

Busting congestion

One of my favourite green policies is to ease congestion and get traffic moving smoothly without so much stop start interruption. We could save so much fuel and cut emissions substantially if vans, cars and buses could proceed at a steady pace more often. Allied to it is greater safety, through better modelled junctions with fewer frustrated drivers taking unreasonable risks.

I have often argued that roundabouts work much better than traffic light controlled junctions to maximise flows and minimise interruptions. Today I wish to share with you some work I have been doing on light phases, following careful observation of a large number of regularly blocked junctions with lights.

One of the common causes of delay is the four phase light set at a conventional crossroads. If we assume a 100 second complete set of phases for the lights then traffic from east, west, south and north have a green phase just 25% of the time or 25 seconds each way. Traffic from any direction can use that green phase to carry straight on, turn left or turn right when they finally reach the turning points. This means each direction of main road is not being used for 75% of the time, apart from turning traffic.

It would be much better if the lights were rephased so that most of the time east and west traffic have a green light for straight on or left turning, or north and south traffic have green for straight on and left turning. There should be short right filter phases, with one allowing north and south to turn right, and one allowing east and west to turn right.

If we allow 7.5 seconds for each of the two right filter phases, the primary east-west and north-south phases then operate for 42.5 seconds per 100 seconds instead of for 25 seconds. This gives us a 70% increase in road use or capacity across the junction, which will greatly cut delays and allow more smoother flows of traffic.

Another regular cause of delay at off peaks is lights turning red on main roads to allow access from lightly used side roads when there is no traffic present in them. All light sets allowing side road traffic onto a main road should have traffic sensors, with constant green for the main road unless traffic is detected, when the normal timings of phases would then kick in.

UK to grow faster than Eurozone

The IMF published their latest forecasts for growth yesterday as I opened the first debate in Westminster Hall this decade, choosing the topic of how to

promote faster growth. The IMF cut some of their forecasts. They also drew attention to how the monetary easing (other than in the UK) has led them to expect 0.5% extra growth world wide within their 3.3% forecast for 2020.

The IMF expects the UK to grow at 1.4% in 2020 compared to 1.3% for France, 1.1% for Germany and 0.5% for Italy and 1.3% for the Euro area as a whole. These are poor Euro area figures and are despite the Euro area enjoying a substantial monetary easing from the ECB. The UK could grow faster than that if the government and Bank of England took the actions I have been proposing.

The IMF shares many of the assumptions of the Davos internationalists, urging states to drive the green revolution faster. The IMF usually fails to forecast turning points, missing recessions until they are happening, and exaggerating negative consequences for any country not following the global agenda.

It is probably right to be so pessimistic about Italy where the Euro rules impede change and about Germany where the green policies are damaging the car industry. The UK should continue to outperform the Eurozone this year if pro growth policies are followed through.

[Update on the Australian Bushfires](#)

I have received an update on assistance the UK Government is providing to the Australian Government to help tackle the Australian Bushfires:

DOMINIC RAAB MP
Member of Parliament for Esher & Walton



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

16 January 2020

To: All Conservative MPs

Dear colleagues,

Australian Bushfires

Over the past four months bushfires in Australia have killed at least 28 people, displaced thousands more and destroyed over 2,000 homes. 11 million acres of land have been burnt and millions of people have been affected by poor air quality. This crisis has been devastating and our hearts go out to the Australian people.

I am sure many of you will have heard the Oral Statement given by the Minister for Asia and the Pacific on 9th January on this topic but I also wanted to take the chance to write to you to set out the support we are providing.

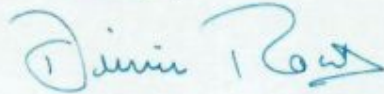
Early in the New Year, I reached out to my Australian counterpart, Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne, to offer our condolences and stress our readiness to provide whatever help was needed. The Prime Minister and the Minister for the Commonwealth, the UN and South Asia, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, have also been in contact with their counterparts.

The Australian government has been inundated with offers of assistance. Given that the UK does not have bushfire experience we can offer to Australia, last week we deployed an expert support and assessment team, made up of specialists from Defence, Health and Fire Services to ensure our assistance matches Australian needs with UK capabilities. The team included a senior member of the UK Fire and Rescue Service, a medical specialist in trauma and mental health and a military liaison officer. The team have been meeting with their Australian counterparts both in the central government and at federal level to establish the types, extent and duration of support that will be of most use to Australian emergency responders. This focused support has been welcomed by the Australian government.

We also stand ready to give further support to Australia, including to address the environmental and ecological impact of the bushfires. Over a billion animals are thought to have perished, and there are concerns that some species found only in certain areas of Australia may have been wiped out altogether.

Australia is one of our most valued allies, partners and friends. We stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the people of Australia. Our approach will ensure that we give them the help they need in the best way we can. We will do all that is possible to help them respond to and recover from this tragic situation, and we are in close contact with the Australian government to provide this support.

You sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dominic Raab". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end of the name.

THE RT.HON. DOMINIC RAAB MP

Domestic production and state aid

As we leave the EU we need to create our own approach to preventing unfair competition and avoiding unacceptable subsidies. The very wide ranging EU regime under the control of the Commission and Court can be too long winded and unfair itself.

There are some industries which can benefit from exit from the EU once we can change the rules. Fish is the most obvious which I have talked about before. As we take control of our fish stocks again we need to stimulate a larger domestic fishing fleet to capture a much larger proportion of a smaller total catch. This in turn can act as a means of creating a larger fish processing and related food products industry.

Farming too can be given a domestic boost by leaving the restrictions of the CAP and providing a system of financial support which encourages more domestic food production.

When we leave we will also be able to strengthen our domestic capability to provide the weapons, vehicles and protection that our armed forces require from their suppliers. When the government wishes to buy naval vessels or aircraft or body armour or small weapons the competition should preferably be organised for domestic producers so that the technology and ability to scale up production rests here in the UK should need ever arise created by a larger conflict. We can rebuild parts of our defence industries that have been run down in recent decades as a result of smaller budgets and shared procurement.

Where we wish to buy good products from allies that are already available we should seek the capacity to make them in whole or part under licence, to have access to the technology, or have an alternative we can control in the event of disagreements. Of course there are benefits from sharing ideas with allies and from buying from each other, but there needs to be fair give and take and satisfactory arrangements to ensure we have the ability to replace and repair the weapons in any circumstances.

Going for growth

It needs to be easier to set up a business, to work for yourself, to take on your first employee, to find new premises and to expand a larger business. All these barriers to growth need examining and changing if we are to achieve the government's ambitious target of 2.8% growth from here. Today we need to look at the regulatory framework and the relationship with government.

The government has rightly made clear it has no wish to lower employment standards or weaken health and safety and other essential protections. There remain many opportunities to make life easier for businesses without making it worse for employees or neighbours.

More freeports offer the opportunity to run a business which brings in imported raw materials and components, transforms them into goods and export them without having to pay tariffs and taxes until you sell them on and make a profit. It cuts down the paperwork and promotes lower cost production.

More Enterprise zones allow business to obtain better capital allowances or business rate relief. They could also offer simplified planning and access to cheaper land with permissions.

As the government steps up its funding of science and technology in schools and universities, it should also encourage university/business collaboration and offer contracts which foster business spin off from research. The very successful Oxford and Cambridge clusters of research and business parks can be replicated elsewhere and grown everywhere.

The government will want to improve FE, technical and vocational training and ensure accessibility for all ages and experience levels. Training a better workforce is central to raising productivity which allow higher pay and the fulfilment of more individual ambitions.