

Migration numbers

When I was policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher we sought economic growth per capita as we wanted U.K. people to be better off. We did not welcome the model of inviting in many people to do low paid jobs to boost GDP at the expense of GDP per head. We sought to keep net migration to a maximum of 50,000 per year, itself a high figure requiring extra homes and public services. There were some obligations to take workers under EEC rules, which were greatly expanded into full freedom of movement for all EU citizens introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992 and the subsequent EU legislation under John Major and Tony Blair.

There does need to be clarification from the government on what it thinks an acceptable level of migration is, as most of it is legal migration requiring visa permits from the U.K. government. They need to clarify their view of what minimum income should apply for someone needing a work visa, and what planning has gone into providing sufficient extra homes, NHS capacity, school places and utilities provision to ensure new arrivals can have a decent income and living standard without causing shortages for people already legally settled here. Treasury accounting which assumes GDP growth from new arrivals assumes they get a job, ignoring dependents, and overlooks the drop in GDP per head if many take low wage employment. Above all they surprisingly ignore the large public expenditure and taxpayer cost of providing subsidised accommodation and free public services for many.

So far the only category of overseas migrant we know the government wishes to cut sharply are the foreign multi millionaires who wish to pay tax on non U.K. wealth and income elsewhere whilst paying full U.K. tax on all they did here. It will mean a net loss of tax revenue and of investment in jobs and companies here, without reducing numbers of people much.

If the government truly wants to grow the economy faster and increase average prosperity it needs to welcome people coming to invest and create jobs whilst cutting back sharply on numbers wanting low paid jobs or state support. The U.K. response to the drivers shortage showed how putting pay up and increasing training could recruit many people from those already settled here. Where business is short of employees there needs to be a mixture of higher pay and measures for higher productivity and training to ease the shortage.

Enforcing the law

I do not have original ideas or proposed different policies to enforce the law. I rarely write about it for that reason. Today it cannot be ignored. As part of my series on growth the first priority

is clearly to enforce the law.

Rioting and looting destroy commerce and harm the lives of the many. Who will invest in a business that might be torched, or toil in a shop where looters help themselves?

A lax approach to shoplifting can lead to the outrage of people helping themselves on an industrial scale. It is worse when people are assaulted or made to live in fear.

The so called protests that have seen violence against the police and property and the so called counter protests of gangs who want to fight the others both need stopping, with even handed action by the authorities.

The government also needs to update us on how it is getting on enforcing the law against illegal people trafficking. Controlling our borders is a demand of many people. The government promised better control from more resources. Has it appointed another Commander? Has it got further collaboration from the French authorities? How will its improved Border intelligence and management work given all the resource and effort the last government put into it?

Law enforcement has to treat profiting from illegal migration as a serious crime as well as looting a shop or breaking windows of a hotel.

Freeing the roads

There are three main kinds of roads.

There is the national network of motorways and trunk roads. These should be vehicles only. There has been some expansion of capacity by adding lanes and improving some junctions. More needs to be done as these are much used and crucial to our economy. Their capacity could be helped if Rail freight could be boosted by more sidings, single waggon marshalling and other ways to make it a more practical and viable option.

There are the local strategic roads, usually A designated. These should primarily be for vehicles. They should have mainly roundabout not traffic light junctions as these are better for flows. Road schemes which seek to remove capacity by narrowing, putting in exclusive use lanes, more lights and partial barriers should be discouraged. Junctions often need improving by increasing capacity. Lights need automatic sensors to switch to green where vehicles are waiting when there are no vehicles using the green that is available.

There are local roads which will often be mixed use. Here there may need to be further schemes to allow safe use by a variety of users, or to restrict parking where that creates obstacles to use.

The big change that is needed is to understand we need more capacity, and to see that making it easier to get through junctions on large roads is a way to improve safety and reduce driver error. If the government wants economic growth it needs to increase capacity of the national routes and the strategic local networks, issuing new guidance on junctions and budgets to get rid of bottlenecks, inadequate junctions and capacity shortages.

Better transport

If you want an economy to grow faster you need to create transport systems that allow people and goods to get about easily and at sensible cost.

For years under all 3 main parties in Parliament the U.K. has followed an anti car, truck and van policy. Nationalised roads have been kept in short supply. Road management has often been designed to impede vehicles seeking to use them

Despite this people and companies have continuously decided road vehicles are the most flexible and useful means of getting about for all but the shortest distances where walking is best. People value the way their car or van is always available when they want it and will leave when they wish. They like the ability to get to virtually every address in the country allowing door to door travel,

Governments prefer rail. Rail does not allow address to address travel unless you live next to a station and want to make a visit to a business or company next to another station, You are limited in what you can carry onto a train and place in the rack, whilst you can get plenty of things in your car or van. Rail only goes when they want to, and may let you down with delay or cancellation. You need to work out how to get to the departure station and from the arrival station. The fare can be high.

Sending more goods by rail could be an excellent idea but it needs sidings for the delivery point and single waggon marshalling to allow smaller consignments than a trainload. It is possible to use containers, picking them up with tractor units for short end delivery trips.

It is not going to be practical to go shopping by train. Trains dont have stops at schools for the school run. The small business providing service at home for people needs a flexible van to get around and fit enough in during the day. Tomorrow we will look at how to configure our roads for growth,

Let's have a larger rented sector

The U.K. is short of homes. We have often agreed here that much lower numbers of migrants would help reduce the shortage. The danger now is the new government may continue with the old government's high migration policy and perhaps add to it with new safe routes and an amnesty for illegals. This makes expanding the private rented sector even more important. Public sector budgets are not going to stretch to building many more Council houses.

The government plans to increase the protections for tenants, extending the past governments plans. Whilst this may be good news for those who have a long term tenancy, it is bad news for those needing to find a house to rent or needing to renegotiate an expiring arrangement.

There is likely to be a further reduction in homes to rent as landlords sell up or find less regulated uses for their property than letting it out to someone for their home. This will increase rents again and leave people in need of a home scurrying round when a tenancy does become available. Government needs to get to a balanced regulatory system ,protecting tenants against bad landlords but leaving landlords with sufficient rights over their property to make it a worthwhile investment.

A better private rented policy needs to be allied to helping the building industry train enough skilled staff and invest in sufficient building materials capacity to expand new homes output. There needs to be an increase in new homes to rent as well as to buy.