

# Prolonged lockdown will ‘trigger a rebellion’

## People need to get back to work, says Lord King

[Philip Aldrick](#), Economics Editor  
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Lord King of Lothbury, the former Bank of England governor, said the if the lockdown went on for too long there could be a backlash among the young



The government needs to set out an exit strategy for the coronavirus crisis because a lockdown that lasts for months is unrealistic and will damage the economy, Lord King of Lothbury, the former Bank of England governor, warned yesterday.

Lord King, who led the Bank during the 2008 financial crisis, said that an indefinite shutdown would hurt younger generations and would cause mental health problems. If it went on too long, “there will be a rebellion against it” among the young, he added.

He was speaking at a “webinar” organised by the Policy Exchange think tank, in which Lord Darling, the former Labour chancellor, and Lord Macpherson, former permanent secretary at the Treasury, warned that taxes would rise to repair the public finances once the pandemic is over.

Public debt is projected to rise above 100 per cent of GDP, from its present 80 per cent, as the government borrows as much as £200 billion this year to save businesses and cover workers’ wages while the country grapples with the deepest recession in almost a century.

The longer the lockdown goes on, the more economic damage it will cause and the more taxes will have to rise, the peers said.

Lord King, 72, said he recognised that quarantining was essential, but there would be a backlash if it went on too long. “The idea that we can simply maintain this lockdown for months and months on end according to the development of the virus is unrealistic,” he said.

“The lockdown itself is creating damage. It can be to the mental health of people who lose jobs and the younger generation for whom we’ve cancelled their university education.

“The lockdown should not be permitted to stay indefinitely because of the damage it will do. The government needs to find an exit strategy and it may need to examine methods by which those people who have had the virus are able to travel and go to work.”

Lord Darling, 66, said that the government urgently needed to think about an exit strategy, which would involve “testing the population as a whole” so that people are able “to go out and about, to return to work”.

Lord Macpherson, 60, said that he was watching carefully the experience of Sweden, which has only limited restrictions in place.

Taxes would have to rise, he added. “The sheer cost of the crisis is going to result in a lot more debt, so we are going to have to tax people more. In the end this has to be paid for.”



Lord King, former Bank of England governor, Lord Darling, the former Labour chancellor, and Lord Macpherson, former permanent secretary at the Treasury, took part in the webinar, warning that taxes would rise to repair the public finances

Lord Darling warned that “at some stage this is going to have to be paid for” and urged the government to improve the delivery of its support for small businesses, workers and the self-employed.

“The hard bit is delivery. One of the best things the government can do is try to reduce the damage that will have to be paid for, which is why I emphasise the delivery,” he said.

Lord King said that the banks should ensure that their branches were open so that small businesses could talk to staff about loans. Bank branches are on the list of essential services that are excluded from the lockdown, but many have closed.

Lord Darling and Lord Macpherson said some services would change for good. “The death knell of the railway franchising system has been sounded very clearly. It won’t go back to what it was because patently it didn’t work,” Lord Darling said. Lord Macpherson said that the government would probably end up “owning a few airlines”.