

Inflation and recession

We have the inflation. It is important to avoid the recession. It looks as if we will see peak inflation this autumn as the official forecasts now concede. The delayed increases in domestic heating bills will adversely affect the inflation numbers then and hit people's budgets again at the next increase.

Next year inflation should come down. It is difficult to believe the prices of the basics could go up again by the magnitudes of the increases this year. Money policy this year is a lot tighter, whereas it was too loose last year. The economy is being slowed by the Bank's policy and their higher interest rates, and by the big hit to real incomes caused by soaring fuel and food prices. Many people are responding by having to cut back on some discretionary spending to afford the basics. The reduction in demand from these measures will help cool prices.

It does not need a wide range of tax rises on top of the forces slowing the economy. VAT cuts on energy would be helpful, both by cutting the prices of some of the dearest items in budgets, and by returning a bit of cash to people who otherwise have to pass the money to the fuel companies, suppliers and government energy taxes.

My intervention to the Transport Secretary about taxpayer subsidies to the Railways and how Managers could try to keep services running on a strike day

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): What has been the monthly rate of taxpayer subsidy to the railways so far this year? What additional flexibilities could managers use to try to get a bigger proportion of services running even on a strike day?

Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport: My right hon. Friend is right to discuss the subsidy, which has been £16 billion as a whole through covid—or £16 billion committed, which means that we do not have the exact number yet for the amount of that which is still going towards the operations this year. One thing I can say to him is that without that support the railways simply would not have been able to operate. It is the equivalent of £160,000 per individual rail worker. To turn around and call these strikes is a heck of a way to thank taxpayers. We have lost around a fifth of the income

from rail. I hear Mick Lynch, the leader of the RMT, claim that the Government are cutting the money that is going to the railways, but that is a fundamental misunderstanding on his part. The money that is missing is the £2 billion of passenger fares that are not being paid because people are not travelling.

[My letter to Wokingham Borough Council about A1 Car Spares](#)

Please find below my letter to the Chief Executive at Wokingham Borough Council regarding A1 Car Spares:

Dear Susan

I am aware that my constituents have met with Wokingham Borough Council to discuss the noise levels arising from A1 Car Spares.

This is a long running situation in which the residents have had to live with the noise generated by A1 on a daily basis. My constituents tell me that A1 have failed to comply with conditions placed on them regarding hours of operation, noise and vibration levels and they have failed to adhere to their own Noise Management Plan. The effect on the quality of life of my constituents cannot be stressed too strongly.

I am told there is relentless grinding noise, with reversing alarms from trucks sound continuously throughout the day.

Since 2019 I have worked with my constituents, Wokingham Borough Council and the Environment Agency in order to bring about a resolution which all parties can live with. Any respite achieved has been temporary and my constituents are understandably frustrated as am I.

The residents have also raised concerns about A1 cutting down protected trees and water pollution as a result of their operations.

I strongly support my constituents and I ask the Council to deal decisively with the problem and bring about a permanent solution which is long overdue.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood

Resolving the rail disputes

Management and Unions need a plan to modernise the railway. Only they can hammer out the detail of services, safety, investment in automation and pay that can help the railway adapt. A business which has lost so much revenue needs convincing ways of wooing back customers and restoring turnover, otherwise it needs to adjust its cost base to the reduced usage of its service.

The best way to resolve the disputes would be an agreement to the joint purpose of restoring revenues. It would be a plan to put more training and automation to work so pay can go up backed by substantial productivity gains. Only an expanding passenger base allied to new ways of delivering good service can bring forward the cash for higher pay than is already on offer.

It is going to be easier expanding rail freight from here with environmental benefit of taking trucks off the road. Wooing back five day a week commuters is going to be more difficult as many like some working at home. Many have been put off five day a week rail travel by high season ticket prices and unreliable services. The railway is not going to sustain its current cost base by just relying on expanding the leisure railway with plenty of off peak discount fares, especially given the difficulties getting enough weekend rail capacity for special events. The railway should be able to slim its cost base without compulsory redundancies if there is a shared wish by the Union to modernise.

Better road junctions

Four of the worst junctions on my way to work in Westminster would be easy to improve. The first is the junction of Millbank with Vauxhall Bridge Road on the Embankment. The lights allow twice as much time for traffic coming from the bridge heading north at the junction as they allow for traffic passing along the Embankment. As a result there are regularly unused periods of time when the Vauxhall Bridge northbound lights are green with no traffic, whilst there are nearly always queues along the Embankment requiring vehicles often to await two changes of lights to cross. A simple retiming of lights would cut traffic waits.

The second is the junction of Lyall Street, Elizabeth Street and Eaton Place. There they placed one of those sets of cross roads lights that have all red phases for traffic. I have never seen a pedestrian cross both ways at the same time, who would be the only person needing this all red phase. There are very few pedestrians as it is not a shopping or leisure area. The all red phases should be removed.

The third is the junction of Drummond Gate with Vauxhall Bridge Road. This is one of those junctions designed to maximise the take in fines from unwary drivers, with box junctions that make it difficult for vehicles turning right into Vauxhall bridge Road to find enough road space to do so against red lights ahead. There is plenty of road space for a sensible repaint. The timings of lights at the junction of Bessborough Gardens and John Islip Street does not give enough priority to the main road, adding to the chaos and increasing the back up to the close by Drummond Gate junction.

The fourth is the junction of the A4 with Warwick Road at Earls Court. There is not enough priority given to west east Cromwell Road into London by the lights. The other main flow to turn left out of Warwick Road onto Cromwell Road westbound could also benefit a longer left filter phase with suitable lane markings on the A4.

I give these examples as a few amongst many. We all need to review the failings of our local roads and submit proposals for change to our local Highways authority. I am doing such an exercise for my Wokingham constituency.