

Harris Education & Recreation Association – new classes enrolment

Evening Classes



The Harris Education & Recreation Association new evening classes enrolment takes place tomorrow night (Wednesday 17th) at the school from 6pm to 7.30pm.

There's nine great evening classes to choose from.

You can read details of all the classes [here](#).

Its great to see Harris Education & Recreation Association running another excellent set of evening classes and I hope these are well-supported.

Taxing travel

I saw in the press the case made for private sector run roads. The IEA pointed to the shortage of capacity of the current road system, the high pay backs that new road investment would achieve compared to new railway lines, and urged a more radical approach. The present government has ruled this out, and is only considering road user charging for lorries, not for private cars. Without a system of comprehensive user charging private run roads with private new investment are impossible. This article is not an attempt to re open this issue, which the government regards as settled.

In the run up to the 2010 election I worked out a scheme to repay debt from franchise fees for roads whilst abolishing Vehicle Excise Duty as the

Conservatives were keen to find ways of cutting state debt. I am not recommending this scheme now, but thought it might be of interest to see what has been explored and rejected in the past.

The aims I set were

- 1 Road users overall to pay no more in tax and no less as a result of the change
2. Tax road use rather than vehicle ownership
- 3 Raise a large sum of money from the private sector to pay off some national debt.
4. Government to retain the freehold of road network so we were not selling long term national assets
- 5 Motorists to display and register their insurance so there remained accessible records of vehicles in use
- 6 Private managers of the highways network incentivised to increase capacity, safety and availability of road space
- 7 Price controls to stop monopoly exploitation of popular roads at popular times of day.
8. Winners from the scheme to be people on lower incomes, low mileage drivers and users of roads at off peak periods

The scheme entailed introducing road charges to replace the lost VED revenue. The government was to offer franchises to manage and improve the main roads and to collect the charges to pay for the maintenance, management and franchise premium paid to the state. The franchises were to be auctioned for a specified price, with bidders bidding for length of contract. There would be absolute price controls to stop monopoly exploitation, allowing franchise holders to charge less off peak as they saw fit. The numbers worked to deliver £ 100 bn of capital to the government to repay debt, with later reversion of the franchises to do it again.

Private management of the highways was likely to result in improvements to flows and use, with less time with intrusive roadworks and closures. Franchise holders could add to the network, with incentives to spend capital on road improvement and protection for sunk capital if they lost the public sector road franchise.

The leadership considered it carefully but rejected it because it had a big political drawback . The public were so distrustful of government that they did not believe any government would honour the promise not to charge more. I accepted their decision and did not press the scheme. The scheme did of course offer a useful tax cut to those using the main roads less than the average. It was particularly helpful to low income and elderly households who drive fewer miles. The user charges only applied to the national trunk and motorway network.

Today interest rates are lower so the public finances would lose out from the loss of state revenue, so it is a non runner. The scheme worked financially only because the state saved in interest costs from debt repayment what it had lost in VED revenue forgone. Today some people are proposing a switch from VED to road charges but all collected by the state. This cuts out revenue loss but fails to deliver service improvements in highway provision. With user charges the motorist would likely get even more critical of the poor service and availability of roadspace in the UK with a public monopoly.

Where should we buy our food?

The one area of trade which will be affected by moving to WTO trade arrangements in the event of no trade deal with the EU is the trade in food. This is the only area where high tariffs can be levied, and are currently levied by the EU on imports from outside the zone. Were we to adopt the EU schedule of food tariffs on leaving the EU, they would represent a barrier to continental exporters of food to us.

Our trade in food is in massive deficit with the EU. They sell us the bulk of the £6bn of meat we import, and much of the £10bn of fruit and vegetables. Since we joined the EEC/EU our home producers have lost substantial market share to the rest of the EU, and have found it very difficult to export to the continent. Our beef industry was banned from exporting for a long period, and our milk industry did not have enough quota to produce more. Since 1990 our meat output is well down, our milk output has flatlined and our potato output is down.

The Netherlands have been successful at taking market share for salad stuffs and vegetables. The Danes dominate the ham and bacon market, continental cheese producers do well, and the French and German dairy industries also export large quantities to us.

If the EU decides against a free trade agreement with the UK then UK farms will have a great opportunity to produce far more fruit, vegetables and meat for the UK market. We could return from the 74% self sufficiency in temperate food to the 95% level we were at prior to the full impact of the Common Agricultural policy. We will also be able to remove tariffs from tropical food products which the UK cannot grow for itself, giving the consumer a better deal.

[The government should step in and take over Carillion's rail contracts – Andy McDonald](#)

Andy McDonald MP, Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on the implications of Carillion's collapse, said:

“Following the disastrous East Coast franchise decision, giving a contract to Carillion is yet another example of the negligent and carefree approach towards awarding contracts from Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling.

“The government should step in and take over Carillion's rail contracts to ensure rail renewal and enhancement work is brought in-house within Network Rail along with maintenance work.”

[Mr Gerhard Jarosch appointed National Member for Austria](#)

✘ Mr Gerhard Jarosch was appointed National Member for Austria at Eurojust for a four-year term, starting 1 January 2018. In accordance with Article 2(1) of the Eurojust Decision, the appointment was approved by the Secretary General of the Council of the European Union.

From 1999 until 2003, Mr Jarosch was a prosecutor in Eisenstadt, Austria, situated near the EU Schengen border with Hungary. There he dealt with a large variety of criminal cases. He became a prosecutor in Vienna in 2003, specialised in organised crime and terrorism cases and international legal cooperation. In 2008, Mr Jarosch became a Senior Prosecutor. Since 2009, Mr Jarosch was Deputy Chief Prosecutor in Vienna.

Mr Jarosch is the President of the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP), former President of the Austrian Association of Prosecutors and former President of the Austrian Prosecutors Personnel Representation.

Following his appointment, Mr Jarosch said: *‘As the President of the IAP, I am already acquainted with many colleagues at Eurojust, which should make this appointment a smooth transition.’*

Mr Jarosch replaces Ms Gabriela Hornbeck as National Member for Austria.

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