

Let's create higher environmental standards

I am grateful to Owen Paterson for pointing out in recent speeches that the EU's environmental policy which we have to adopt has in several crucial ways let us down badly. It is a myth that the EU has created high environmental standards that we would not have created for ourselves, and a myth that all the EU's environmental decisions have raised those standards.

Indeed, the UK was a pioneer of higher environmental standards before joining the EU, and an author and enthusiast of some of the better environmental measures the EU did introduce. The UK was early into the crucial business of cleaning up the water courses and containing and processing sewage, with large Victorian schemes to segregate fluids and to eliminate disease carrying water from our tanks and taps.

In more recent years the UK pioneered clean air acts to reduce the burden of dirty smoke, particulates and harmful chemicals coming from factories and commercial premises, and from the domestic fireplace.

The UK pre the EU was good at public open spaces, parks and National Parks to preserve some of the rural landscape in or near to built up areas.

The EU has forced us into environmental damage in several important respects. It has decided that burning biomass – wood to you and me – is good because it lowers CO2 output and recommends it for power stations. That leaves us with a problem with the smoke and particulates.

It pushed diesel cars as another good answer to CO2 issues. Now people are worried about the impact so many older diesel cars have on Nox and Sox and particulates in the air around our busier roads.

It now pushes electric vehicles without exploring the full impact of battery production and disposal on the environment, or considering the ways in which the electricity will be generated to sustain this extra demand. In a country like Germany present policies rely on burning a lot of coal in power stations.

Out of the EU we can have a more positive environmental policy. It might include concreting over fewer acres of countryside for houses, once we have in place a new migration policy. It would definitely include a fishing policy that lands all fish caught, instead of returning many of them dead to the ocean.

Getting Wokingham on the move

Over this summer of road closures and temporary traffic lights Councillors have assured me that the plan is to get the works finished during the school holidays so people can get around more easily again when they both have to take children to school and get themselves to work in the morning and to get home in the late afternoon. I have just written again to the Council asking them to remove temporary lights and take blocks away from closed traffic lanes in good time for the return to school wherever they can. We have experienced troubles with prominent junctions like the Winnersh Crossroads, the Finchampstead/Wellington Road roundabout and with the closure of Denmark Street and Broad Street in Wokingham, town centre.

The UK renews EU trade agreements for post Brexit

One of the many lies of Remain was the claim we would lose all the trade agreements the EU has managed to negotiate. Yesterday the government signed the carry over of the EU Partnership agreements with six African countries. Would all those who wrote in to this site and said this would not happen now like to apologise.

Signing the EU Withdrawal Agreement would be bad news. Leaving without signing it would be good news.

The Prime Minister was scarcely overwhelming in her support for Brexit, which remains her most distinctive core policy, when she said leaving without a deal would not be the end of the world. Let's have another go at explaining the reality.

There is no agreed deal on the table for the UK's "future partnership" in the way she wants. Indeed Mr Macron has just poured more cold water on the Chequers proposals, which are not going to emerge as an agreement. What is on offer is an almost completed EU Withdrawal Agreement which is heavily one sided, giving the EU much of what it wants. It delays Brexit for us and

burdens the UK with a huge and needless bill which we are under no legal obligation to pay unless we sign to do so.

So here's my advice. The UK government should be positive and release the new policies on fishing, farming, migration, and trade that could add to our growth rate and prosperity, using the freedoms leaving gives us. Above all the Treasury should cheer up and tell us how they are going to spend the £329bn they have in the budget to give away to the EU. Spend that on tax cuts and public services at home and that's a great 2% boost to our output and incomes, which we could enjoy over the next two to three years.

Signing a Withdrawal Agreement to give continuing overseas aid to a group of rich countries on the continent will leave us poorer. Let's hear the Treasury calculations of how much economic damage is done by the large payments abroad, and by the large balance of payments deficit we run with the EU under present rules. It's high time they did a calculation of the additional costs and losses brought to the UK by EU membership. Let's also have a new tariff schedule which works for the UK, allowing us to narrow the deficit and do more at home to supply our needs. The single market has not been good for our trade balance or for our big parts of our industry.

Wokingham Conservatives lunch on Sunday 26 August

There was plenty to talk about when Conservative members assembled for a summer lunch last week-end. We reviewed progress with getting more money for Wokingham's schools, social care and road improvements. We talked to Councillors present about the need to re open the roads in time for the return to school and the end of many people's summer breaks. And yes, the topic of Brexit did come up.

No-one present spoke up for the Chequers proposal. The majority view was to press the Prime Minister to move on from Chequers, and to see what kind of free trade deal might be possible. This was not a formal political event with votes or decisions, but it was interesting to see such a broad measure of agreement from a good audience. There was a general wish for the UK to be firmer in negotiation and to talk more about the benefits of leaving.