

My intervention in the Prime Minister's Statement on CHOGM, G7 and NATO summits

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): Western purchases of Russian energy are paying for Putin's war. Will my right hon. Friend redouble his efforts to ensure that we invest in more production and output of oil, gas and electricity here, to make our contribution to reducing western dependence?

Boris Johnson, Prime Minister: Yes. I think the UK can be very proud of the way we have moved beyond hydrocarbons in so many areas, but we must recognise the limits and the pace of what we have achieved, and be less neuralgic about using our domestic hydrocarbons, particularly when the alternative is just to import them from abroad.

What should the government do now?

It is difficult to know if the interim government will feel it can do things. Constitutionally of course it can, as it is still formed from the same Conservative majority from the General election of 2019. It still has the same Prime Minister who won that election. Yet some around the table may think they should mark time pending a new decision about direction to be made in the forthcoming leadership election. What is clearly true is there will not be the same uniformity of view and collective responsibility as usual, as several in the Cabinet will be campaigning to be Leader and will wish to differentiate their views from the current line.

I would urge them to be liberated generally. They should try to get agreement to necessary courses of action that cannot easily wait until October and the formation of new government. Here are some of priorities they should press on with or adopt:

1. Intensify the campaign to get more people into work all the time there are so many jobs on offer, as there are still too many people on benefits who could improve their finances by taking work.
2. Put in place all that is necessary to cut the government overhead under the plans identified but not yet implemented fully by Jacob Rees Mogg.
3. Press on rapidly with the Northern Ireland protocol Bill. We need to be free to set our own VAT rates for the whole UK as soon as possible, and to restore GB/NI trade.
4. Produce a better package to tackle the cost of living crisis. Suspend VAT on domestic fuel, and halve VAT on petrol and diesel immediately.

Remove the National Insurance rise. Lift the threat of higher business taxes next year, to show the world the UK is open for business and welcomes more investment.

5. Strengthen legislation to take full control of our borders.
6. Amend the Levelling Up Bill to allow local communities to set the amount of new housing in their local plan.

Leadership of the country

Given the unusual events playing out this week I write this short piece to give people an opportunity to send in their views. I am consulting widely on what should now happen.

I am strongly of the view that the issue of leadership has to be resolved by the Conservative Parliamentary party. An early General election is not in the national interest. We need urgent Ministerial action to promote growth and tackle the cost of living crisis. There is a majority to do what needs doing.

My Speech at the Westminster Hall debate on the UK's Energy Security Strategy

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): I welcome any measure to buttress our energy security. Ministers are right to be alert to the difficulties we face. I am concerned about this decade. Once again in this debate, we have heard many ideas about nuclear, wind and solar—new technologies that may make a great contribution in the next decade—but our task today is to reinforce all the things that the Minister is doing to keep our lights on for the next three or four years. Our more immediate task is to see what contribution the United Kingdom can make to getting Russian gas and oil out of the European system. We need to make our contribution, providing more of that supply from our domestic sources as part of our war effort. We need our people, who want to keep the lights on and the boilers running, to feel secure that we will make our contribution in case Russia turns the taps off.

Wera Hobhouse MP (Lib): It is simply not true that renewable energy projects will take until next decade to be developed. In fact, many of them are waiting; it is just that they cannot be connected to the grid. Can the right

hon. Gentleman correct what he has just said about renewable energy projects?

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): I am afraid that the hon. Lady, and other Members who have made similar contributions, do not understand that I am dealing with the problem of intermittency. In order for all the extra wind they want to be useful, there needs to be a way of timesharing the wind power. We already have days on which wind and solar together produce less than 10% of our electricity, and most of our constituents are not using electricity to drive or to heat their homes, so that is a very small proportion of our total energy.

The vision of wind requires mass battery storage—we seem to be years away from the technology and the investment required to do that—and/or conversion to hydrogen. Green hydrogen would be a perfectly good answer, but again, we are years away from the investment, the practicalities and the commercial projects that could turn that wind energy into hydrogen. My constituents would love it if they could get hydrogen today. They do not want to have to rip out their gas boiler; they would quite like to be able to route more hydrogen through the existing gas boiler and make their contribution to the green revolution.

However, MPs have to be realistic. Our prime duty is to ensure that our constituents can live in relative prosperity, keep the lights on and have access to decent energy for their requirements. At the moment, most of our constituents get to work and to the shops using a diesel or petrol van or car; most heat their homes and water with a gas, oil or coal boiler. Very few use electric technology for that. If there was the great popular electrical revolution that they have bought into, and they could suddenly afford the electrical products and liked them, we would have a huge problem, because we would be chronically short of electricity generating capacity.

The true electrical revolution on the scale that Wera Hobhouse would like would require an enormous investment in new electrical capacity. If everybody went home tonight and plugged in their car, which uses more electricity than the rest of the home, and heated their homes using electricity, there would need to be a big increase in capacity. The hon. Lady is shaking her head. She wants to get real! Does she really want to cut off her constituents because she so hates them using gas?

Wera Hobhouse MP (Lib): This is about choices. We cannot forever get stuck in the past, as we have just heard. We need to look forward to the future. Investment in renewables is the only way I can see as the right way forward. Yes, that needs adaptation; yes, that needs our constituents to come along. However, it is a necessity. We cannot bury our heads in the sand.

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): Once again, the hon. Lady is in denial. She will not answer the intermittency problem. Does she ever look at the hourly and daily statistics on the grid to see, quite often, how little of our power is renewable-generated? That is because of physics and weather. We have to find technological answers to that. Now, there are technological answers, but at the moment they are not being adopted. They are not commercial and they have not been trialled properly; there may be safety

issues and all sorts of things.

Peter Dowd MP (Lab): Yes, they have.

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): The hon. Gentleman says that they have been trialled. Why are they not there, then? Why can I not turn on my hydrogen tap now? There are all sorts of commercial issues and issues about how to route it to every home and so forth.

Peter Dowd MP (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman is so fixed on this idea of commerciality. There will potentially come a point when the taxpayer—for the sake of argument—decides that the Government are going to invest. I know that the right hon. Gentleman has an ideological obsession with the Government not doing that. However, in the current situation, does he not agree that the state might sometimes have to do just that?

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): But that is happening. We already have one of the most over-managed systems because successive Governments have put in all sorts of subsidies, tax breaks, interventions, price controls and all the rest of it to try to send those signals. That is why we have the current mix—it is not the exact mix the market would have produced.

I fully accept that there is often a role for Government when we try to develop new technologies. I have no problem with that. However, it does require agreement on what that technology is, agreement on the scale of the effort needed and realism about how many years it would take. It is all very well for the Members present to say that they have a vision of everybody using an electric car and having a heat pump. However, if their constituents cannot afford it or do not want it, it does not matter what Members think—they have to deal with the world as it is. We cannot lecture our constituents into having a heat pump. They will have a heat pump when it is affordable, when it is a good product and when they think it makes sense, and they are nowhere near coming to that conclusion at the moment.

The crucial question in this debate is what more the United Kingdom can do at this critical moment. We have to help our allies and friends on the continent who are gas short and oil short and want to get Russia out of their supply system but cannot do so because it would collapse their industry, while Russia is financing a war by selling its oil and gas into Europe as well as elsewhere. I think there is a lot more we can do.

I urge the Minister to see it as both a patriotic duty and a crucial duty to our allies to work closely with our producers and owners of oil and gas reserves in the United Kingdom and maximise output as quickly as possible. Some of the output can be increased quite quickly; for others, it will take two or three years to get the investments in. Will the Minister do everything he can to expedite it? We owe that to our constituents, because gas and oil are too dear—every little extra that we can produce will make a little difference—and confidence in markets might be affected. Above all, we owe it to our allies, who will otherwise be financing Putin's war.

[John Redwood urges government to accept new clauses to Planning Bill](#)

NC17

To move the following Clause—

“Community right of appeal

- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is amended as follows.
- After section 78 (right to appeal against planning decisions and failure to take such decisions) insert—

“78ZA Community right of appeal

- The Secretary of State must by regulations make provision—
- enabling communities to appeal against a decision to grant planning permission or permission in principle for a development, and
- about such appeals.
- The regulations may require a certain number or proportion of residents of a local area to record objection against a decision for such an appeal to proceed.
- The regulations may, in particular, make provision the upholding of such appeals and the revocation of permission if—
- the development is inconsistent with a relevant neighbourhood plan, or
- due process has not been followed in relation to the planning application.
- The first regulations under this section must be laid before Parliament before the end of the period of six months beginning on the day on which this section comes into force.””

Member’s explanatory statement

This new clause would introduce a community right of appeal against the granting of planning permission

Amendment 57

Clause 83, page 91, line 30, leave out “national development management policy” and insert “the development plan”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would require any conflict between a local development plan and a national development management strategy to be resolved in favour of the local development plan.

NC15

To move the following Clause–

“Requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework

- The Secretary of State must ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is in accordance with subsections (2) to (6).
- The NPPF must not contain a presumption in favour of sustainable development including where there are no relevant development plan policies, or such policies are out-of-date.
- The NPPF must provide for the right for persons to object to individual planning applications.
- The NPPF must provide that the Planning Inspectorate may only recommend that local plans not be adopted if–
 1. the consequences of that local plan would be detrimental to the objectives of such plans, and
 2. that local plan is markedly and verifiably atypical in comparison to other such plans.
- The NPPF must permit local planning authorities to impose bans on greenfield development in their areas, other than in exceptional circumstances, where–
 1. greenfield areas make a marked contribution to the local economy through leisure or tourism, and
 2. where sufficient brownfield land is likely to be available to meet housing needs identified in neighbourhood and local plans.
- The NPPF must include specific measures designed to support the creation of additional retirement homes, sheltered accommodation for the elderly and facilities for care homes.
- This section comes into force at the end of the period of six months beginning on the day on which this Act is passed.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause requires a revised NPPF within six months to provide that, among other things, there should be no presumption of sustainable development.

5 Year Land Supply– NC14

“Prohibition of mandatory targets and abolition of five-year land supply rule

(1) Any housebuilding target for local planning authorities in–

- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF),

(b) regulations made under any enactment, or

(c) any planning policy document may only be advisory and not mandatory.

(2) Accordingly, such targets should not be taken into account in determining planning applications.

(3) The NPPF must not impose an obligation on local planning authorities to ensure that sufficient housing development sites are available over five years or any other given period.”

Member’s explanatory statement

This new clause requires a revised NPPF within six months to provide that housing targets are advisory not mandatory and that the five-year housing land supply rule will no longer apply.