

Economy Minister welcomes funding commitment for Economic Recovery Action Plan

Economy Minister Diane Dodds has welcomed the commitment from the Executive to provide £286.8million in additional funding to deliver her Economic Recovery Action Plan.

Statement on Executive decisions

Today, the Executive discussed its ongoing implementation of the Pathway out of Restrictions, and ratified the following decisions coming into effect from 12 April:

Getting things done – Hazel Drive #dundeewestend



A resident recently advised me :

'I wonder if anything can be done about the lane leading from Hazel Drive, near Hazel Gardens, to Perth Road. The area by the drains is totally blocked by leaves and mud. When it rains, the path becomes a mini river.'

I took this up with the Roads Maintenance Partnership and have now been advised that the local roads inspector has since checked the gullies at the top and bottom of this footpath and they are now clear.

Our local environment manager has been asked to ensure the leaves in the path are removed.

[John Redwood's Diary](#)

John Redwood's Diary

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com> Speaking for England Wed, 31 Mar 2021 13:59:41 +0000 en-GB hourly 1 <https://wordpress.org/?v=5.6.2>

Early years teaching reforms

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/31/early-years-teaching-reforms/>
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Wed, 31 Mar 2021 13:59:41 +0000

[Early years teaching reforms](#)

All MPs have received the letter beneath from the Schools Minister concerning early years teaching which I will share with you for interest:

Reception Baseline Assessment and Early Years Foundation Stage reforms

I am writing to inform you that we are proceeding with the introduction of the new

Reception Baseline Assessment and the Early Years Foundation Stage reforms on a statutory basis from the start of the 2021/22 academic year. The necessary legislation will be laid before Parliament today. I would also like to take this

opportunity to provide a reminder of the purpose and aims of both and why they are

being introduced at this time.

As you will be aware, following the cancellation of primary assessments in summer

2020/21, the Government announced its intention to run a full programme of primary

assessments in the 2021/22 academic year, including the introduction of the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment. This assessment was due to be introduced as statutory in September 2020, but due to the impact of the Coronavirus

pandemic on schools, the 2020/21 academic year has instead been an "early adopter" year. For the Early Years Foundation Stage reforms, academic year 2020/21 was also an early adopter year as planned, ahead of planned statutory rollout from September 2021.

Reception Baseline Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to act as the starting point to measure the progress schools make with their pupils between Reception and the end of primary

school. It will be administered as a short, teacher-mediated, age-appropriate assessment covering material that many pupils will already be familiar with,

and will be carried out in normal teaching time using materials and guidance provided. The assessment will assess all children on-entry, accounting for any impact on their education up to this point. The new progress measure will ensure schools are recognised for the work they do with their pupils, in particular for those schools with a challenging intake and those who have been significantly affected by the COVID19 pandemic. Additionally, the Reception Baseline Assessment itself will provide valuable one-to-one time with each child, particularly during those important first weeks. It is also important to note that its introduction will mean that statutory assessments at the end of year 2 (Key Stage 1) will be made optional, lessening the overall assessment burden on schools, lightening teacher workload and giving them greater flexibility on how best to carry out end of year assessments. A factsheet which clears some common misconceptions regarding the Reception Baseline Assessment is attached at Annex A.

Early Years Foundation Stage reforms

The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet. This includes curriculum, assessment and health and safety requirements.

Following the Government's response to the Primary Assessment Consultation in 2017, we developed, piloted and consulted on reforms. The two overarching aims are to improve outcomes for all children at age 5 and to reduce practitioner and teacher administrative workload so that more time can be spent interacting with children in their care.

An independent review of the reforms pilot was published by the Education Endowment Foundation and NatCen in 2018 and the Government then launched a full public consultation on the proposed changes. The consultation concluded on

31 January 2020 and received 2,452 responses.

The pilot report and consultation responses informed the final reforms, which are as follows:

- Revisions to the educational programmes, which form the high-level curriculum for children in the early years.
- Revisions to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile assessment, which takes place at the end of Reception year to make the Early Learning Goals clearer, more specific and easier for teachers to make accurate judgments. The 'exceeding' assessment criteria will also be removed from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to ensure a focus on supporting all children

to reach the expected level before year 1, and there will no longer be a requirement for local authorities to externally moderate these judgements in schools to reduce bureaucracy and free teachers up to spend more time interacting with children.

- A change to the safeguarding and welfare requirements to promote good oral health.

Over 3,000 early adopter schools have been implementing the reforms since September 2020. The reforms will serve as an important platform to help children

catch up in key areas such as communication and language and personal, social and emotional development, which are important now more than ever in the context of COVID-19.

Preparedness of schools and early years settings

The Department believes that early years settings and schools will be able to prepare appropriately to implement these two reforms. Extensive preparatory work has been undertaken to enable the reforms to proceed, while the third period of

national Covid-19 restrictions has reduced infection rates, and the parallel vaccination rollout is progressing well. Schools in England have returned to full

attendance since 8 March.

In addition, in acknowledgement of the impact of disruption on schools and early

years settings up to this point, the Department has announced a range of recovery

support and is developing longer term plans. The Department also recognises the

key role of these reforms in supporting children who have spent extended periods

of time out of their nursery, school or childminder setting this year. The reforms aim

to improve outcomes for all children in early years settings, particularly disadvantaged children, and to provide a powerful basis for supporting children's

catch up from the implications of COVID-19. Reception Baseline Assessment reforms will have a less immediate impact on catch up but remain essential to the

Department's aim of creating a better progress measure to improve school performance and reduce attainment gaps in the long-term.

We believe it is the best approach to proceed with the reforms, given the policy goals

of the Department and the momentum built up in the sector. We also believe it is

right to take and communicate a final decision now, in order to give much needed

certainty and ensure early years settings and schools prepare for statutory implementation. The Department will ensure overall workload demands are managed, including inputting to wider discussions on burden on schools and early

years settings in 2021/22 to ensure the Department accounts for the introduction of

these reforms.

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Locally Sourced Food

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/31/locally-sourced-food/>
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Wed, 31 Mar 2021 05:42:14 +0000

[Locally Sourced Food](#)

I recently wrote to the main supermarkets about customers being able to buy more locally and UK sourced food. I have received the enclosed responses from Morrisons, Tesco and Asda which they said I could share with you. I am happy to reproduce the other replies if they wish when I receive them. I encourage any UK based food retailer to do a good job selling and promoting UK produced food. They are in alphabetical order. Tesco gave the most rapid response.

Asda

"Thank you for your email regarding British sourcing. As a company established by a group of

Yorkshire dairy farmers, this is an important issue for Asda.

We keep our fish sourcing under review, but due to the need of having to maintain a

sustainable supply, this does sometimes come from overseas. However, we do support small

suppliers, such as Downies of Whitehills Cullen Skink and ScottyBrand Smoked Salmon.

Some of our seafood is UK sourced, including Atlantic Herring, Mackerel and Edible Crab.

We have a dedicated local sourcing team, who enable small suppliers to supply Asda stores,

including the facility to be stocked in a single local store. This covers a wide range of different products.

As you may be aware, Asda has recently had a change in ownership. With this change, we

have pledged to source 100% British beef, 100% British dairy and increase our sourcing of

bread wheat to 100% British.

You may be interested in the results of a recent customer insight survey we carried out,

where we asked about attitudes to buying British. This showed a divide in attitudes depending

on age, with 56% of 18-34 year old customers saying it is important, rising to 81% of 55+. The

overall importance of buying British was listed as the eighth biggest issue

for our customers,
with them viewing recycling, reducing food waste and tackling antisocial
behaviour as their
biggest issues.
While this does show differing attitudes towards British sourcing, we are
keen to do all we can
to support small British suppliers throughout our stores, and constantly keep
sourcing under
review.”

(their survey showed 76% thought buying British was important.)

Morrisons

“Morrisons is committed to buying British and giving our customers a great –
and growing – choice of locally sourced food and drink.

We are the nation’s largest fresh food manufacturer and operate our own
abattoirs, food manufacturing sites, and produce pack houses. We have
recently added to this capacity with the acquisition earlier this month of
Falfish, a family-owned processor of sustainably sourced seafood based in
Cornwall.

For customers, this acquisition will mean further improvements to the range,
quality and availability of fresh fish and shellfish at our in-store
counters. Following the deal over 80% of Morrisons fish and shellfish – both
in our 497 stores and in our online business – will come from Morrisons
wholly-owned seafood operations (Morrisons already owns two seafood
processing sites close to the docks in Grimsby).

This deal is a real commitment to the South West fishing industry which we
believe will benefit the local economy as well as offering our customers an
improved range of freshly caught fish and an investment in our in-store
fishmongers.

You also asked about local produce. One of our core priorities is ‘local
integration and serving the community’ and we have made positive strides on
this in recent years. Prior to the pandemic, our buyers were touring the
nation and hosting ‘local foodmaker’ events which offered local producers the
opportunity to showcase their products. Through our ‘local foodmaker’
programme we have now surpassed a key milestone of 1,000 new, local products
(from 220 local suppliers) which we have sourced from 37 events held across
Britain in the last few years. This programme continues although with the
onset of Covid we have been forced to hold events online.

Many local food producers are continuing to expand their geographic reach
through their relationship with Morrisons and more of our stores have local
products on offer. As an example, our store at Lake, Isle of Wight, is one of
our most integrated stores so far, stocking locally supplied milk, cheese,
cream, coffee, eggs, meat, tomatoes, biscuits and garlic.”

Tesco

“At Tesco, our ambition is to be British agriculture’s most trusted partner, helping to secure a successful future for farming, food and fisheries.

As part of our commitment to a competitive and productive UK agriculture sector, we’ve set up a number of Tesco Sustainable Farming Groups (TSFGs). The Groups, led by our suppliers, farmers and Tesco colleagues, are organised by sector and are central to our work of building long-term relationships with our farmers. We’re also supporting new entrants and young farmers through our Future Farming Foundation, which each year provides 50 young farmers from across the UK and Ireland with guidance, support and training.

In store customers will find that all of our milk is British, sourced from British dairy farmers who are guaranteed a fair price for every pint through our Fair for Farmers Guarantee. We support our dairy farmers through the Tesco Sustainable Dairy Group, which was the first of the TSFGs to be set up in 2007, and now represents the largest group of dairy farmers working with a retailer directly. In addition to this, 100% of our beef, chicken, eggs and cheese is British and Irish. Alongside this we have a dedicated local sourcing team to evaluate and identify locally-sourced products, which are then sold in store – giving customers access to top quality, British products.

Recognising the demand from our customers for homegrown, seasonal produce, we work with trusted growers across the UK to deliver this all year round and include our Best of British Union Jack on packaging to help customers identify fresh fruit and vegetables which are 100 per cent homegrown. We are also using this partnership approach to foster innovation across all sectors, including our Incubator Programme which is helping suppliers to grow their brands and bring new, innovative products to market.”

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Vaccine diplomacy

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/30/vaccine-diplomacy/>
<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/30/vaccine-diplomacy/#comments>

Tue, 30 Mar 2021 05:06:58 +0000

[Vaccine diplomacy](#)

The UK is likely to have a substantial surplus of vaccine doses over home needs, thanks to its early and substantial actions to help firms develop and produce them including placing advance orders. The UK success also included working with Astra Zeneca who came up with the cheapest vaccine on offer and promised to sell it profit free, thanks to the UK taxpayer backing the project in its early days. It is perhaps understandable that some other countries, some higher charging companies and the EU are jealous of this success.

The UK took a big risk, as no-one could be sure which companies if any would succeed when the UK made investments and offered contracts. As a result of good choices the UK will have substantial supplies of vaccines from other companies as well as Astra. This will allow the UK to offer many millions of doses of various vaccines to others. The issues arise, which countries should we choose and on what basis should the additional vaccines be supplied?

There is a case to be made to supply some of our surplus free of charge to low income countries who did not have the rich country advantages of a strong domestic industry to develop the products, or the cash to forward order in quantity. This would be a good use of our overseas aid budget, paying for the vaccines from that source. It is difficult to see why we should similarly supply free to any higher income country that would like our diverted orders. There is a case for charging them what they cost us. Some might argue we should charge them a higher market price. In the case of Astra product that would raise the issue should any part of a UK taxpayer profit be shared with Astra who otherwise have a break even price, and might raise issues for Astra about their promises over general pricing and supply. There is also the issue of what criteria we should use to select the countries that we help. I suspect many UK taxpayers would be unhappy to help any country that had recently imposed trade bans, restrictions or sanctions on us or who had tried to undermine the reputation of Astra product. I would be interested in views.

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Emmbrook School becomes an Academy

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Mon, 29 Mar 2021 15:46:50 +0000

[Emmbrook School becomes an Academy](#)

I have received official confirmation from the government that Emmbrook School will be an Academy from April 1 2021 . A funding agreement has been reached between the government and the School. I wish the school success from its new status.

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Time to move on from EU policies

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Mon, 29 Mar 2021 05:03:04 +0000

[Time to move on from EU policies](#)

Let us remind Ministers that in U.K. government the civil service provides continuity. They will carry on energetically implementing past policies until the Cabinet or a Minister with the authority tells them policy is changing. It is the job of Ministers to propose new directions, argue them through against civil service objections and sell them to Parliament and the public.

In a few areas Ministers have seized the initiative and changed policy from the overarching EU laws and decisions which came to dominate most areas in recent years. The notable decision to opt out of the EU approach to vaccine development and procurement shows what can be done. Yet in all too many other cases Ministers are still to change and improve the EU approach which governs.

The Treasury for example has still not removed VAT from a range of items where the U.K. thought it wrong impose the tax. Why is there still VAT on boiler controls, heat pumps, drought excluder and insulation for starters? Why are we still reporting under the debt and deficit rules of Maastricht? Can't we have a pro growth anti inflation framework of our own to replace Maastricht austerity rules?

At DEFRA we still await details of how the U.K. is going to rebuild its fishing fleets and take control of our fish, catching sustainable quantities and landing them in the U.K. At Business there is no sign of a better regulation Bill to slim and improve the vast annals of EU legislation, some of which the U.K. opposed or wished to improve when first drafted. Pledging high standards is good, but improving the way they are defined and enforced would also be good. At the FC0 There is little riposte to the abuses of trade between the EU and ourselves, particularly on the island of Ireland. We still do not have new procurement rules, nor a better self reliant energy policy.

We did not leave the EU to preserve all its legislative works from the outside. We left to make things better. Some Ministers need to alert officials to the huge opportunities which Brexit can bring.

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Honda leaves Swindon – a cameo of our time

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Sun, 28 Mar 2021 05:15:42 +0000

[Honda leaves Swindon – a cameo of our time](#)

The immediate reason why Honda is closing its Swindon car assembly plant is the lack of demand for its cars throughout Europe. The company's sales in Europe peaked in 2007 at 313,000 and is now under half that. Contrary to referendum rumours their closure has nothing to do with Brexit. They are also ceasing production in Turkey and do not want any production in Europe for the future.

The second reason is the EU/Japan trade deal. The prospective ending of 10% tariffs on imported cars from outside the EU will make Japanese produced Hondas in future 10% cheaper. Why not make them in Japan and get greater economies of scale from manufacturing there where they need output for the home market as well?

Which brings me to the third reason. Honda needs to launch new models that are all electric for the market of the future. This requires a complete rethink on how you make cars and where you make them. Honda will put its battery capacity into Japan and get the economies of scale there for the European market production at the same time.

This Honda story is a warning to the UK and to other established centres of car production in Europe. The transformation of the car means new plant and new equipment and may well mean a different pattern of industrial location as a result. Brexit was never a threat to the UK car industry. Electrification is. For the UK to keep its current level of capacity and to grow its industry it needs to take bigger strides to invest in and control the raw materials, component production and assembly of the electric cars of the future given the determination of the USA, EU and UK governments to force this transition. Until enough people freely buy electric cars this means the industry investing in advance of demand and government offering suitable assistance to help make the new products more affordable and acceptable to customers.

Meanwhile the Honda factory will become warehouse space. Let's hope it will not just be filled with more imports.

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President Biden drives the EU to a more aggressive foreign policy

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Sat, 27 Mar 2021 05:06:37 +0000

[President Biden drives the EU to a more aggressive foreign policy](#)

President Biden's more diplomatic approach towards the EU comes at a price. Last week the USA persuaded the EU to put its name to sanctions against

Chinese officials and to make a statement condemning China's treatment of the Uighur Muslims. The EU had been negotiating an Investment and Trade Agreement with China, and had been careful not to criticise China's approach to human rights. The 5 Eyes grouping of the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand had been more outspoken and Australia had borne the brunt of Chinese denials, rebuttals and complaints.

The US Secretary of State also made it crystal clear that the USA remains implacably opposed to the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, despite it being almost finished. He stated it was a "bad idea" for the EU as well as for her western allies. He added to Trump's strategic criticisms the added criticism that the project gets in the way of EU climate change objectives as well, a new US sensitivity which the EU is meant to share. The USA under Biden has more time for allies, but expects them to rally round a new aggression towards both China and Russia. President Biden dislikes these states. He alleges they undertake state sponsored cyber disruption, interfere in western elections, fail to uphold human rights for all and are building up their military power whilst creating a series of client states. The German model of doing plenty of business with Russia and China is being put under some strain. For her part China is testing out both Biden's power and the cohesiveness of the western alliance. The trends are clearly towards a US led system and country grouping, and a Chinese led one. Biden's team are trying a tough public stance on political matters, whilst trying diplomacy to settle some of the trade issues with China in private. I would be interested in your comments as well on where the UK should now position its foreign policy towards China.

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Restore our freedoms

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<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/26/restore-our-freedoms/#comments>

Fri, 26 Mar 2021 05:09:37 +0000

[Restore our freedoms](#)

Yesterday I was one of a few MPs who voted against a six month extension to the powers of the Coronavirus Act. I did so because I wish to hold the government to its promise of an end to lock down this June. I did so because I think the powers are too sweeping. We need to restore our liberties and let people make judgements for themselves about their conduct and their health risks. I did so because I do not think government can protect us from all harms, and has to avoid taking so much action against one threat that it leaves us vulnerable to other threats.

I and others will continue to question and to seek to persuade the government to remove this raft of restrictive measures. Without the Official Opposition

also opposing we lack the votes to change things, but we have voices and public support which we need to represent.

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The UK's migration proposals

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Thu, 25 Mar 2021 05:09:32 +0000

[The UK's migration proposals](#)

I reproduce below a letter sent by the Home Secretary to all MPs and peers, as I thought it best you read the government's statement and respond to their proposals:

New Plan for Immigration

We have today published the New Plan for Immigration – our landmark programme to deliver the first comprehensive overhaul of the asylum system in decades.

UK asylum claims increased by 21% to almost 36,000 in 2019 – the highest number since the 2015/16 European 'migration crisis'. Small boat arrivals to the UK reached record levels with 8,500 illegal arrivals last year.

At the same time, our ability to remove individuals with no right to remain in the UK is being undermined by repeated legal claims designed to impede removal action, often strung out over a period of many years. The vast majority of last-minute claims designed to prevent removal are subsequently found by the courts to have no merit. Shockingly, there are around 45,000 failed asylum seekers who have not left the UK and over 10,000 Foreign National Offenders – and yet there were just 7,000 enforced returns in 2019.

All of this impacts our ability to help those in genuine need by taking up scarce resources and wasting valuable judicial capacity.

We have already reformed our legal immigration system by ending free movement and introducing a new points-based immigration system. This plan is the next step in taking back control of our borders by tackling illegal immigration.

Our New Plan for Immigration has three main objectives:

1. To increase the fairness and efficiency of our system so that we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum;
2. To deter and prevent illegal entry into the UK, thereby breaking the business model of the criminal trafficking networks and protecting the lives of those that they endanger; and

3. To remove more easily from the UK those with no right to be here.

At the heart of this plan is the principle of fairness. Access to the UK's asylum system should be based on need, not on the ability to pay people smugglers.

For the first time, how someone enters the UK will impact on how their claim progresses and on their status in the UK if that claim is successful. As we clamp down on illegal immigration and abuse of the system, we will also streamline the asylum framework to prevent repeat claims which frustrate removal, including of dangerous Foreign National Offenders.

We will increase prison sentences for those illegally entering the UK, introduce life sentences for facilitation of illegal entry, give Border Force additional powers, strengthen age assessments and introduce a more robust statutory definition of "well-founded fear of persecution" for asylum purposes.

At the same time, we will enhance our reputation as Global Britain, strengthening our safe and legal routes for refugees and fixing historic anomalies in British Nationality law.

The proposals are fully compliant with our international obligations, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the Refugee Convention and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

These reforms are explained in more detail in the policy statement, which we have published today. To inform the proposals set out and ensure we can deliver effective change across the system, we have also launched a public consultation and a wide-reaching engagement process. We will use this opportunity to listen to a wide range of views from stakeholders and sectors as well as members of the public, followed by legislation at the earliest opportunity.

You can find the policy statement and consultation portal at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-plan-for-immigration>.

I look forward to hearing your views on our New Plan for Immigration, and hope that you will strongly encourage your constituents to take part in the public consultation so that the voice of the public is heard.

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My Speech during the Second Reading of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill, 23 March 2021

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/24/my-speech-during-the-second-reading-of-the-advanced-research-and-invention-agency-bill-23-march-2021/>

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2021/03/24/my-speech-during-the-second-reading-of-the-advanced-research-and-invention-agency-bill-23-march-2021/#respond>

Wed, 24 Mar 2021 11:08:16 +0000

[My Speech during the Second Reading of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill, 23 March 2021](#)

Of course I welcome the idea that we should do everything we can to promote greater science and better technology. Our country has a fine history and tradition of scientific breakthroughs and scientific excellence in our universities and our scientific societies. We also have a fine tradition in technology, with entrepreneurs developing new industrial processes and new products and making great breakthroughs that have benefited humanity widely, and of course we should do everything we can to support that. There may well also be a gap that this body can fill between all the methods we have of backing science and technology, and I wish it every success.

In his introductory remarks, the Minister pointed to the recent great success of universities, companies, medics, scientists and Government in coming together—here and elsewhere, but particularly here—on the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine. Why did that work? Because there was a very clear, defined task. There was great excellence and expertise already in companies and university science, and the Government helped to bring that together, to pump-prime the process and then to provide very large orders, as did other Governments and health services around the world, to make it worthwhile and to defeat the virus.

Now, we hope that do not have too many of those concentrated needs, but that model worked without ARIA, so this body has to define something a bit different from that. I notice that MPs are already discussing the adequacy or inadequacy of its resources, by which they usually mean money. I do not think it is possible to have any idea of what would be a good and realistic budget for it until talented people have been appointed to run it and have set out what it is trying to do. The first thing the Government need to do, therefore, following the success of this legislation—I am sure it will pass quite easily—is to appoint really great people to lead this organisation who just have that feel, that touch and that intelligence to judge risk, to sense opportunity, to see where the niches are and to define the unique breakthroughs and areas where this body can make a serious contribution. As some have said, a scattergun approach is probably not going to work; trying to do too much across too broad a spread would require a lot of good fortune. This body will need some targeting.

ARIA then has to work out how it commercialises whatever it produces. The UK has had a century or more of plenty of breakthroughs and technical innovations, but in quite a lot of cases we did not go on to commercialise and exploit opportunities, and we allowed others around the world to adapt patents or take the underlying principles and develop their own products, making many more jobs and much more commercial success out of these things than we did. The leaders of this body therefore need to ask how they will commercialise the ideas, how big a role that will play, and at what point

they will work with commercial companies that could come in and take advantage.

That leads on to the issue of security. I do not think British taxpayers want to spend more money on blue-sky research and interesting technical ideas only to see them taken away, perhaps resulting in many more products for the Chinese to export back to the United Kingdom. What we want is that integrated approach, where the ideas that the Government have helped to pay for through this body, working with universities and perhaps with companies, can go on to be commercialised and add to the stock of wealth and jobs and make a wider contribution to the human position.

I suggest that the Government link the development of this body to the work that they have started to do, and they need to do much more widely, on national resilience. I am an admirer of what President Biden has set out to do in the United States of America on supply chains. He has a very ambitious programme—a 100-day programme for targeted sectors and a one-year programme for all the sectors of the US economy. It is looking at what America can do better, at where America needs to fill in gaps in her knowledge and understanding of patent, designs and specifications, at where America needs to put in new capacity to avoid shortages or more hostile powers interrupting her production processes by withholding import, and at where the Government machine can use intelligent procurement, appropriate grants and interventions to work with the private sector to have a much better supply chain, creating more jobs and providing national resilience.

I hope that the agency will look at what we can do to ensure that we make our weapons and defence requirements, as the new policy suggests that we will do more often. It should look at how we can grow more food and make sure that we have more of our own fish so that we have fewer food miles and more national resilience in the food chain. It should look at a series of industrial areas where we have in the past been very successful to see where we can improve the technology and add to the UK capacity to produce.

My suggestion to Ministers is that the first task is to get really excellent people; the second is to work with them on defining realistic and achievable objectives; and the third is to ensure that the agency is properly resourced—£800 million might be the right amount, but if the agency comes up with really worthwhile things that look as though they will work, we will want to back it with more money. If it was not getting very far, I think a number of MPs who say that they do not mind failure would become rather more critical. This will need quite a lot of ministerial and parliamentary supervision. I wish the agency every success, and I look forward to hearing to more detail about what it is trying to do.

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