

More funny numbers from the OBR

So we learn that UK state borrowing was £11.3 bn less in the first four months of this financial year than the OBR forecast. Spending was up so the main reason for a further large error once again was understating tax revenues. Income tax was up by a massive 13% . the OBR often understates revenue when the economy grows a little.

I renew my question to Ministers. Why do you make the OBR five year forecast of the deficit the key control on your economic choices? As the OBR cannot get within £10 bn for the immediate year why believe the 5 year forecast? If the OBR model regularly understates tax revenue why accept advice to hike tax rates?

The numbers were further distorted by the transfer of £14 bn to the Bank of England to pay losses, taking the total to an astonishing £24 bn in just four months. The Bank's decision to sell bonds at the low prices it has driven them down to instead of holding them to repayment has added to the misery and inflated government ex Bank borrowing and spending.

Spending on benefits was up £11bn, on staff costs £8.2 bn and grants to Councils up £3 bn, making a total increase of £24 bn so far this year. If the government would introduce a freeze on public sector recruiting save for key personnel like medics and uniformed roles the government could start to control some of these outgoings.

Debt interest remains very elevated, More than half the stated costs do not entail any cash payments out or additional borrowing given the way the accounts treat indexation of some bonds.

The government needs to look through these confusing numbers and forecasts. The underlying reality is it could cut the rate of increase in spending, boost public sector productivity and cut some tax rates to grow the economy and revenues more.

Wokingham gets more money per head than neighbours according to IFS

I have had a few emails from constituents repeating Lib Dem claims that Wokingham gets little or no government funding and is short of money to spend.

The IFS has recently published a study of spending per head on five main service areas, including local government and schools. This combines

government grants and local revenues.

The table beneath shows Wokingham in second place after West Berkshire amongst local areas:

Place	Schools per head	Local government per head
West Berkshire	£941 £1822	£881
Wokingham	£892 £1736	£844
Bracknell	£ 879 £1662	£783
Reading	£831 £1634	£803
Hampshire	£797 £1593	£796
Windsor and M	£873 £1555	£682

These figures show that Wokingham is not treated badly or without money in the way the council has been saying. I have made the case for better funding for social services and schools in Wokingham and am pleased to see the government has increased the financial support it offers.

[Some questions on carbon accounting](#)

In order to close the gap with net zero ambitions governments and companies pursuing this agenda need to revise the way they account for it. Here are some questions they need to answer.

1. As China, Russia, India produce more than 40% of the world's CO₂ output and their output is still growing, how do we get to the 2030 and 2035 targets? What actions are being taken to get the largest and fastest growing outputs by these countries to be reined in?

2. Why does the system assume electric vehicles are a win for less CO₂? Will the figures include the fact that many EVs are being recharged with electricity that may come from more fossil fuel than renewable generation? What allowance is made for all the CO₂ produced in mining and smelting the raw materials for an EV and its battery? And for total assembly and delivery? How many miles does an EV have to travel before it generates less CO₂ than

carrying on with an older ICE vehicle, assuming it can get 100% renewable electricity or putting in accurate figures for the CO₂ content of the electricity likely to be used.

3. Why does the accounting system credit a country with lower CO₂ because it has closed down fossil fuel based activities, only to import the products needed? This will usually raise world CO₂ by the amount of extra transport involved.

4. When attributing success to more renewables shouldn't you need to also factor in the extra costs and extra CO₂ from the standby fossil fuel generation needed to prevent black out when the wind drops?

5. What will be the CO₂ impact of needing to put in so much more grid capacity and cable to allow a major switch from gas to electricity?

6. When calculating the CO₂ impact of rail travel it is important to include connecting travel by road vehicle and do a whole journey calculation. It is also important to use a realistic mix of electric and diesel trains and allow for times in stations with engines running.

Nationalised roads

Our road system is badly run, delivering a poor service to all the people struggling to get to work, to drop children off at school and getting to the shops. It lets down delivery drivers, large trucks bringing essential supplies and business vehicles carrying people to do work in our homes and commercial premises.

It is a typical nationalised monopoly. It believes in keeping us short of roadspace on the bizarre grounds that if they built more roads we would use them more. Any normal business is delighted to expand when it hits on a popular product or service.

The highways authorities take special delight in making life as difficult as possible for their tax paying customers. They regularly restrict access, narrow lanes, increase junction delays and change rules on road use. They compound this by setting traps to get more fines revenue out of complex and changing regulations.

They fail to maintain the surfaces of many roads, letting potholes grow until more extensive and expensive repairs are needed. The state grossly overcharges for use of the roads, collecting far more in motoring taxes than it defrays in road costs.

They insist on putting cables and pipes under the middle of main road requiring digging up the road every time a repair, replacement or increase of

facility is needed.

Why? We depend on the roads for so much of our lifestyle.

Bossiness

The governing elites are usually unpopular. They may have to make unpopular decisions. There will always be some who think they tax too much and others who think they give away too little.

The current governing elites of the EU are particularly unpopular. So are those officials, lawyers and other senior people in UK institutions that have a similar world view to their EU friends and opposite numbers. One of the reasons is the overarching bossiness, the we know best attitudes they strike on so many crucial matters.

There is first the discourse. They wish to talk about the road to net zero, the need to be generous to migrants, the need to follow international Agreements and Treaties, the need to suppress or defeat populist movements. Many in the public want their concerns to be heard. How do I get a better job? How do I pay the energy bills? When can I afford a home of my own? Am I allowed to fly abroad? Can I use my car or van to get around without more charges and barriers?

The refusal of the elites to take many of the popular issues seriously adds to the tensions. The populists cry humbug when they see elite players flying round the world to green conferences, staying at air conditioned hotels and ordering the best meat on the menu whilst telling the rest of us to do none of the above. The elites shout back that the people must understand the priority of cutting carbon dioxide, the need to accept dearer energy and more fossil fuel taxes to get there. They explain their carefully contrived legal framework which turns out to thwart populist ideas of how to improve more voters lives.

As a result of this process most of the major governing and opposition parties in the EU of the late last century have been destroyed or have shrunk in the face of populist movements of the right and left. The splintering of their votes reveals an inner unhappiness by electors.