

No to a Corbyn led government of national disunity and unreliability

The UK has given its word to the international community that we are leaving the EU. We have held numerous discussions with countries around the world based on our new future. Now Mr Corbyn wants to delay our exit and create confusion about what we might do. His own party remains riven between Remain at all costs MPs and accept the verdict of the people MPs. Now the Leader of the Opposition is showing he cannot reach out and attract the support of the Lib Dems or Change UK for a No Confidence vote designed to put him in Downing Street.

Parliament's choice this September is simple. Does it at last want to do the right thing, honour the verdict of the referendum and allow us to leave the EU on October 31 as the government plans? Or does it have a narrow majority of MPs who want to bring on an early election, going back to the people and telling them this Parliament is not fit for purpose, can't make up its mind and needs to be thrown out? Were it to choose the latter it will be a difficult task for all those Labour MPs who stood on a Manifesto of leaving the EU to explain their about turn. It would mean any Conservative who had helped bring about such an election was unlikely to run again as a Conservative candidate. It means the near certain end to the Parliamentary work of those MPs who defected from their original parties and are now in Change UK in order to try to keep the UK in the EU.

This Parliament would go down in history as the worst ever if it opts to disband this autumn. Only getting us out of the EU as the two main parties promised in 2017 can now improve the reputation of this Parliament. This Parliament may anyway have left it too late to try to hold an election before we leave even if it could call one. Ironically only if the election is held after we have left does Labour have more chance of winning a decent vote share.

Trade wars?

Trade is always vulnerable to politics. Today we see a US/China trade dispute on a grand scale, as the US responds to the growing strategic and military challenge of the emerging superpower. Pakistan and India are in bitter dispute over Kashmir with threats to the trade from both sides of their troubled border. Japan and Korea have dismantled their framework of mutual trade preference and are imposing barriers on some items. The row resumed over Korean claims for war reparations. Many developing countries charge high tariffs on imports with special dispensations from WTO rules to

allow this. The US has imposed sanctions on Iran which the EU has in effect to go along with. The UK refuses to sell various countries weapons and security machinery on strategic and moral grounds. Most advanced countries place security restrictions on the sale of certain technology products and services.

The main trend worldwide is for neighbouring countries to impose trade restrictions on each other for wider political reasons. In the Middle East trade is disrupted as part of the wider Sunni Shia conflicts. Mr Trump threatened tariffs against Mexico to get better border policing on the Mexican side of the border. He seeks to stop the illegal drugs trade from South America and looks for trade remedies. Japan have difficult relations with its neighbour China. China, Pakistan and India have disrupted trade around their common borders in Kashmir. These common rows and anti trade policies are always with us, but the strength of the WTO trading framework means world trade continues to grow and stays at high levels.

Despite these common problems the bulk of our trade in or out of the EU will be tariff free with relatively easy passage across borders. There are no current difficulties from government restrictions on the UK importing a large number of components, food and pharmaceuticals from non EU countries. The WTO Facilitation of Trade Agreement coupled with the enthusiasm of exporters to sell to us will ensure plenty of imports to meet our needs after 31 October with or with an EU Agreement. The UK so far has announced a major reduction in tariffs once we are out making it cheaper and easier to import from non EU places, and no dearer to import from EU.

We need to remember as well that the overwhelming majority of our trade is domestic. There is more scope for growing UK businesses and farms to supply our domestic market more, and this may well happen once we leave the EU and can settle our own affairs. Our time in the EU has seen loss of home market share in a number of crucial areas thanks to EU regulations and EU economic policies. Our early years in the EEC were particularly damaging with substantial de industrialisation. The ERM debacle hit our growth rate badly. Our growth rate has been slower in the single market than before we joined.

[New 16 – 17 Saver discounted rail tickets & Independent rail fares review](#)

I have received this letter from the Government detailing the launch of the brand new 16 – 17 Saver, which offers discounted rail tickets to young people. They are also launching an independent review of rail fares to ensure the railways offer value for money to passengers:

Dear John

I am pleased to inform you that today the Department for Transport, together with the rail industry, has unveiled the brand new 16 – 17 Saver, which guarantees half-price travel for young people in England and Wales.

Whether starting or returning to sixth-form or college, beginning an apprenticeship or entering the world of work, teenagers can start using their discounted tickets on Monday 2 September.

It is forecast to save young people and their families an average of £186 every year and set to boost education opportunities, communities and businesses with young people able to travel more affordably.

The launch comes as the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) confirmed that over 327,000 people are now saving a third off their journeys after purchasing the 26-30 Railcard, saving an average of £19 per month since it launched in January.

Today's announcement means that passengers aged between 16 and 30 will now benefit from significant savings on their travel. Available for purchase for £30 online at www.16-17saver.co.uk or by calling 0345 301 1656, the Saver will be on sale at 9am on Tuesday 20 August

From this date, up to 1.2 million young people are eligible for the 50% discount it offers on most rail travel, including peak and season tickets. The 16-17 Saver will be valid across England, Wales and services into Scotland, but not on ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper services.

This is a positive step, but we need a rail system where passengers of all ages get a fair deal. While the government has frozen regulated fares in line with inflation for the seventh year in a row, there is a need to do more. Which is why the government has launched an independently-led Government review of the railway, including looking at fares reforms and value for money for passengers.

This review will report in the Autumn with reforms expected to begin in 2020.

I look forward to updating on progress in this area.

Yours sincerely
Chris Heaton-Harris MP
Minister of State for Transport

[Paying for care homes](#)

Mrs May rushed out social care proposals in her 2017 General Election Manifesto, only to have to drop them during the course of the Election

campaign as they were unpopular. The new government has also promised to produce proposals which will benefit from study of what went wrong with the May ideas.

It is first important to understand the tri partisan settlement we have lived under for many years over social care. The political parties have all agreed that healthcare must be free at the point of need for all, including elderly people requiring a lot of expensive care towards the end of their lives. They have also agreed that living costs are to be paid where possible by the people concerned. In particular, if an elderly person needs to be looked after in a care home then the hotel costs of providing a room with meals and service falls to them if they have an income to cover it or if they have capital they can draw on.

The most contentious part of the current settlement for some is the fact that an elderly person needs to sell their home when they move into the care home and spend the capital from their home sale on the hotel costs of the care home. If someone does not have any capital then the state provides the care home place as well as the healthcare at taxpayer expense. Some say this is a tax on the thrifty and prudent. Others say the elderly person no longer needs their former home, so why shouldn't its value be treated like all their other capital? Should taxpayers pay the care home costs of millionaires, for example? If not, at what level of capital should the state take over and pay for the provision? If only one person from an elderly couple needs to move into a care home then of course the couple's home remains untaxed and available for the other person living there.

My elderly parents reached the point where they needed to move into a care home to be looked after, and wanted to do so. I helped them sell their two bedroom flat so they could afford a good quality care home. I did not think I had any right to inherit their flat and did not disagree with the policy that said that money from the sale of their home had to be used for their living costs in the care home.

Do you think there should be a new deal on this matter? What is a fair solution over the costs of living for elderly people, when some elderly people have saved and have capital and others did not?

[A new approach to crime](#)

This week the government made more announcements about dealing with crime. They tell us that the Prime Minister has ordered an urgent review into the prison sentences of violent and sexual offenders to ensure the public are properly protected from the most dangerous criminals. The review, beginning immediately, will focus on violent and sexual offenders, assessing if their sentences truly reflect the severity of their crimes. It will look at whether we need to change the law so they cannot be let out if they have not served

their full time. Finally, it will examine how we can break the vicious cycle of prolific, repeat offenders.

This review is part of wider attack on crime, recruiting 20,000 new police officers, creating 10,000 new prison places and increasing stop and search powers. The aim is to keep dangerous criminals off the streets.

The new prison places will come from building new modern, efficient prisons which will provide better opportunities to reform criminals, meaning less re-offending and a lower burden on the taxpayer. Offering strengthened stop and search powers will give the police full support in combatting serious violence and keeping people safe.

The government will also publish draft guidance on measures in the Offensive Weapons Act , paving the way for new criminal offences that will help to stop knives and dangerous acids making their way into criminal use.

Are there other features you would like to see in an effective counter crime strategy? Clearly strong policing of our borders to keep out international criminals would be welcome. I also favour more work on rehabilitation and non custodial sentences for lesser crimes where there is no violence involved and where there is good chance of avoiding re offending.