

[A Wokingham debate](#)

I was disappointed to learn we still do not have a debate scheduled for all five parties to set out our positions. I repeat my enthusiasm for such a debate and my willingness to find a different date and time if the original proposal is difficult for two of the candidates.

[The pound has been rising](#)

There has not been a lot of media comment, but the pound has risen from 1.06 Euros to 1.17 Euros since August and from \$1.21 to \$1.29. The commentators say this has happened thanks to opinion polls implying a Conservative government that can get Brexit done.

Indeed, its not so far off the Euro 1.23 and \$1.37 levels it was at just before the referendum. Since then we have seen a worldwide strengthening of the dollar against most currencies, to do with US interest rates being a lot higher than Euro area, Japanese and UK ones.

Prior to the referendum and any suggestion we might leave the EU sterling hit a low of 1.04 Euros in 2009. In the 1980s sterling was well below current levels against the dollar whilst in the EEC.

There has been a lot of nonsense talked about sterling and Brexit. Sterling has fluctuated substantially against both the dollar and the Euro all the time we were firmly in the EU. Interest rate differentials, different outlooks for growth and inflation all have an impact, as does relative money policy. Once out of the EU sterling will doubtless continue to go up and down according to relative sentiment about our economic policy and valuations as it has done during our long time in the EU.

[Issues in Arborfield and Wokingham](#)

During my walks and talks with voters this week I have found continued interest in the national campaigns and in the alarming contents of the Labour Manifesto. There is concern we could end up with a Labour led government in a hung Parliament. People fear the large spending increases would result in higher taxes and unsustainable debts.

There have also been detailed questions about local planning and transport

matters and about school funding. I answered these in line with the information given on this website.

The terms for a SNP/Lib Dem/Labour coalition according to Nicola Sturgeon and friends

I do not predict UK election results where I am taking part. The SNP and Lib Dems do, and are predicting a hung Parliament. I see the polls as others do, and read that there could still be a hung Parliament where post election deals would decide how we are governed. I hope that is not the outcome, given the disastrous last months of the last Parliament where no-one had a majority.

Meanwhile some parties are telling us how they would behave if the electorate voted for another stalemate. Nicola Sturgeon has set out her terms to allow a Labour minority government to take office. She wants an early second referendum on Scottish independence, the removal of Trident submarines from Scotland and more money for the NHS. Jeremy Corbyn probably agrees with the second and third, and Labour would doubtless finesse the issue of another referendum in order to get Labour into government.

Jo Swinson seems to have abandoned her rhetoric of expecting a Lib Dem majority. Whilst playing hard to get she has made it crystal clear she would not want to help a minority Conservative government, so it only leaves one option of Labour into office. It might well not be a coalition, but just allowing them to win confidence votes would be sufficient for Labour to take over.

The push for a second Independence referendum in Scotland would be disruptive. It would establish the idea that governments only accept referendum decisions they like and make people vote and vote again to get a reversal. It would invite further uncertainty over Brexit, with the parties concerned wanting a second referendum on that as well. It would plunge the country into another two years or more of constitutional wrangling and confusion, undermine business confidence and get in the way of the new Parliament doing things to improve public services, grow the economy and pursue a strong and consistent foreign and trade policy.

Now is the time for a clear decision. We need a majority government to move on from Brexit and to remind the SNP they had their referendum and promised to accept its result.

More nurses and student grants

I was pleased to see the recruitment of 50,000 more nurses figure in the Conservative Manifesto. It also proposes a £5000-£8000 annual maintenance grant for student nurses when training.

I proposed similar ideas for my Brexit bonus budget. The total increase in NHS spending turns out to be £650 million extra a week between 2018 and 2023 on Conservative spending plans.