

# My contribution to the debate on Leaving the EU: Impact on the UK, 17 March 2021

I welcome the opportunity to debate the many opportunities that Brexit presents. It was always the case that, once we had achieved Brexit, the Government needed to use the freedoms it brings to promote the greater health and prosperity of United Kingdom citizens. We meet today with a success already as a result of these freedoms. The United Kingdom Government decided last year not to join the common vaccine procurement system of the European Union. They went their own way. They had confidence in British science and in British medicine, and they had confidence in great companies based in the United Kingdom and in our great universities.

It is tremendous news that, as a result, the United Kingdom helped pioneer one of the first successful vaccines. The United Kingdom pre-ordered a very large number of vaccines for United Kingdom people on the basis that some of these vaccines would be good and would be available for use, and that put the United Kingdom in the position to vaccinate much earlier, saving more lives than those countries can that were not in the happy position of having early supplies of vaccine. Even our regulators were quicker and more agile. Our regulators gave regulatory approval to the first vaccines some weeks before the European regulator, though the European regulator came to the same view in due course.

I think this is a model for how we can use our freedoms more widely to promote our health and better prosperity. I would draw the Government's attention to a very important policy initiative from President Biden. They may find it surprising to see me recommending something from a Democrat President, but I think his 24 February Executive order—looking at America's supply chains, and saying that America can do much better at developing its own technology, putting in its own industrial capacity and creating many better-paid jobs by having more capacity in the United States—is a model we should follow. Indeed, it is the model we have been following with the development of the vaccine, which has led to more good jobs in the United Kingdom and more United Kingdom productive capacity.

The Biden initiative starts with a very rapid—100-day—attempt to fix the need for the United States of America to have a much bigger presence in pharmaceuticals, batteries, rare earths and minerals, and semiconductors. There is then an annual programme, involving all the relevant Departments of Government, of going through the supply chains and asking what can be done to use innovation funding, Government procurement and Government regulation to encourage more onshoring and more exciting technical developments. Of course, a country needs to have strong competition law and not to abuse state aids, but many good things can be done with the massive procurement programmes of the British Government, like those of the American Government, to encourage competitive responses in the United Kingdom and to encourage that increasing

capacity.

I hope the Government will do more on both the Northern Ireland border issue, where I think we need to be firm—and I support their recent action—and on the fishing industry, where I think we need more rapid progress to build up our fleet and to take back control of more of our fish. That was the promise and that is clearly the intended journey, but I wish the Government would be firmer, because I do not think that at the moment we have the right deal to promote that industry. If we wish to develop our green policies, as we do, we need to do more at home, cut the food miles, cut the fish miles and have more value added in the United Kingdom.

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## **SNP debate on independence**

Listening to the two Opposition day debates yesterday led by the SNP I was struck by the endless contradictions and negativity.

Here is a party which says it wants a referendum that spends most of its energy complaining about the two big referendums it lost recently. It only likes referendums if it wins. Otherwise it is undemocratic, denying their result.

Here is a party which says it wants an independent Scotland. Its idea of independence is to seek to rejoin the EU and not create its own currency or independent money policy.

Here is a party which says leaving the single market of the EU is damaging but leaving the U.K. single market which accounts for four times the trade the EU handles with Scotland would be fine.

Here is a party which complains about the loss of the EU Erasmus scheme whilst failing to accept that the U.K. replacement, the Turing Scheme, will help more U.K. students.

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## **Government consults on whether to use vaccine/test certificates in relaxing CV 19 controls**

I reproduce below the government's words on its consultation. Knowing there are strong views here I recommend you reply to the government directly.

#### “Consultation description

The government is reviewing whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening our economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety.

COVID-status certification refers to the use of testing or vaccination data to confirm in different settings that individuals have a lower risk of getting sick with or transmitting COVID-19 to others. Such certification would be available both to vaccinated people and to unvaccinated people who have been tested.

The government will assess to what extent certification would be effective in reducing risk, and its potential uses in enabling access to settings or relaxing COVID-secure mitigations.

The government is looking to consider the ethical, equalities, privacy, legal and operational aspects of a potential certification scheme, and what limits, if any, should be placed on organisations using certification.

We are issuing this call for evidence to inform this review into COVID-status certification, to ensure that the recommendations reflect a broad range of interests and concerns. We welcome views from all respondents.

#### Documents

COVID-Status Certification Review – Call for evidence  
HTML”

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## [Global Britain and the security review](#)

The Prime Minister’s statement yesterday renewed attention to an increase in spending on defence, including the renewal of the deterrent, an expansion of counter action in cyberspace and improved equipment for all three services. He confirmed the reduction of overseas aid spending, called China a challenge and proposed an Indo Pacific tilt to future policy. The UK is joining the South East Asian nations as a dialogue partner and applying to join the trade Agreement called Trans Pacific Partnership.

The policy takes a more realistic view of threats and challenges worldwide, and proposes strengthening the UK’s response. The aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth will lead a carrier force to reinforce the UK commitment to open sea lanes around the world. A cyber force will be available to retaliate against criminal gangs and state actors attacking our systems. UK networks and utilities will be better protected.

There are various ways in which I want this approach to be strengthened. As I have set out before, a country cannot guarantee its own defence unless it

controls central technologies and designs that enable it to roll out sufficient defensive weapons should war arise. A country dependent on seaborne trade needs both to be able to protect convoys at sea and to reduce its reliance on imported raw materials, food and crucial products to reduce the risk of shortages should we face another attempt to dominate us by strangling our imports. Seapower and more recently its modern air arm have been needed in the past to prevent blockade and invasion.

There remain some unanswered questions that next week should be clarified when we hear from the Defence Secretary. How many troops will the army retain? How many seagoing warships? How quickly will the role of drones, smart weapons, unmanned aircraft and missiles increase and what numbers will be involved? What if any global defence tasks should we take on, given our presence in Estonia for NATO and our enduring commitments in places like Cyprus and Gibraltar? What more action is going to be taken to strengthen national resilience and self sufficiency?

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## [The government sets out its agenda to reduce crime](#)

I reproduce below parts of the government's explanation of its wide ranging Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which the Commons will vote on today.

The Bill will tackle crime by:” equipping police officers with the powers and tools they need to keep themselves and all of us safe; putting the Police Covenant into law; doubling the maximum sentence for assaulting workers in emergency services; tackling unauthorised traveller encampments; requiring schools, police, councils and health authorities to work together through Violence Reduction Units to prevent serious crime; empowering the police by a new court order to target known knife carriers, making it easier for officers to stop and search those convicted of knife crime; enabling the trialling of secure schools; improving employment opportunities for ex-offenders; introducing tougher sentencing for the worst offenders and ending automatic halfway release from prison for serious crimes; and introducing tougher community sentences.

The Serious Violence Duty will require local authorities, the police, criminal justice agencies, health authorities and fire and rescue services to work together, share data and intelligence, to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Prisons and educational establishments will also need to work with these core partners where necessary.

Protecting children and young people in vulnerable positions from sexual

abuse and exploitation is a top priority for this Government and we have been reviewing the law in this area very carefully to ensure that any changes we make are the right ones. The current “positions of trust” offences criminalise sexual activity with a child under the age of 18 by people who hold a defined “position of trust” in respect of that young person even if such activity is consensual, effectively raising the age of consent from 16 to 18 in those circumstances. The positions of trust offences build on the “general” child sex offences, which make it a crime for anyone to engage in sexual activity with someone under the age of 16. Non-consensual sexual activity, whatever the age of the victim, is illegal. Following thorough engagement with stakeholders, including representatives from faith groups and the sporting sector, we have concluded that there is a clear need to extend the scope of positions of trust legislation, which currently covers a number of statutory roles such as teachers and social workers, so as to also include those who carry out certain activities within religious and sports settings, for example, those whose roles involve them in being a faith leader or sports coach. By doing this we aim to stop such people who seek to abuse their positions of trust from manipulating or exploiting young people to engage in sexual activity.

#### Criminal Damage to Memorials

While incidences of damage to memorials are typically of low monetary value, they very often carry a high sentimental and emotional impact. Under the current law, cases of criminal damage with a value less than £5,000 must be tried summarily and carries a maximum penalty of three months’ imprisonment or a £2,500 fine. The Bill will toughen the law where criminal damage is caused to a memorial, by removing the consideration of monetary value which would otherwise determine venue and limit sentencing powers, effectively increasing the maximum sentence from three months to 10 years’ imprisonment for criminal damage to a memorial where the value involved in monetary terms is assessed to be less than £5,000. These changes will allow the court to consider all the impacts, not just financial, so that the sentence can reflect the full range of harm caused.

#### Public Order

We have seen the extensive disruption that some protests have caused in recent years, stopping people getting on with their daily lives, hampering the free press and blocking access to Parliament. We need to improve the police’s ability to safely manage such highly disruptive protests by giving them new powers to manage public assemblies and processions. In particular, the Bill will:

- Widen the range of conditions that the police can impose on static protests, to match existing police powers to impose conditions on marches;
- Broaden the range of circumstances in which police may impose conditions on the generation of noise at a protest, including single person protests;
- Amend the offence relating to the breaching of conditions so that someone commits an offence where they know or ought to have known of the conditions imposed by the police;
- Introduce a delegated power enabling the Home Secretary to clarify “serious

disruption to the life of the community” and “serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried out in the vicinity of the protest”; two of the thresholds at which relevant conditions can be placed on a protest should a senior police officer reasonably believe there to be a risk of the protest meeting these thresholds;

- Codify in statute the common law offence of public nuisance into in line with proposals put forward by the Law Commission

#### Unauthorised Encampments

As reported before on this website

#### Driving Offences

Whilst many deaths and injuries are the result of a tragic accident, too many of these incidents involve criminal behaviour. The Government is bringing forward changes to driving penalties to meet its longstanding commitment to ensure the courts have the powers they need to deal with those drivers who kill by dangerous driving or by careless driving when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Our aim is to make sure that the penalties available to the courts for such offences are proportionate and reflect the seriousness of the offences committed. We will also create a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving to close an existing gap in the law.

#### Serious Violence Reduction Orders

Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) will give the police additional stop and search powers to target those convicted of knife and offensive weapons offences. SVROs will target those who pose the greatest risk of harm, will discourage offenders from carrying weapons again as there is a greater likelihood of being caught and brought to justice, and will help protect exploited individuals. SVRO will save lives and make communities safer. To ensure that SVRO operate as effectively as possible we will pilot the new orders before they are rolled out nationally.

#### Courts

Finally, the Bill will contain measures to help improve the efficiency of the court and tribunals system by modernising existing court processes to provide better services for all court users.”