

Trade hits new records

Remain tried to make out Brexit was mainly about trade. It was of course mainly about taking back control, giving us the right to make our own laws, set our own taxes and spend our own money. They also asserted it would damage our trade to leave. They said we would not even be able to roll over all the EU trade deals we were part of. Treasury, Bank, much of the civil service and Remain parties pushed out these lies continuously. The Treasury famously summed up its conclusions by saying wrongly that leaving would "push the UK into recession and lead to a sharp rise in unemployment." Their severe shock scenario meant an extra 800,000 unemployed and a 6% fall in GDP!

So what happened?

After the vote unemployment fell and the economy grew. Trade went up.

The UK did roll over all the EU trade deals into UK trade deals and in some cases negotiated improvements to them.

The UK went on to agree a trade deal with the Trans Pacific Partnership countries. The UK also at some needless political cost signed a trade agreement with the EU.

The government has recently released figures for what has happened to our trade since the vote and since we left. Our service exports have doubled since 2014 to non EU countries (2016 was a little up on 2014) and risen by more than a half since 2016 to the EU.

The UK is now the second largest exporter of services worldwide after the USA. We are now adding service sector chapters to trade deals which the EU was unwilling to do.

Total exports are up from under £600 m in 2016 to £862 bn in the year to February 2024. They are up by a third to the EU and by considerably more to the rest of the world.

A divided party won the local elections

Labour did well in the local elections. Being hopelessly divided on big issues did not stop its success. Its former leader remains banished. Some of the Corbynites remain on the Labour benches arguing for more Corbynite policies. The party is deeply split over the Hamas/ Israel war with some wanting a much tougher anti Israel line and some worrying about anti semitism

. It is split over the Reeves wish to follow OBR austerity economics. There are many keen promoters over a speedier path to net zero shocked by the dumping of planned public spending to try to up the pace. All those who want to nationalise much more and tax much more are kept quiet or played down.

I point this out as a minority in my party argue that if all Conservative MPs supported everything the government does we would jump in the polls. They say divided parties cannot win. So how did Labour manage it? How did Margaret Thatcher pull off 3 great wins, when the Wets as they were then disparagingly called tried to undermine her continuously?

The way to win is to govern well. It is to allow robust debate about issues, policies and out turns. A leader needs to listen, adopt the best ideas, and be prepared to make the case for his choices.

To win Rishi Sunak needs to get legal migration well down, cut taxes for all, curb excessive public sector losses, recapture lost public service productivity and resolve public sector strikes.

Most people do not believe there is a climate emergency

Most of us accept the science that says CO₂ is a greenhouse gas, and accept manmade CO₂ is an influence on the climate. Clearly, however, most people do not think there is a manmade CO₂ driven climate emergency, because if they did we would see jet travel plunging, car use falling, meat diets disappearing, heat pumps flying off the shelves and many other behavioural changes.

Instead polls tell us people are against dearer fossil fuel energy. They oppose higher petrol taxes, oppose schemes to make it more difficult to use cars and vans, oppose wind farms and pylons near their homes and are angry about climate protesters trying to block roads and attacking petrol companies. Only a small minority buy all electric cars.

Many voters would like government to limit UK CO₂ by enforcing a major reduction in migration numbers. We would like more home grown food to cut the food miles rather than wilding schemes to boost imports. We support promoting fuel efficiency.

Some say in a temperate climate like the UK a possible average rise of temperature of say 2 degrees might help agriculture, as would some increase in CO₂. There have been many changes in climate during earth history. Some think adaptation is a more affordable and practical response as and when change occurs. It is self evidently true that unless China, India and the US reduce their CO₂ output nothing we do can stop more rises in world CO₂. It

is also obvious importing instead of making and growing at home usually increases world CO₂ so it is not a win. The Green party who promote climate crisis as their lead issue never get out single figures in the polls.

[My Intervention on the Urgent Question – Port Talbot Steelworks](#)

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

When will the Government do something about the very high energy prices in this country, which have been made high by regulations and taxes? Does my right hon. Friend not accept that any kind of steelmaking will be extremely difficult if we have uncompetitive energy, and is it not wrong to import such materials, because it will mean even more carbon dioxide emissions, as well as destroying jobs here?

David T. C. Davies (Secretary of State for Wales):

We have looked carefully at the losses that Tata is making, which have come about partly because of the age of the infrastructure. In fact, Tata has had to close down the furnaces at the Morfa coke ovens within the last few weeks. The UK Government are fully cognisant of the cost of energy at the moment, which is why Tata has already benefited from many of the schemes that we have introduced over the past few years, will begin to benefit from the British industry supercharger scheme shortly, and will benefit from the carbon border adjustment mechanism at the start of 2027.

[Too many layers of government](#)

The more government we have the worse it is. I have more government than I want, more government than I need and more government than I can afford.

It is great news we have got rid of the needless, prying, interventionist EU government. Too many places still have three layers of local government with County, district and town or parish. There are then national quangos and regional quangos.

Wokingham has a Borough Unitary rather than County and District. That avoids disputes and confusions over which Council does what and saves a double overhead. I did with others successfully press to get rid of the regional Development Agency but we are now lumbered with a useless, annoying and expensive LEP, though it is cheaper than the RDA.

Elected Mayors are prone to playing national politics in preference to doing the day job of improving and supervising local public services. Mayor Kahn has damaged London with his anti driver measures, his failure to control knife crime and his inability to run a good value strike free public transport system, The overlap with the London Boroughs causes tensions and extra cost, especially over planning.