

ANDREW MARR SHOW

29TH NOVEMBER 2020

LISA NANDY

(Please check against delivery (uncorrected copies))

AM: Lisa Nandy, welcome. Now, good news really this morning: infection rates are down, the R rate is below one, things are looking up. Are you going to vote for the government's new restrictions, the new tier system, on Tuesday or not?

LN: Well, we very much share the view that there need to be public restrictions. It's good news this morning but I think we're still very concerned, particularly in parts of the north of England like mine about the pressure on hospitals. So we don't share the view of those Tory backbenchers that you can just let this virus rip through the population with the damage that that would do. But we want clarity from the government on two things: first of all is this sufficient to get control of the virus – we're meeting the Chief Medical Officer tomorrow afternoon to discuss that – and secondly, whether people will actually be able to comply with this. At the moment only 11 per cent of people who are asked to self isolate through the NHS app are actually able to do so, many of them not eligible for a one-off payment to help them do that. We need to see proper support put in place so that people can comply otherwise we could end up in a worse situation in January, and nobody wants that.

AM: It sounds as if you are leaning towards voting with the government but you want more economic help as the price for that. If you don't get that will you still vote with the government?

LN: Well, look, our support is not unconditional. We will act in the public interest, so we need to know first of all that these measures are tough enough in order to get control of the virus, otherwise what we're asking businesses to do is go through significant pain, people laid off, some businesses at risk of collapsing, without

being able to show that this is worth it, that it will actually set us on a path to recovery in the future.

AM: I'm sorry to labour this, but if you don't get those assurances will you try and vote this down or not?

LN: Well, it's not too late for the government to come forward with those assurances, and we're not in favour of rejecting public health measures – just remember, Andrew, this is a straight up-or-down vote, it's these measures or no measures, but we want to know that the government is coming forward with that help. And that's the basis on which we'd vote for them.

AM: Parsing your answer, it sounds to me very much as if you will definitely vote for these measures. Now, you say the Conservative Party is divided, which it certainly is, but so is your own party. Your colleague Kat Smith says, 'the reality is that Lancashire should have multiple different tiers of restrictions because we're a very diverse county and we look in different directions.' There are a lot of Labour MPs, including members of the Shadow Cabinet, who are very unhappy about this.

LN: I think – I mean, everyone in the country is quite unhappy at the moment because this has been a very difficult process. I had a briefing with one of the health ministers on Thursday, and there are a lot of Conservative MPs and some Labour MPs who are asking those questions about their own areas. The reason that we have asked the government to publish the criteria on which these decisions are made is because if people don't feel that these decisions are fair and that all areas of the country are being treated fairly, I don't think people will follow them. Just remember that in parts of the country like mine people haven't been able to hug members of their family for four months now. So if we're going to ask people to do this we need clarity about that criteria. The government wrote to MPs overnight – I'm not sure Labour MPs have got that letter yet, but I think Conservative MPs might have – to say that they're going to publish that criteria, but it's

very, very vague. I mean, one of the measures, for example, is pressure on the NHS. We need far more clarity about what that means. The reason that I'm committing to vote for these measures is because we're not convinced at the moment that they are either sufficient or workable. It's not too late for the government to convince us of that, but that's what they've got to do in the next 48 hours. They haven't even published the regulations yet, let alone the economic or health impact assessments. They say they're going to do that in the next 24 hours. We want to see them, and we want the government to come forward to make that this does actually work and get control of the virus.

AM: But given everything that you've said, can you really bear to vote these measures down, in which case there'd be no restrictions at all and some kind of free-for-all in course? I put it to you a lot of people look at the Labour Party's position and simply don't believe that in the end you won't be voting with the government.

LN: No, we've never voted against health restrictions all the way through this virus. It's been absolutely clear that we need health restrictions. Some of the restrictions that we've got now we need, frankly, because the government wasted the summer. They still haven't got control of test, trace and isolate, and that's where we are where we are. And we wish that we weren't, we shouldn't have been here, we repeatedly warned the government about that. But given that we are, we're certainly not going to set our face against health restrictions that are recommended by SAGE and by the scientific advisers. What we want to make sure is that they're actually workable.

AM: If these restrictions go through and cases carry on rising – which is possible – will you vote for another national lockdown, do you want another national lockdown in the new year?

LN: No, what we want the government to do is to make sure that the measures that they take this week are actually sufficient to get control of the virus, that people are able to comply with them, and we want them crucially to use time to fix test, trace and isolate. I was asked to self-isolate a few weeks ago, and having been through the experience myself I can tell you absolutely that this is not working, that the messages that you get are very confusing. I was given several different dates until which I had to self-isolate. I'm fortunate that I'm not in a position where I stand to lose my job if I don't go into work, but many of my constituents are. It's a very, very difficult thing to do, and I only got a phone call ten days in to ask if I was in need of any additional support. I mean, this just isn't working?

AM: But these are the very same strict measures that you as a party are calling for.

LN: We're working for a workable test, trace and isolate system, and one of the reasons that we've said for months now that the government has to take this away from these national contracts and call centres and hand it to public health directors is because public health directors are actually far better at reaching the right number of contacts and working with local authorities to put support in place for people who have to self-isolate. They've had months to do this, they just haven't done it. And if they don't do it now, then what we could see is with winter flu coming, winter falls coming, we could see ourselves in a much worse situation in January, and nobody wants that. That's why we're saying to the government you've got 48 hours, please get this right.

AM: Talking about this new tier system, the tougher tier system, Matt Hancock told the Commons that, 'unfortunately,' he said, 'we did see the impact of a the number of cases going up and continuing to go up in those areas where local leaders were not working alongside us.' And course Manchester is still in tier 3 and Liverpool, which worked much more closely with the government

LISA NANDY

is in tier 2. Do you think, candidly, that Andy Burnham let down Manchester?

LN: No I don't. I think that Matt Hancock clearly has a particular personal problem with Andy Burnham which at times I felt was quite bizarre, but is not really helpful at all. Local authority leaders and Andy Burnham met regularly with ministers and with scientific advisers to try and get this right for Greater Manchester, but all the way through had said, 'look, we've had restrictions for a very long time here and we need help.' Liverpool got the mass testing pilot; that seems to have had some success as well. We've been asking ministers will we get additional support here in Greater Manchester so that we can actually make sure that people can comply with this. I that is the responsible thing to do.

AM: Okay. Alright, Lisa Nandy, thanks very much for getting up and joining us this morning. Much appreciated.

(ends)