

[My Interview with Talk TV](#)

Please find below the link to my Talk TV interview with Mike Graham where I discuss central banks, inflation and economic growth amidst the Spring Budget announcements.

You can find it between 35:30-44:00

[Small boats](#)

Today and tomorrow the Commons will take the Committee stage of the illegal migration bill. There are various amendments tabled to seek to make the decisions about the future of illegal migrants proof against excessive delays and legal appeals. Whilst it is important that anyone claiming asylum should have a fair hearing and a right to an appeal if necessary, it is wrong to allow so many legal interventions that people arriving illegally get to stay here for years whilst endless legal processes are explored against the original decision, at the taxpayers expense. It is also important not to effectively give illegal migrants some priority or ability to get round the rules and to stay here regardless of where they came from when there are safe routes for legal entry from countries where they are at risk.

The government is promising to look at the suggested amendments with a view to strengthening its Bill. It is important it does so, as people will expect these legal changes to be sufficient so the government can deliver its promise to stop the boats.

[The Bank of England's mistakes](#)

Most MPs tell me the Bank of England is independent. They tell me its sole purpose is to keep inflation down to the 2% target Parliament has set it. Yet when inflation runs more than five times target most MPs have no wish to debate why or to venture any criticism of the Bank.

They ignore the fact that government and Parliament appoint the Governor, set the target, approve and underwrite all the bond buying the Bank has been doing which meant ultra low interest rates, and question the Governor through a Select Committee. It has been lonely criticising the Bank for printing too much money in 2021 and now for destroying too much money in 2023, though all this has been approved and indemnified by government.

It was therefore a pleasure to read the Daily Telegraph yesterday with a leader and a good article criticising the Bank for its role in creating and allowing the inflation to take hold. The paper should go on and criticise the Bank for disrupting the bond market with its large Quantitative tightening programme last autumn, having to reverse it temporarily when it saw the damage it did to the LDI/pensions market, and ask more questions about whether they have now lurched from money being far too easy to being too tight.

In future articles I will look at why the Bank has got so many of its forecasts of inflation wrong in recent years, how it could improve its track record and how it should now proceed. I will stress that in practice the Bank has three aims, not just one. It does need to consider growth as well as inflation, and above all needs to ensure financial stability in the banking system that it regulates and finances. It had a bad record in the period 2006-10 doing this.

Can we now cut VAT?

One of my reasons for campaigning over the Northern Ireland protocol is I want the UK government to be able to set or amend taxes they impose. One of the Brexit wins for me was going to be removing VAT from items that should not be taxed like female hygiene products, home insulation and other green items. I also wanted to raise the threshold limit before a small business has to comply. There are many cases now of small businesses that stop trading during the year in order to avoid exceeding the £85,000 turnover limit. Literally guests houses have some months when they refuse guests and many small trading businesses discourage orders when they are getting near the limit.

The arguments of the last few weeks have not for me been theoretical or constitutional or over diplomacy. They have been about these basic issues of who sets the taxes and who fixes the law that have a direct impact on the small businesses of my constituency and the rest of our country. In 2019 the UK lost a case in the European Court and was forced to impose VAT on wind and water turbines. A complex services test was imposed before insulation could qualify for zero VAT. In 2022 the UK legislated to correct some of this bad judgement, but could not make changes for Northern Ireland under the Protocol.

I have long been worried that the Treasury's reluctance to raise the VAT threshold relates to their belief that they cannot do so for Northern Ireland. I will table some more questions about what powers the EU will still have under the latest agreement, both over NI and the whole of the UK. It appears the UK has accepted it needs to keep much of the VAT law framework. VAT is a bureaucratic tax, expensive for business to administer. Instead of

just being a tax on the final consumer, a simple purchase tax, it is a tax on all business activity. It needs a system of input and output taxation, with businesses trying to reclaim VAT on materials and intermediates, as every time a component, material or finished manufacture changes hands it attracts VAT.

[We fight to keep the weekly bin collection in Wokingham](#)

I have supported our Conservative Councillors in trying to keep our weekly bin collections. I was pleased to see this press release from them:

Conservative Councillors Win Vote to Keep Weekly Bin Collections Following Petition of 1800 Residents

Wokingham Conservative Group and one of the Borough's Independent councillors voted to retain weekly bin collections despite the Liberal Democrat/Labour Coalition administration's plan to reduce bin collections to fortnightly.

The vote came after a debate on a petition of 1800 residents' signatures.

The petition, presented to Council last month, reflects concerns for larger families, for people who have more waste to dispose, such as nappies, and for residents who do not have room to store rubbish.

At the Budget Council meeting in February Liberal Democrat Cllr Ian Shenton described the petition as "spurious".

This follows a Council consultation where only 24 per cent of responders said that they liked the idea of fortnightly collections.

The Council consultation on waste did not include an option to retain the current system of weekly collections or blue bags, preventing local people from expressing a view.

Wokingham Conservative Councillors would retain weekly waste collection and make savings by enabling residents to recycle more of their household waste. The cost to the Council of disposing of recycling is significantly cheaper than that of general waste.

Despite other nearby authorities moving to fortnightly collections, previous Conservative administrations in Wokingham Borough have kept weekly waste collections for 20 years, through careful management of the Council's finances.

Cllr Norman Jorgensen, Shadow Executive Member for the Environment said "It is clear the majority of residents wish to retain weekly waste collections. I

am pleased that an Independent councillor recognised just how unpopular this policy is and has voted with us.

“The Lib Dem/Labour Coalition didn’t give residents the chance to express their views on keeping weekly bin collections. I am glad we were able to bring resident’s views to the Council despite Liberal Democrat’s attempts to discredit it as “spurious”.

“Waste collection and recycling are important universal services that everyone in the Borough relies on. This policy will not save any money in the short term. In fact, it is expected to cost £2 million to implement. And future savings are not guaranteed. Remember this is the administration who said, when they scrapped the caddy liners, that they would increase recycling, saving the Council £300k. As we predicted at the time food recycling has not increased.

“Residents are being expected to pay more for less – this is not value for money for taxpayers.”

Cllr Pauline Jorgensen, Leader of the Conservative Group, said, “This was a vote on one of the Liberal Democrat/Labour Coalition’s key policies. They have wasted months trying to force through this unpopular and flawed decision.

“The Liberal Democrats didn’t include imposing fortnightly bin collections on residents in their election literature. In fact, some members of the Liberal Democrat Executive previously campaigned to keep weekly waste collections.

“Now residents have had their views heard. I hope that this will make the Lib Dem administration think again.”

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