Twitter Thread by Jon Worth



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Next week is shaping up to be one hell of a week in ■■ politics

It all revolves around parliamentary sovereignty, Tory party shenanigans, and Johnson's need to survive and if that contradicts with doing the right thing

Bear with me - this is messy but important

1/12

Why will it be hellish?

We *know* that there will be a vote on Coronavirus Tier system on Tue 1 Dec, with the system to come into force from the end of 2 Dec

There *might* be a Brexit Deal at the start of next week as well, and Johnson having to OK it or not

2/12

Coronavirus first

I am not well placed to judge whether the Tier system is right (don't @ - reply me about that), but it's enough to say there are 3 grounds for critique
- do lockdowns work?
- does THIS lockdown system work?
- has my town/region been harshly treated?

3/12

Those are enough grounds for plenty of parliamentary opposition on the Tory benches, and on opposition benches too.

Labour could easily justify voting against in that some of the judgments on Tiers are not strictly based on the science

But what does voting *against* mean?

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Were the vote lost, there would be little or no actual practical consequence regarding the Coronavirus restrictions - as discussed with Adam Wagner the government would almost certainly table Regulations using its emergency powers instead

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https://t.co/Djlx8oQH5r

> Yes they could table new regulations and could use the emergency procedure so that parliament doesn't have to vote on them until 4 weeks later. So the govt has a lot of leeway (legally if not politically)
>
> — Adam Wagner (@AdamWagner1) November 27, 2020

Backbenchers would then sit down with Ministers to work out what system would be appropriate, and a further vote would presumably then happen some days later

But that makes Tuesday's vote - above all - an opportunity to give Johnson a bloody nose. It's a free hit

6/12

And then... possible BREXIT DEAL! ■

In the middle of a very political & symbolic fight over Corona restrictions. And like on Corona, Tory backbench power to stop a Deal happening is low - not least because Labour will abstain or even back a Deal. The damage is political.

7/12

Or - putting it another way - just at the moment Johnson would need his backbenchers to be at their most docile and not make a fuss about a Brexit Deal (presuming Johnson were to want that), those same backbenchers are going to be fuming over the Corona Tiers

8/12

There are no nice ways out here. The question is whether Johnson can risk loosing so much political capital in a week.

If Johnson were to cede to backbenchers on Corona now - e.g. loosening or reallocating Tiers - Labour wallops him for being anti-science. Not handy.

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If Johnson cedes anything to the EU in the Brexit negotiations his backbenchers wallop him for not being able to deliver the ■ they think they are getting.

Ceding on Corona might help him get more backing for a Brexit Deal.

10/12

A hard (No Deal) line, or further absence of decision on Brexit, might help him on Coronavirus.

But getting his Corona Tiers approved, *and* getting a Deal acceptable to the Tory backbenches, is going to leave Johnson looking politically heavily battered.

11/12

If Johnson's prime motivation is his own survival - rather than the actual health or the economic health of the country - what does he do?

It's not a simple choice!

12/12

P.S. There is some discussion about whether the date / time for the end of the national lockdown in tweet 2 is correct - see this for example https://t.co/x8LvxZcz8W
This does not change the essence of my argument here though!

> Interesting -- you say "come into force from the end of 2 Dec", though the official guidance says "The new rules will come into effect from the beginning of Wednesday 2 December" (less than 28 days since they started "from 00:01 on Thursday 5 November"!) https://t.co/A56qt7rYVt
>
> — Matt Sendorek (@matt_sendorek) November 27, 2020