

The paralysis of political decision making has to be ad...

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One of the things that should be obvious about the Covid 19 crisis has been how relatively easy it has been to get data, and so to predict the required reaction to it.

Scientists were able to foretell the crisis that we now have in the NHS, and demand action on it weeks ago. That there was going to be a second spike requiring lockdown was predictable months ago. And yet in both cases reaction happened too late, with profoundly serious consequences.

Why make the point? Because the comparison that can be made with the climate crisis that we face is horribly uncomfortable. Scientists know that the climate crisis requires action now. The consequences of the failure to act are entirely foreseeable. The consequences of not acting are dire, as they have proved to be with Covid 19. And still prevarication takes place.

As we face new lockdowns in England for many weeks to come the Covid 19 crisis feels very real. But although I have no confidence at all in the government's ability to roll out vaccines in the timescales they predict I do also accept that if properly administered in the dual doses that are licensed for use then vaccines do provide a way out of this problem, at least with regard to its medical consequences.

There is, however, no vaccine for climate change. Nor will there be. There is only a need for changed behaviour, a massively changed economy and a new structuring of how we manage our priorities and lives, all of which will take time to achieve, which is why the process should be starting now.

But that process is not starting now, even though it is a way to rebuild after what has now happened as Covid 19 has brought destruction to the economy we have. There is, in fact, hardly any sign that this process will really start at any time soon.

Instead what is clear is that political management is now about delaying clearly required action until no other option is available and a decision is unavoidable, by when it is, by definition, too late.

This political decision making process is delivering substantial numbers of excess deaths from Covid 19 now.

If repeated with climate change, as seems to be entirely foreseeable at present, the impacts could be very much more serious.

The paralysis of political decision making is already costing lives. It may get very much worse.

There are people who know these decisions are required. And there are people who know what needs to be done. But there is an obstacle, and it is the politics of populism, now afflicting both the largest UK political parties, neither of whom now seem capable of delivering any form of effective political leadership.

Even my bottomless well of hope is being challenged right now.