

The BBC Today programme recycles the trade deal scare

I awoke to the one sided comment that prices will rise as we will lose access to the EU 's trade deals when we leave. Both the EU and the UK has to confirm with the other party to any given trade deal that we wish to continue as before after seperation. I do not know of any country wanting to end these arragements with either the rest of the EU or with the UK!

The UK government is discussing this with all the relevant countries to ensure continuity.

Once out of the EU we can unilaterally lower or remove the tariff on anything we like.

Travelling sense

Just before Christmas the government floated the idea of charging lorries for road use instead of some of the current forms of taxation they pay. There was a suggestion they are looking for a way of ensuring that foreign trucks pay a fair contrubution for the use of our roads. At the moment a foreign lorry pays no VED and can avoid fuel duties by arriving with a nearly full tank and leaving nearly empty. In opposition I and others proposed a Brit disc to ensure foreign trucks paid a charge like VED to level the playing field.

Some think this reform idea is a way for the Treasury to get ahead of the rise of the electric vehicle which will eliminate a lot of fuel duty revenue. The government, however, has made clear it is not considering applying this reform to cars and light vans, so it is not the solution to the rise of the electric vehicle undermining the motoring tax base.

We have long experienced heavy taxation from a mixture of VED and fuel taxes on motoring which far exceeds the cost of monopoly provision and regulation of roadspace. No government is going to find an easy way of substituting revenue from sources other than motoring. Most governments positively favour taxing road travel as they see it as a problem rather than as a freedom and an economic solution for the supply of goods and services.

I am planning several blogs to explore how we can live with the car and van, enjoy the flexibility they offer, and find revenue streams as technology and regulatory requirements change the shape of personal travel. The change to electric if governments follow through with this demand poses one set of difficulties.

Larger issues would be posed if the market took us over time to many more relying on hired in or time share vehicles rather than each owning their own car. Widespread adoption of hire in would mean a large reduction in the size of the car fleet, with obvious consequences for VED and other per car levies.

Happy Christmas

I wish you a happy Christmas. I am having the day off, but send me thoughts if you wish.

Christmas eve

(Here's one I prepared earlier)

WILL SANTA COME TONIGHT?

"Will Santa come? Will Santa come tonight?"

"He might. He might.

If you are good, he might."

"Can I stay up and see?"

"No. He will not come for you or me

If we do not sleep .

He's too busy to meet us all."

"And will he come for us?

If you go to sleep – he does not like fuss."

Tonight, by the lights of the tree

There is, at last, some grown up time for me.

The cake is iced
The wine is spiced
The carrots diced.

The pudding's steamed
The brandy butter creamed.
The turkey prepared awaits
And yes, I did clean the plates.
The tree is up, the table laid,
the cards are out , though the credit card's unpaid!

So shall I soon with gifts a plenty
Mount the stairs to deliver twenty?
Do I dare to tread the stair?
And will it creak?
And will it creak?
When can I take a peek?
I need to know if they slumber
Before I arrive with my lumber.

If they are still awake
what dreams will go?
What heart might break?
Or do they know?
And is their belief just all for show?

So tonight by the magic tree
There is need of more time just for me

I will wait – and struggle to keep open my eyes
And wrestle with the morality of eating Santa's mince pies.

My adult mind is full of Christmas chores
The cooking times, and the cards through neighbours' doors
The parties with do not drink and drive in my ears
So the night does not end in tears
Drinks that might have been – but not that cheap red
Which would give me a headache as soon as I got to bed

I was once a child too excited to sleep
with a torrent of thoughts about what I might be given
Hoping that it was a toy beneath the wrapping – should I peep? –
Not more socks or hankies, preferably something to be driven

So could Santa still come for me?
Drowsily I dream as if I were eight
Hoping that Santa would not be late
Like every little boy
There is of course a much wanted toy

So will Santa come tonight?
He might, He might.
If you sleep well
and if you believe

Only if you believe.

And only if in your family
Love fills the hours you will be spending.
It could be the true Santa on the stair
Or it could be someone from an empty chair.
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So will Santa come?
He will. He will.

[Good Christmas news for animals](#)

I was delighted to see the government wants to improve the lot of young pets by tightening controls on breeding and selling kittens and puppies.

The government wishes to ensure that all dog breeders are licensed and only sell animals they have bred themselves. They need to keep young dogs and cats with their mothers for at least eight weeks before sale. They plan a better clampdown on smuggling animals, and on breeding pets with genetic problems. The law will be strengthened to offer more protection to the animals.

Like many of my constituents I want to see pets treated well, and to ensure they are bred and sold by decent local businesses that care about them. I have lobbied for higher standards and voted to end the use of tamed wild animals in the circus.