

Apparently a request for a long delay has been cancelled!

Good news that maybe the Prime Minister has now understood she must not ask for a long delay.

No delay

The referendum result must be fully implemented on 29 March 2019 as the law states. Mrs May lost the support of 200 Conservative MPs when she proposed a delay in Brexit in Parliament last week. The EU can see from that vote she does not even speak for her own governing party when she asks for a delay. She cannot tell us how long a delay or why!

Jobs and pay continue to grow

Contrary to gloomy pundits the start of this year has brought more good news in the jobs market. 222,000 additional jobs were added in the last three months to end January, meaning more people with an income from employment to pay their bills and improve their lives. Pay sustained rises of 3.4%, usefully ahead of price inflation, so the average earner will have a bit more spending power as a result.

Now would be a good time to reinforce these favourable trends. Given the growing weakness of the Euro area economy and the slowdown in China, it would be helpful if the government would tax a bit less and spend a bit more. The figures show higher tax receipts than planned. They also show continuing reductions in taxes like VED and Stamp Duty where the rates have been set too high to maximise the revenue, whilst damaging activity and putting people out of work in the affected areas.

All parties agree that the best way out of low income and poor living standards is to get a job, and the best way to get a decent job is to work up from a lower paid job. Good employers help train an individual to realise their skill levels and therefore raise their pay. As unemployment is now quite low and as some employers are complaining they cannot attract the workers they need, it is even more imperative for companies to work with the people they have got. Value, them, train them, pay them better and get their

productivity up. The UK is good at creating lots more jobs, but needs to get better at increasing productivity. The aim must be a higher wage higher productivity economy.

Unemployment is now at a 40 year low and employment at a new high. 76% of all people of working age are in jobs.

Planning for Wokingham

Today I am meeting the Secretary of State for Communities and local government in the Commons to put Wokingham's case for a slower rate of building. Last year the housebuilding rate shot up to more than twice the required amount under the local plan, with obvious strains on our road network and local communities living nearby.

I have two proposals to put to him. The first is Wokingham's large contribution to the national housebuilding effort should be reflected in decisions by Planning Inspectors,. They should not grant more permissions outside the agreed areas in the local plan.

The second is that Wokingham should have a lower build rate for the next local plan period.

Maybe you cannot keep asking the same question in Parliament

The Speaker's ruling was a good one on the government's Withdrawal Agreement. It has twice been decisively rejected. On the second occasion the government tabled additional documents and argued it was a amended proposal, but many in Parliament thought the changes did not amount to much. As I wrote at the time, ask the same question and you probably get the same answer. From this clear ruling it seems the government cannot now table the same Agreement and vote again on it before the end of this week when the PM goes to the European Council.

If she goes to the Council and gets some material change to the Agreement then she could return to the Commons next week and seek another vote. Meanwhile the ruling should also have implications for some other hardy perennials that this Parliament likes to go over and over again. Several times we have voted down staying in the customs union. We have voted down a second referendum. We have voted down the Cooper-Boles-Letwin idea of taking

over the Commons agenda to legislate for Brexit delay. Perhaps now these cannot be put again either.

It is also true that the Commons approved a motion against leaving without an Agreement. That however contradicts the legislation the House has passed, where the legislation will take precedence unless amended.

I am urging the Prime Minister to go to the Council at the end of this week and tell them we were leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement. I am asking her to table a free trade agreement and to invite them to talks as we leave the EU in accordance with their timetable. I do not see why the UK would seek an extension to Article 50. So far Ministers have been unable to come up with any plausible reason why the EU should grant us an extension.