepared” for emerging respiratory diseases.

I suggest that Professor Whitty should also be asked when he first knew that hundreds of thousands of deaths in the UK from Covid-19 was possible. Did he inform Mr. Hancock before the statement on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 that hundreds of thousands of deaths in the UK from Covid-19 were possible?

***(21 June 2021)***