

Dear Constituent

Unemployment has risen sharply, and many people on furlough are worried about whether and when their jobs will return. I have been pressing hard for more people to be allowed back to work in safe ways.

I am pleased to report some progress in recent days. Many of you wanted Garden Centres to re open and waste tips. Both have done so this week with social distancing rules in place.

The Government passed its new Agriculture Bill through the Commons this week. I wrote about my contribution yesterday. I am pressing hard for more of the government support to be grants to assist the expansion of market gardening. There is considerable scope for the UK to grow more of its own fruit, vegetables and flowers, and to expand the glass house space to do so. It will also create many more jobs for local people to help.

Builders are resuming work and homes can be bought and sold again. Car factories are starting up and other industrial production is underway. There will still be a substantial hit to output and incomes, given the way social distancing limits how much can be produced in any given factory.

The government has set out a timetable for limited returns to school before the summer break. Some of you are very keen to see the schools re open, conscious that children need formal education and will miss out without school. Some are nervous about safety. The good news is CV 19 does not normally cause health problems for children. The bad news is grandparents may need to stay isolated from their grandchildren for longer, especially where they are vulnerable through other medical conditions.

The worst affected areas remain leisure, entertainment and hospitality. There will be delays before they are allowed to re open, and substantial restrictions on how many people they can serve once they are allowed to trade. Shops too are struggling, with more being done on line. There are no easy answers to these problems, where the businesses themselves are going to have to adapt to changed circumstances.

I have successfully urged a strong response from the Bank of England to make money available and from the Treasury to provide grants and loans to individuals and businesses who have lost their incomes. I am now urging the government to put in place more policies for economic recovery. These include tax cuts to assist the self employed, small businesses and individuals wanting to buy a house or car .

I passed on wishes to allow more sport and outside activity. It was easiest making the cases for fishing and golf which have now been relaxed. All of us can now go for walks or runs as often as we like.