

Ministers should insist on a revision of aims for government

In this civil service led government the aims are to preserve the EU legal framework, promote net zero in all things, keep obedient and good relations with all international bodies, allow quangos to take most of the decisions and bind U.K. defence, resilience and economic activity into the European model.

Some Ministers welcome this. The Treasury runs on rephrased Maastricht rules and pays up for all the bills to the EU and foreign governments and bodies without ever pushing back on them. The Business department until the recent Ministerial led change of energy policy got on with running down U.K. industry and energy to cut domestic CO₂ only to import more. The defence department joined many procurement and deployment systems with allies leaving the U.K. unable to arm herself easily in case of need.

We now need a reset for the new world we face. The USA, the EU, China and other important players are promoting more self sufficiency and less reliance on imports. The world is splitting into two large informal blocs, a democratic state one led by the USA and an autocratic one led by China. In this world the U.K. needs to follow policies which strengthen our national resilience and draws us closer to allies we can trust. The 5 Eyes grouping is central to our future, just as NATO is crucial to our defence.

The U.K. needs a strategy to ensure we have all the technologies and capabilities we need to feed ourselves, to defend ourselves and to keep the lights on. The policy of binding our energy system into an EU one when the continent is chronically short of oil and gas was a bad idea. The growth of dependence on continental food was short sighted. The shedding of core industrial activities like steel making, ceramics and aluminium was unwise.

The new national security policy has to be based on the perception that we need to do more for ourselves. The Ukraine war should be a wake up call to how vulnerable the European continent is if it loses access to Russian gas and Ukrainian food.

Why Ministers struggle to run government

The civil service has been used over many years to running the U.K. as a subject state of the European Union. It has given them a growing and activist agenda of legislation covering an ever widening range of areas. The civil

service busied Ministers with trying to negotiate minor changes to the EU wishes. Parliament has been told to legislate a vast amount of derived law, with the civil service drafting complex and long versions of the initiating Directives and telling Ministers that was necessary to avoid infraction proceedings against the U.K. in the European Court. Much of it went through as long and complex unamendable secondary legislation under the authority of the European Communities Act.

The Treasury ran economic policy on the EU austerity model. They dictated tax and spend policy from the Maastricht debt and deficit controls. The EU's extensive net zero policy overarched energy, industrial and environment policy. Governments usually went along with these extensive directives. They either adopted the aims as their own or denied anything significant was happening.

Now we are out there is clear evidence that many civil servants still seek to keep Ministers and government aligned with EU policy. There is a reluctance or inability to grasp the opportunity Brexit offers. Ministers need to set new aims and insist on repeals and amendments to the EU ways. The U.K. needs to be far more flexible and innovative. The civil service has been disappointing in implementing Ministerial wishes to resolve the lop sided and unfair EU interpretation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the policy to end illegal cross Channel migration as a couple of examples. We need a new Union of purpose between civil servants and Ministers to shape an independent policy.

[A written response from the Department of Health and Social Care](#)

I have received the below written answer from the Department of Health and Social Care:

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (91818):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidential basis supporting the decision to move to covid-19 Plan B. (91818)

Tabled on: 13 December 2021

Answer:

Maggie Throup:

Prior to the move to Plan B on 8 December 2021, the available data at that time suggested that the confirmed prevalence and transmission of cases of the

Omicron variant was high. The Government evaluated a range of emerging evidence and metrics including those discussed in the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies' meetings 97 to 101 and associated meetings, such as meetings of the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group, the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling, Operational sub-group, the COVID-19 Clinical Information Network and the Environmental Modelling Group. These meetings were minuted and published on GOV.UK. Data from the COVID-19 dashboard was also assessed, including the Office for National Statistics' population survey, the UK Health Security Agency's vaccine coverage and effectiveness data, National Health Service data, rates of positive tests and international data.

The answer was submitted on 28 Apr 2022 at 12:00.

[Progress with energy](#)

The shortage of energy and the realisation of the need to keep the lights on has led to some crucial changes of U.K. policy recently.

The government does now see the need to keep the 3 old coal power stations open for when the wind does not blow. Let's hope they are in time to save them. yesterday wind only delivered 4% of our electricity, requiring huge quantities of gas.

It now sees the need to get more gas and oil out from the North Sea given the world shortage and the wish to avoid Russian energy.

Let us hope its fracking review comes up with the answer that we should offer incentives to landowners and local communities to allow onshore production as well.

[Two Written Answers from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#)

I have received the below two written answers from Ministers at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (158851):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish an assessment of the impact of high fertiliser prices on the volume of planting of wheat in England in 2022. (158851)

Tabled on: 25 April 2022

Answer:

Jo Churchill:

It has not proved possible to respond to the hon. Member in the time available before Prorogation.

The answer was submitted on 28 Apr 2022 at 12:07.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (158850):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help secure more planting of greenhouse food crops in the context of high gas prices. (158850)

Tabled on: 25 April 2022

Answer:

Victoria Prentis:

An innovative, productive and competitive agricultural sector is one of the Government's key priorities, and we recognise the role greenhouse crop production has in ensuring a reliable and sustainable supply of fresh produce throughout the year.

The Government is working with the sector on a forward-thinking approach. It is looking at innovative ways of growing crops, such as increased use of greenhouse crop production and other state of the art farming technology which can help maximise crop growth and increase productivity.

We are aware of the challenges facing greenhouse growers and other farming sectors, as a result of the recent increase in the cost of a range of inputs including high gas prices, and the impact this is having on the production of food crops.

We continue to keep the market situation under review through UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments. We are increasing our engagement with industry to supplement our analysis with real time intelligence.

The answer was submitted on 28 Apr 2022 at 11:33.