

# Paying the bills

I see in the press stories about alleged tensions between the Treasury and the PM's Office about the magnitude of future bills and the affordability of the government's programme. I agree with the PM that the U.K. should be willing to pay to support the economy, individuals and business all the time some jobs are banned and businesses shut to contain the pandemic. The Treasury largely did this but was unhelpful to some small businesses and the self employed for no good reason and is reluctant to continue the support for the delay in Freedom day. The budget deficit last year was very large but came out well below Treasury forecasts. It is highly likely it will contract quickly as soon as we have a full and vigorous recovery. Threatening tax rises or ill judged spending cuts now will delay recovery and might worsen the deficit.

It is however important the Treasury provides a voice for value for money and for sensible priorities on spending. Let's look at a couple of the alleged battles looming up.

The first is the issue of the next upgrading of the Retirement pension. The Conservative Manifesto promised to maintain the triple lock, which says the pension will go up by the largest of 2.5%, inflation or average wages. Most of us Conservative MPs want to keep the promise. This April wage growth hit 8.4%, showing how distorted the figures are by the affects on the base from lockdown and massive shedding of lower paid jobs during the emergency. Most people have had nothing like a 8.4% pay rise. Maybe as we see the next few months figures some of the distortion will unwind, removing the anomaly. Maybe the July figures which will be used for the September pension updating will still flatter.

If the Treasury wants to rid itself for one year of the wages part of the triple lock then it needs to tell us why and what it thinks would be a fairer figure. It should consult and trust the public. It should not simply insist on tearing up a Manifesto promise. It would need to set out what it thinks the underlying increase in wages and living standards is adjusted for the distortions on the CV 19 labour market and see if enough of the public agrees before venturing change. Clearly recent figures for wages are not a good representation of a general increase in income which the triple lock was designed to copy for pensions.

We also read that the Treasury is not in favour of a new U.K. ship to help represent us diplomatically and commercially around the world. The capital cost is modest relative to the HMG capital budget and the costs will be spread over several years. The vessel must be built in the U.K. which would generate some offsetting tax receipts. It is strange the Treasury did not sort this out before No 10 briefed all the main outlets and released an illustrative picture. Sometimes you should be bold and spend a bit to boost future business and influence. Such spending would be better than a bigger advertising budget for example. The Treasury could find more offsets.

The big changes that come from ending lockdown must result in early and big savings. Ending all the special support measures and cutting back all Covid related spending should make a big difference. Implementing the ideas I and others have put forward to get more discipline and control into quango budgets would also help. Controlling public spending is hard graft and lots of detail. The Treasury needs to work away at raising productivity and getting better value for money whilst not cutting priority spending on health or education or promoting a strong U.K. recovery.

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## [Conservative voters want the right kind of green policy](#)

The voters of Chesham and Amersham sent a message to the Conservative party. It is a message they have been trying sending in other ways for a long time, and one that is shared with many other constituencies in Conservative England. They want a green Conservative policy that is relevant to their lives, landscape and locality. As Conservatives we all wish to conserve and look after the best of our local natural world. We understand our relationship with fields, farms and forests and the need to treat them well. The voters do not welcome excessive new housing development taking away their countryside. In Chesham and Amersham they have long fought against the way HS2 will cut swathes through their open spaces and woods and leave many of them living close to a very noisy fast train line.

The battle of greenery will be the defining one of our age. The Conservatives will not be able to outbid the Greens and Liberal Democrats, parties in opposition, when it comes to tougher action to cut carbon and match ever more difficult targets. A carbon target is easy for those not in office, and very difficult for those in power who need to persuade or force millions of people to change their behaviours to deliver. The way Conservatives can reassure most that we are the party of good green is to set out a new and positive green agenda.

First the government must show how we will limit excessive migration and too many demands to build more homes. We believe in treating people well that we welcome into our country, including helping them with good housing. There has to be a limit on how many we can accommodate, given the shortage of good housing and the need to cater for the wishes of the many already legally settled here for better provision for them and their families. The current pace of housebuilding in the most popular areas is unsustainable whilst the need is very great. If hundreds of thousands of new people come every year to join us that is a lot of extra housing.

We need to demonstrate an intuition about what people will do for the green cause. We can make common progress with the many by encouraging, incentivising and promoting better home insulation. Lower fuel bills is a winning proposition. If the aim is to substitute dearer power for cheaper power, and more interruptible power for reliable power, it will be a difficult sell. The government still hasn't even removed the EU's VAT levy on insulation materials, boiler controls, draught excluder and the rest. Surely that would help promote the virtues of keeping warm whilst burning less energy. The public reluctance to take up smart meters should worry the government, as these are offered free. People see little advantage for them for the work that has to be done in their home. They already know how much power they are consuming, and what makes the most difference to their bills. Social media is full of chat that may be misinformed fearing that a smart meter will lead to differential pricing by time of day and even temporary removals of power as the authorities seek to balance a system with more interruptible wind and solar power, and with more heavy demands from car battery recharging and electric heating.

The emerging government agenda to be kinder to animals is a positive. We are a nation of animal lovers. There needs to be some commonsense about how far to go on rewilding with the introduction of dangerous species to areas people may wish to use for recreation or food production. There is considerable support for the government passion to plant many more trees. Many a Conservative would rather have a wood nearby than another housing estate. As the trees grow we should also encourage sustainable forestry. It is a disgrace that we import so much of our timber needs, often from colder countries where the growing times are longer. The government could be greener by offering to cut the wood miles. The economy would be stronger for producing more of our own material for roof trusses and floors, fuel for biomass electricity plants and timber for furniture.

At the heart of the new agriculture policies being set out following our exit from the Common Agricultural Policy the emphasis is all on nature. I am in favour of encouraging areas of wildflowers, good hedgerows and attractive woods and coppices. I am also very keen on cutting the food miles. For too long we have been dragged into dependence on continental food at the expense of our domestic agriculture. Our dairy industry was kept small by shortage of quota, our fruit industry was offered grants to grub up our orchards to replace Cox with the Golden delicious. Our market gardening industry for flowers and vegetables was undercut by the Dutch and others, with arguments over subsidies and the price of gas to heat glasshouses. Defra should as a matter of urgency bring forward support systems to encourage a big expansion of our domestic capacity to grow fruit, flowers and vegetables, and to expand our meat and dairy activities to reduce imports. Our competitors use a range of trade barriers and subsidies to benefit them. Our market share has fallen a lot in the last fifty years. Today there is strong

demand for more UK produced food which super markets are struggling to meet. Note how anything home produced sports the Union flag to reassure, and note how anything from the continent has its origin in small letters with no national or EU flag to entice us, presumably for fear of deterring those who want domestic produce. More fields honestly tilled and more orchards full of fruit would add to the beauty of our landscape.

I have no problem with an electric revolution, but it can only proceed with popular consent. That means working with the private sector on the better and cheaper ways of travelling and heating that electricity might afford us. It also means proceeding at a pace which ensures we have enough electric power to meet the needs of the buyers of the new electric products. The UK has been pushed into dependence on importing electricity from the continent. We should be self sufficient and building extra capacity to allow for growth. Staying short of power and dependent on unreliable imports points to higher prices and disruptions ahead. We need more hydro and pump storage to smooth out interruptible power and more biomass for baseload based on UK wood pellets.

In Australia and in Canada in their 2019 General elections the left of centre parties went too far with their decarbonisation proposals. People dependent on fossil fuels felt threatened, and voted instead for the Conservatives who took a more moderate line. We need to learn from that. Transitions have losers as well as winners and they have votes and rights. An opposition party can demand the closure of all traditional vehicle factories and the end of North Sea oil and gas. Government has to decide what happens to replace them and what happens to all the people who would lose their jobs by being on the wrong side of change.

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## [A Better regulated future?](#)

The government has this week published the special review 3 MPs and officials carried out into the opportunities to reduce the regulatory burden and to have smarter regulation.

I agree with their main recommendation that future regulation should be proportionate and not based on the precautionary principle of EU regulations. I also agree Regulators should take into account competitiveness, competition and innovation. Regulations can benefit from

partial exemption for innovative developments and trials.

I welcome the wish to abolish the 2019 Ports Directive which was agreed by the UK ports and government at the time be a needless extra burden on them. I also support amending the Weights and Measures Act to decriminalise and authorise the use of imperial measures if people wish.

I would liked to have seen other proposals to make life simpler and cheaper for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

I would include for example

1. **Raise the VAT registration threshold to lift more small businesses out of VAT. It is a major burden setting up a new VAT system for a small business, and a disincentive to growth.**
2. **Take VAT off domestic fuel to cut fuel poverty and boost spending power of those on low incomes**
3. **Remove VAT from insulation, boiler controls, new heating systems, draught excluders and other green products. Installing more of these is labour intensive and helpful.**
4. **Remove need for a person paying full NI on earned income to claim deferral of extra NI on other earnings every year. This is a waste of time and government effort when no tax is due.**
5. **Reverse M and S decision in ECJ allowing grouping of EU continental losses to cut U.K. Corporation Tax. HMT should like this as it will collect more tax from U.K. successful businesses.**
6. **Remove Digital Tax imposed unilaterally and await G7 or OECD agreement on how to tax digital activity other than through normal business taxes. This tax is leading to tariff retaliation from the USA, raises little money and causes trouble with on line/in shop retail hybrid businesses.**
7. **Raise the Business rate exemption for smaller commercial property**
8. **Exempt a self employed person from Employer NI for their first employee for the first two years. We need to grow more self employed businesses and create more jobs**
9. **Remove threat of IR35 changes**

## **ENERGY**

**10. Remove expensive requirement on energy companies to install Smart meters. Let them and their customers do so if they wish. This is a £20 bn public spending commitment which is causing energy businesses difficulties as well.**

**11, Revise UK energy policy to give greater priority to self sufficiency of electricity and to ensuring a safe margin of capacity as we used to enjoy.**

**12 Change generation mix by introducing more lower cost supply through a bidding process, as we need lower power prices for the onshoring of industry to the UK and more self reliance. The UK needs more biomass or green gas as baseload and can do with more hydro and pumped storage for flexibility. Too**

much reliance on wind is both costly given the need for backup and leaves us vulnerable on capacity on low wind days.

## **BUSINESS**

13 Speed up introduction of Freeports and make sure they have high levels of exemption from customs, taxes, and property restrictions.

14 Create new Enterprise Zones, including in conjunction with Free ports.

15 Change procurement rules allowing more UK only bidding for UK government contracts, as with MOD.UK government purchases should be much more UK rich in choice of goods. Why does the UK public sector import any cars?

16 Develop the vaccine model where UK government backed a research project, helped with installation of production capacity and then had preference for purchasing product.

## **FISHING**

17 Ban EU vessels fishing for shellfish in Class B waters in response to their ban on our exports

18 Step up policing of UK fishing rules on foreign vessels

19 Ban supertrawlers over 100m in length

20 Get DEFRA to roll out faster, better and more generous plans to step up UK domestic fishing capacity in both sea going vessels and processing fish

## **FARMING**

21 Inject more attention to promote more food production in the UK into new subsidy schemes

22. Speed up schemes to install more market gardening capacity into UK to produce our own temperate fruits and vegetables, and to extend the growing season under glass and polytunnels

23 Ensure tree planting schemes and subsidies are also linked to much more sustainable forestry to produce timber for home use. Why do we import timber to burn at Drax power station? Why don't we produce more of our own wood for housebuilding and furniture fabrication?

## TRANSPORT

**24.Reimpose road charge on foreign lorries using U.K. roads to help domestic haulage**

**25.Repeal the limitations placed on the Merchant Shipping Act by the ECJ, and develop a better framework for UK owned and registered ships. We need to encourage more UK flagged vessels.**

I attach the check list from the Report of their suggestions. I would be interested in comments, as government will now consider all this. Many of their proposals takes the form of additional regulation for new areas which they wish to see done in a spirit of assisting the development of these areas. It would have been helpful to have some worked up proposals of how this might work.

THE Annex A: Full list of recommendations

A BOLD NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE UK

1. Promote productivity, competition and innovation through a new framework of

proportionate, agile and less bureaucratic regulation.

1.1. Reimpose the 'one in, two out' regulatory duty on all government departments.

1.2. Make the UK a global pioneer and leader in agile, adaptive regulation to increase productivity, competition and innovation.

1.3. Create a lead Cabinet Minister and ensure there is a Cabinet Committee responsible for the implementation of regulatory reform.

1.4. Mandate a new "Proportionality Principle" at the heart of all UK regulation.

1.5. Use digital sandboxes to test innovations more quickly and ensure regulation

is based on evidence of impact.

1.6. Regulators should introduce 'scaleboxes' to provide agile regulatory support

to high growth innovative scale-up companies.

1.7. Give regulators statutory objectives to promote competition and innovation in

the markets they regulate.

1.8. Delegate greater flexibility to regulators to put the principles of agile regulation

into practice, allowing more to be done through decisions, guidance and rules rather than legislation.

1.9. Give the Regulatory Reform Committee a remit to scrutinise all regulators and

regulatory reform proposals. Bolster its resources, including with seconded experts, to carry out this expanded function.

1.10. Include consideration of the wider effects of proposed policies in Regulatory

Impact Assessments, including on innovation, competition, the environment, and trade.

1.11. Establish a framework for regulators to report publicly on how they have

promoted competition and innovation in the markets they regulate.

1.12. Produce a simple annual innovation scorecard to assess departments and regulators on the markets they are responsible for.

1.13. Embed our recommendations in the UK Innovation Strategy, use non-legislative and existing regulatory powers where possible and make use of targeted primary legislation.

1.14. Set a UK standards strategy to promote the use of British standards internationally as a way to boost UK influence and promote trade and exports.

## SECTOR PROPOSALS

### UK PENSIONS AND INVESTMENTS

2. Reform regulations limiting UK pension and insurance funds to enable greater investment in UK domestic growth.

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2.1. Enable Defined Contribution (DC) pensions schemes to diversify their investments into venture capital and businesses that drive Net Zero and levelling up commitments.

2.2. Amend matching adjustment and risk margins in Solvency II to release significant capital for investment in the UK.

2.3. Attract private investment to help regenerate local infrastructure and support the UK's levelling up agenda.

### UK START-UP AND SCALE-UP FINANCE

3. Amend the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) and the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) to maximise Private Equity and Venture Capital investment in growth industries.

3.1. Amend the age eligibility requirements for companies to access investment

through EIS and SEIS to ensure businesses outside London and the south east benefit equally.

3.2. Increase the maximum level of SEIS investment.

3.3. Commit to the continuation of EIS beyond 2025.

### FINANCIAL SERVICES

4. Restore a common law principles based approach to financial services regulation.

4.1. Amend inherited MiFID II Position Limits to introduce greater flexibility while preserving protections on critical contracts.

4.2. Introduce a more discretionary and judgment-based approach to calculating

Central Counterparty Clearing House (CCP) margins.

5. Deliver a regulatory framework that supports UK global leadership in FinTech

and digitalisation of financial services infrastructure.

5.1. Mandate the expansion of Open Banking to Open Finance quickly, and take a

more market-led, Australian-style approach.

5.2. Increase competition in the banking sector by adopting a graduated regulatory approach for challenger banks.

5.3. Reducing Anti-Money Laundering (AML) burdens for new Open Banking/Fintech services, which have been caught in the scope of the EU

AML Directive.

5.4. Accelerate UK plans to develop a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and launch a pilot within 12 – 18 months.

6. Amend disclosure and transparency requirements for financial services products to make them more proportionate and less burdensome.

6.1. Remove the requirement to provide costs and charges reports to professional investors and eligible counterparties from MiFID II.

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6.2. Remove the “investment recommendation” disclosure requirements from MAR for wholesale clients.

6.3. Confine the key information document disclosure requirement in PRIIPs to genuinely complex packaged products.

DATA

7. Replace the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018 with a new, more proportionate, UK Framework of Citizen Data Rights to give people greater control of their data while allowing it to flow more freely and drive growth across healthcare, public services and the digital economy.

7.1. Reform GDPR to give people meaningful control of their data.

7.2. Reform GDPR for artificial intelligence, including by removing Article 22 of GDPR and focussing instead on the legitimacy of automated decision-making.

SMART GRID

8. Create the ‘smart’ energy grid of the future, through interoperable data standards, reforms to the energy retail market, regulation, and licencing, and a new regulatory framework for smart appliances.

8.1. Support the deployment of low-carbon technologies on to8.2. Create clear consistent technical and regulatory standards for ‘energy smart’ appliances to support their roll out – creating a more stable energy network in response to growing demands for energy.

8.3. Modernise energy retail regulation to support novel and innovative participation in the energy market and improve consumer protections by using activity-based regulation rather than supply licenses.

8.4. Reform the regulation framework for the retail energy market to enable innovative approaches to tariff pricing and new products.

8.5. Prioritise investment in infrastructure in pricing negotiations with energy market operators.

NET ZERO

9. Reform the current UK regulatory framework governing energy generation and distribution to match the Government’s ambitions for green growth and Net Zero.

9.1. Fully implement the short-term findings of the Offshore Transmission Network

Review, reforming offshore transmission connections to support disruptive ‘pathfinder’ projects in the industry.

9.2. Reform the regulatory framework for offshore wind to simplify

responsibilities

across government, and create a more coordinated offshore network that uses standardised designs and can link with interconnectors at scale.

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9.3. Reform OFTO regulations to unblock industry coordination of offshore wind projects.

9.4. Review the Grid Code and other relevant technical codes and standards, to ensure they adequately support innovative net-zero and decarbonisation technologies.

9.5. Design and deliver an energy network 'blueprint' to support further delivery of offshore wind power.

9.6. Create a new regulatory framework for hydrogen via a new Office for Hydrogen in BEIS, encouraging investment and innovation in the sector.

9.7. Increase the legal limit on hydrogen blending by amending the Gas Safety1.5. Simplify and accelerate NIHR adoption and peer review process for trials that are fully funded with standardisation of costing tools across academic and commercial trials.

11.6. Streamline clinical trial set up by HRA adopting automated AI or digital processing of ethical and trials approvals.

11.7. The MHRA and HRA should accelerate the adoption of novel clinical trial processes through better digitising of trials applications and data and use of

novel models like UK Trials Acceleration Programme (TAP) and IMPACT with the capacity to deliver registration level trials.

11.8. Replace the Caldicott data guardians with a HRA Single Data Controller 'One-stop shop' for Health Research Information Governance with harmonised committees to reduce bureaucracy and standardise processes.

11.9. Establish a centralised health dataspine, where all data is stored for ease of

access by approved users across the health network, with standardised format and approval routes for data collection and curation.

11.10. Reform the ICH GCP Guidelines 1995 to embrace the latest novel digital and

biomarker end points, and replace 'standard of care' control arms with 'synthetic control arms' derived from RWE (Real World Evidence) and RWD (Real World Data).

11.11. Accelerate Access to innovation by establishing clear digital framework for

Conditional Approvals and Adaptive Licensing of new therapies like gene therapies based on data including from the new Electronic Patient Recorded Outcomes Measure (EPROMs) dataspine.

11.12. Expand the MHRA remit and Innovation Team to include promotion of UK leadership in innovative trial design, new accelerated access regulatory pathways, standardising format and approval routes for data collecting, curating and collation, and use of novel clinical and digital biomarkers and AI.

11.13. Set global Standards in Clinical Research Skills through a UK professional standard for clinical trials research nurses, clinical trial managers, data managers & clinical trials pharmacists.

11.14. MHRA to work with stakeholders to establish a UK Regulatory Innovation Hub

on the same model as the US Centers of Excellence in Regulatory Science<sup>14</sup>.

MHRA to work with stakeholders to establish a UK Regulatory Innovation Hub and Innovation (CERSIs).

11.15. Regulation of medical cannabinoids and medicinal CBD should move from the Home Office to DHSC / MHRA to create a regulatory pathway for assessment and approval based on patient benefit.

#### DIGITAL HEALTH

12. Establish a clear regulatory pathway for new digital health technology from

approved health apps to integrated healthcare ICS system management to ensure the UK is at the forefront of the digitalisation of healthcare.

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12.1. Remove the barriers to adoption of health apps by creating a new digital

health regulatory unit within the MHRA, responsible for establishing clear digital interoperability standards and an integrated regulatory pathway for development of Consumer Healthcare Apps.

12.2. Remove barriers to accelerate the integration of business-to-consumer digital

health, and create a simple regulatory framework to help new companies develop tools that recruit, diagnose and treat otherwise hard-to-reach patients.

12.3. Remove barriers to local health prevention through the new ICS by establishing a digital framework for assessing Disease Cost and Population Health by each local authority area.

12.4. Reform GDPR to improve use of healthcare data by establishing federated models of data sharing and creating a joint sandbox between the ICO and the HRA.

12.5. Update regulations on medical devices to represent the latest technological

advancements and to licence and adopt AI and AI software as a diagnostic device.

12.6. Remove the barriers to mental health apps by accelerating the integration of

business to consumer patient wellness apps like IESO Healthcare with clinical neuroscience research networks like the Case Register Information System and NIHR research databases like Incliseran to create an integrated UK digital health spine for mental health.

12.7. Extend the IAPT outcome measurement framework (or an IAPT like framework) to Children and Young People and to other therapeutic interventions (e.g. drug treatment) to be able to compare drug and non-drug therapy and conduct multimodal trials.

#### AGRI-ENVIRONMENT

13. Replace EU rules with an integrated agri-environment framework which better

supports the development of more environmentally sustainable agriculture, with more proportionate and evidence-based, outcomes-focussed regulation.

13.1. Promote a flexible, market based trading system for biodiversity offset credits.

13.2. Implement with urgency the data sharing provisions in the Agriculture Act

2020 to unlock data silos in agriculture and the environment.

13.3. Develop a comprehensive system of environmental metrics for sustainable agriculture, incorporating the environmental impacts of a production system from field to fork, to support clearer food labelling.

13.4. Develop a supportive regulatory environment to enable the development of

and increased use of agri-tech to promote sustainable agriculture.

13.5. Simplify compliance with environmental licensing and permitting requirements, with the aim of moving from a mechanistic compliance-based system toward outcome measurement.

13.6. Deliver a common-sense solution to transitioning chemical registrations from

EU to the UK REACH.

13.7. Introduce further exemptions to Annex XVII of UK REACH to allow the reuse

of products in support of the UK's circular economy ambition.

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13.8. Reform landfill surrender requirements to accelerate diversification away from

landfill.

13.9. Adopt a risk-based approach to waste regulation to drive greater re-use of

waste products.

13.10. Remove burdensome EU regulation on the animal feed industry, whilst maintaining rigorous safety standards.

#### AGRICULTURAL GENOMICS

14. The UK Government should actively support research into and commercial adoption by UK farmers and growers of gene edited crops, particularly those which help the transition away from agrochemicals to naturally occurring biological resilience.

14.1. Interpret current GM rules on a case-by-case basis, to permit specific crops

with proven benefits and which are consistent with the UK's rigorous standards on food safety and environmental protection.

#### SPACE AND SATELLITES

15. Through reform of the Space Industry Act, the Government should address the

indemnity and liability issues currently holding back investor confidence in the

UK as a satellite launch and operations hub.

15.1. Amend the Space Industry Act 2018 to cap liability and indemnity requirements for licence applicants to launch and operate satellites from the

UK.

15.2. Ensure the Civil Aviation Authority has the expertise to fulfil its new and

additional responsibilities as a regulator for the space sector.

15.3. Develop an Earth Observation (EO) data regulatory policy framework.

#### NUTRACEUTICALS

16. Create a new regulatory framework for the fast-growing category of novel health enhancing foods and supplements to promote investment in the UK as a leader in the nutraceutical sector.

16.1. Establish clear regulatory standards and definitions for 'nutraceutical products

and create a permissive environment for regulation of products with accepted science outcomes, to form a new easier nutraceutical product regulation pathway.

16.2. Encourage NIHR to gather data to support claims and enable research into

products medicinal and health properties, lead on international standardisations and ensure a pathway to market, so that consumers are aware of the health benefits and better able to make informed choices.

#### OTHER TARGETED REFORMS

17. Deliver other targeted regulatory reforms to reduce the regulatory burden on

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businesses.

17.1. Amend the Weights and Measures Act 1985 to allow traders to use imperial

measurements without the equivalent metric measurement.

17.2. Develop an optional e-labelling system for devices with screens or that can be

connected to a screen, to display compliance information.

17.3. Repeal the Port Services Regulation 2019 (SI 2019 No. 575) to remove unnecessary, EU-derived regulatory burdens on UK ports.

17.4. Liberalise parallel import laws to reduce prices and increase choice for

consumers.

17.5. Urgently review guidance on hand sanitisers so that tested, effective non-alcohol based sanitisers can be used

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## [Good to strengthen ties with Commonwealth friends](#)

The EU and Remain MPs always thought the argument in the U.K. was all about trade. They denied in the U.K. but not elsewhere that the true quest was for ever closer Union including full monetary, economic and political union. They tried to turn crucial arguments about democracy and national accountability into profit and loss items on trade account. They tried to ignore the high cost of belonging to the EU which was more than the likely cost of tariffs to trade on WTO EU terms as a third country. They insisted

on a lop sided view where a free trade arrangement with the EU was crucial but a free trade agreement with many other important trading countries was impossible as a member of the EU.

Since we left they still presume to lecture us with these views even though we rejected them many times as contradictory or untrue. They now seem to want to belittle or disrupt any trade agreement we negotiate with others, to validate their nasty view that we would not be able to do this on our own.

I remember all too many meetings or meals with leading representatives of continental members of the EU when they lectured and hectorated me for daring to oppose first the Exchange Rate mechanism and then U.K. membership of the Euro. More recently they have done everything they can to rubbish Brexit, instead of conforming with their Treaty which requires them to seek positive and friendly relations with neighbouring countries. Why didn't they respect our referendum decision and seek to keep our import market?

What a contrast with Australia and New Zealand. The U.K. left them in the lurch when we joined the EEC/EU , imposing EU tariffs against them and substituting EU food for the food they sent us. As soon as we voted to leave the EU the High Commissioners of both Countries made it clear to MPs that their countries harboured no grudges and saw this as a great opportunity to develop closer relations and free trade with each other again. Why shouldn't we switch more of our attention from the angry , legalistic and negative EU to friendly allied countries that wish us well?

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## [Answer to my Parliamentary Question on areas with labour shortages](#)

The Department for Work and Pensions has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (12056):

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to train more people to fill shortages in (a) HGV driving, (b) farming, (c) construction and (d) other areas with labour shortages. (12056)

Tabled on: 08 June 2021

**Answer:**

Mims Davies:

The Department is continuing to work with the Department for Education, Devolved Authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as other Government Departments to fill vacancies in construction, logistics, farming and other sectors, offering training for those who need it, and securing jobs directly for those ready to move into roles.

DWP's Sector-Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) helps employers to fill job vacancies in sectors with a high demand for workers. In the haulage sector we have been running SWAPs in partnership with employers and trade associations, including the Road Haulage Association (RHA) and Eddie Stobart Logistics, to deliver tailored training to our customers so that they can obtain their HGV licence and the skills they need to enter the logistics sector as a HGV driver.

In agriculture we have worked with DEFRA and key Trade Associations, including the National Farmers Union, to develop a regional recruitment strategy that utilises DWP's Jobcentre Plus network, fosters strong local links between employers and Work Coaches, and gives jobseekers the skills and knowledge they need to enter the sector.

In construction, DWP support the Construction Skills Delivery Group to improve and promote the existing range of training offers which include new occupational traineeships, T Levels, flexible apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, and free L3 qualifications for adults who do not already have A levels or equivalent.

The answer was submitted on 17 Jun 2021 at 15:54.