

Better transport

It is great news that the Budget will include a major programme to improve our roads. The government briefing says they will spend more on motorway improvements. They will offer a substantial sum to improve strategic local highways. There will be more money for potholes, and more to improve dangerous and congested junctions. There will be more cash to improve access to town centres.

I have been pressing for this for some time. It is welcome when ideas you work on come to fruition. I am asking Wokingham and West Berkshire Councillors to have schemes ready that are likely to qualify for money under these headings. We need better and safer junctions, we need more capacity and better flows at junctions, and we need more capacity on our strategic local highways. On my list is the northern and southern peripherals around Wokingham, the new bridge over the railway, and the rest of the Winnersh by pass. There are various junctions that can be made safer with better flows by putting in roundabouts or rephasing lights with traffic sensors. Splitting turning traffic from straight on traffic would also help. Another Thames crossing would be good but getting agreement from surrounding Councils remains problematic.

Nationally England needs to complete the network of trunk roads and motorways to at least dual carriageway standard and with grade separated junctions. We need a network of relief A roads for local journeys to relieve the trunk routes. One of the ironies of all the Remain commentary about possible delays at the ports after Brexit is port delay pales into insignificance besides the delays transport companies have to deal with everytime there is a crash or roadworks on one of our limited number of main motorways and trunk roads. Just in Time manufacturers have to build in these delays which are all too regular. One of the ways of raising productivity in the UK is to improve the road network. People running plumbing, electrical, cleaning and other businesses offering a service in people's homes schedule fewer appointments to allow for the extra time it usually takes to get to the places of work. Delivery companies for on line shopping also have to confront inadequate roads for their vans.

Some green critics complain about any increase in road spending. They should recognise that cutting down on traffic jams and improving flows of vehicles through junctions and over rivers and railway lines cuts down on the amount of fuel burnt by slow moving vehicles, and cuts the amount of emissions hitting people living and working close to busy roads. On line retailers cannot deliver to your door by train or bike, and businesses that need to take tools and materials to a job also need vans. It is time to give them a helping hand. It will require Councils to come up with good schemes to spend the money well. Traffic management needs to help in the task of improving junction safety and vehicle flows.