

China's warning

China has decided to suspend her not very demanding emissions targets as the country needs to keep the lights on. In a major reversal just before COP 26 the world's largest producer of CO2 has had to urge full out production and purchase of coal to generate power. Any idea that the creator of 27% of the world's manmade CO2 was about to reverse the growth in her carbon output has been forced out by the reality that she needs coal to keep the factories turning and the homes heated and functioning. In Germany the CDU is trying to keep coal alive until 2038, with the CDU government in the Rhineland approving new large strip mining activities, owing to the unreliability of wind power on the German system.

Governments keen to decarbonise need to recognise that their prime duty is to keep the lights on and the factories working. It is not a good look to end up with emergency power cuts and the need to dash for coal to avoid disaster. Our very sophisticated societies, hospitals, schools and homes rely completely on electricity to power them or to operate the controls, lighting and communications. It is even more important now to have enough capacity for all conditions and eventualities.

I repeat my request of government that they make putting in more electricity capacity an urgent priority, choosing methods of generation that balance the current mix and provide resilience. I also want to see us produce more domestic gas and biomass materials to cut the costs and fuel use currently taken by importing LNG and wood pellet and to add to our options for power generation.

Levelling up is about people more than about public spending

I reproduce below a piece I published recently on Conservative Home:

I'm all in favour of levelling up. Our country needs all the talent it can get. I want more people who have bought their own home, found a good job, built their own business, developed a passion for dance or sport or entertainment.

I want a society where snobbishness is a thing of the past and where the plumber is as valued as the accountant and a food delivery driver as much as a health worker. We need a reliable water supply and food in the shop every day. These are important tasks.

The recent battle to recruit a new army of truck drivers should be seen as a

prime case where we need to level up. We have seen years of decline in the numbers of people wanting to be long distance and heavy lorry drivers. A lack of concern by some employers over facilities for breaks and overnight stops, coupled with relatively low pay and long periods away from home, has made it difficult to recruit younger people and women.

During lockdown the online retailers needed a massive expansion of van deliveries for their offers. They were able to attract drivers to smaller vehicles with more flexible hours and better pay. The closures and shortages across Europe reduced the numbers of migrants willing to work for less with poor conditions.

The UK needs to attract back the qualified HGV licence holders and early retired, those who have swapped jobs in pursuit of better pay, and train a new cohort of truck drivers. Large employers and government need to remedy the defects of the conditions with more lorry parks, with better facilities for breaks and overnight stops.

Pay needs to go up, as it did when tube drivers used their negotiating muscle to require the public sector to pay much higher rates for a job than an HGV driver gets. There should be a new respect for these drivers now people see how dependent their own lifestyle is on the timely delivery of everything from food to petrol.

Levelling up is about people as well as about place. Indeed, if enough people in a given town make a success of their business or company careers their extra spending power will bring the extra investment, new services and better shops people would like to see.

Conservatives should not try to define levelling up in Labour terms. They place all the emphasis on levels of public spending. Levelling up to them is more about place than people. Buy the town a new heavily subsidised tram system, put in more public sector community centres and provide new school and surgery buildings and the place will be levelled up. If only it were that cheap and easy. They stress the amounts of money rather than what we get for it.

Of course it is right that improving the quality of the public estate and helping with communications and connectivity can help. Any MP knows they have to argue the case for the new school or the improved road for their patch.

That is not the same as thinking if we just double the public sector spend lives will be transformed. To have a self sustaining wealthier community requires government helping the many. They need to reap better rewards from work and to get access to the qualifications and opportunities it takes to own your own home, have some money in the bank for a rainy day and to have a working life that commands respect.

It all begins in the schools. Inspired teachers can help every pupil find that spark, that thing they love and wish to excel at, that drive to be positive about life and its numerous chances. It requires discipline, as you only get good when you practise a lot.

Aims need to be stretching but achievable, built up as a child progresses. It moves on to the choice of apprenticeship or degree. Some break from academic education because they are already sure of their ambition to be sports people or entrepreneurs or performers whose path in life after leaving school requires their full attention to the chosen course.

Government can of course help. It needs to redouble its efforts to make it easier for people to set up their own business, and to go on to recruit their first employees. It needs to make it easier and more affordable to buy your own home. The attack on the self employed through IR35 was unhelpful, The new tax on jobs is a bad idea. Getting a mortgage is not easy. Government contracts could be made available to more smaller companies to give them a chance of getting one through break down of quantities required through multiple suppliers.

Where place and people come together is in planning decisions. Places the Government wants to level up need more homes for people with good jobs and businesses of their own. Many have more freedom over where to live now we are moving into a hybrid world of working. More people with good qualifications and earnings help boost a community and provide more demand for others to meet.

A relatively affluent community like Wokingham is not affluent through more public spending. We are at the bottom of the tables for public spending per head in the main services. We are well placed in the relative prosperity and good place to live tables because they keep on sending so much investment in expensive homes for people to live in who have levelled themselves up through qualifications and good jobs.

Conservative Conference

For those interested I am speaking at the following meetings on Monday 4 th October

13.00 Bruges Group on the future of Conservatism with 3 other speakers

Science and Industry Museum

Liverpool Road

Manchester M3 4FP

18.30 Politeia

Making the most of Brexit

with Jacob Rees Mogg, David Jones and Barnabas Reynolds

Novotel Manchester Centre
21 Dickinson Street M1 4LX

More help for families in need- the Council will have access to new fund

This new support fund, at least half of which will help families with children, will bolster existing measures we have introduced for low-income households, such as increasing the national living wage, the rise in the Local Housing Allowance, expanding the £221 million Holiday Activities and Food which will be offering nutritious meals and enriching activities to disadvantaged children this Christmas, doubling free childcare for eligible working parents and increasing the value of Healthy Start vouchers by over a third. The Fund also sits alongside the Warm Home Discount which provides a £140 rebate on energy bills each winter to over 2.2 million low-income households and the Cold Weather Payment which provides £25 extra a week for poorer households when the temperature is consistently below zero. Please direct constituents in need of support to their local council who will be able to help them access the Fund. The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving £79 million on top of the £421 million for England.

Letter from the Department of Work & Pensions Minister

I have received a letter, reproduced below, from the Minister at the Department of Work & Pensions.

Dear Colleague,

COVID-19 SUPPORT: FOCUSING ON AND INVESTING IN OUR JOBS RECOVERY

Over the past year, the UK Government has helped millions of people as part of its Plan for Jobs to protect, support and create employment. As we emerge from the pandemic and learn to live with COVID-19, we remain focused on creating new, better jobs, and helping people gain the skills they need to succeed. More people are getting back into work, the number of payrolled employees has returned to pre-pandemic levels and there are record levels of vacancies. This is a tribute to the British people and businesses and a testament to our comprehensive and unprecedented £400 billion package to support people and businesses through the economic shock from COVID-19. Despite the biggest recession in 300 years, our support package has helped to safeguard jobs, businesses and public services in every region and nation of the UK, demonstrating it was right to provide exceptional support while widespread COVID-19 restrictions were in place.

The temporary £20 uplift was an important part of the measures we took, helping people facing the greatest financial disruption, specifically those who came onto Universal Credit because they saw their hours reduced and incomes fall suddenly as a result of pandemic restrictions. We have always been clear that this was a temporary measure, responding to extraordinary circumstances. In line with other emergency support it helped to protect livelihoods through the worst of the pandemic. With most restrictions lifted and with record numbers of vacancies, it is right that we now focus on, and invest in, jobs and improving the prospects for those already in employment as we bring these measures to an end.

The Government recognises the importance of giving people time to prepare for a change in their income. Which is why DWP has been proactively communicating this change with claimants. In July, we updated the UC statement to show claimants they have been receiving an additional £86.67 a month in response to the pandemic. In August and September, we notified all claimants via two separate UC journal messages that this temporary measure would be coming to an end. These messages outline the date of their last payment which includes the uplift and

signposts claimant's to organisations who can help with budgeting, and additionally to the "Universal Credit: help with managing your money" guidance on GOV.UK. Our Work Coaches have been supporting claimants on changes to the uplift during appointments, as well as signposting claimants to additional support if it is required. We have also increased the number of people on the telephone helpline and are monitoring phone lines and UC journal entries to identify vulnerable claimants who may need further support.

We will issue a final statement change to inform claimants that Assessment Periods ending on, or after, 6 October 2021 will not include the £20 per week uplift.

We recognise that some people are worried about the cost of living, which is why as well as helping people move into better-paid work and to progress in work, we are also continuing to support people with the cost of living and put more pounds into the pockets of low-income families. This includes raising the National Living Wage, doubling free childcare, supporting households at risk of fuel poverty through the Warm Home Discount, increasing the value of Healthy Start Vouchers and through the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. In addition, our new Household Support Fund will make £500 million available to local authorities during October to help the most vulnerable households with the extra costs of this winter. The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving up to £79 million of the £500 million.

For those who require further assistance managing their money, the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) provides free and impartial debt advice, money guidance and pension guidance through their MoneyHelper service which can be accessed at www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en. Individuals who require help managing payments, credit or loans could also access breathing space through debt advisors if they are eligible.

As our recovery gathers pace, the Government is continuing to help people into work and increase their earning potential – the most sustainable route to financial security and the best route out of poverty. We're investing billions through our Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. With over a million vacancies in our labour market and more than 27,000 Work

Coaches are helping people get into work and improve their prospects. We've got dedicated programmes helping those of all ages; Kickstart for young people; JETS for those directly impacted by the pandemic; SWAPs helping match talent to opportunity by switching sectors; and Restart for the longer term unemployed. But, our support isn't limited to those seeking work – Work Coaches are able to help those already in jobs with extensive training opportunities and other support to boost their hours and further their employment prospects.

With the economy rebounding, and backed by our Plan for Jobs, we have a unique opportunity, to help people move into new and better paid jobs, progress in their existing job, raising their earnings and building their financial resilience. We are dedicated to these tasks as we build back better and fairer.

DAVID RUTLEY MP
MINISTER FOR WELFARE DELIVERY