

Controlling the borders

It sounds as if the government is now going to take more action to clamp down on the people trafficking and smuggling that is a daily event across the Channel. Many people are writing to MPs to complain that Poland and the EU is seeking to resist large illegal movements across their border whilst the UK authorities are daily assisting people smugglers and traffickers to make money out of endangering the lives of a mixture of refugees and illegal economic migrants from France, a safe country.

The government is taking new legislation through Parliament to strengthen the law. All too many failed asylum seekers who have lost their case and more than one appeal stay on, with a legal industry seeking to frustrate the decision of the Home Office that they do not qualify as asylum seekers. The Home Secretary needs to check her draft Bill to make sure it will be a sufficient instruction to the courts. Those who claim to be asylum seekers should be given a fair hearing and opportunity to make their case. They should have the right to a single appeal to an independent court. There should not be a way of using delayed processes to allow them to carry on living in the UK long after it has been determined they are not asylum seekers .

The right kind of greenery My article from Conservative Home

Conservatives and greenery go together. We wish to conserve what is best in nature and our environment. Conservatives have often pioneered legislation to improve water quality, clean up our air, protect our countryside and conserve what is best in our landscape and heritage. Around the country Conservative Councils are often struggling with the dilemma of people needing affordable homes whilst many others regret the passing of woods and pastures to grow crops of new houses. Many of us share the passion for clean air and water and for the gentle contours of English rural landscapes.

The levelling up agenda provides a heaven sent opportunity to do something better. There is no reason why planning policies should continue to direct ever more executive homes to the hard pressed south east, when other parts of the country could benefit from the jobs and investment major new housebuilding creates. Now that in the post pandemic world more homeworking and remote working is becoming part of our lives many more people will be freed from the need to live close to London on a commuter pathway. More small businesses and start up enterprises could be encouraged to establish away from the lure of the capital city. That requires more attractive housing for

the investors, managers and entrepreneurs who will help populate the growth and success of areas that are grasping the opportunity to level up.

Levelling up will be a vast series of personal journeys. For everyone in an area that is improving who does set up a business or brings in a new investment there will be many others who will seize the opportunity to get a better job, to use and develop their talents to advance the new enterprise. Every major company siting a business premise in a new area represents an opportunity for smaller companies to spring up to supply everything from the lunchtime sandwiches and coffees through to the technology support, the cleaning and components they will need. Every new housing estate creates first round jobs for the building trades to be followed by all the jobs to support new residents in their new homes.

Government's role is not only to provide better planning policies, but also to help with high quality education and training. Working with business there can be a new can do approach in places which have been sidelined by investors in recent years. The main thing enterprises need is talented people to work for them and deliver great customer service and product excellence.

Over the last fortnight the UK government has valiantly tried to craft worldwide agreement over the issue of climate change. It was always a difficult task. India, China, and Russia, three of the largest producers of carbon dioxide on the planet were never going to agree to curb their appetites for burning coal, oil and gas. China accounts for some 30% of the total world creation of additional carbon dioxide, and has decided to mine more coal and build more coal power stations. The conference was divided on the very issue of whether coal burning should be completely phased out worldwide or not. In the end the assembled countries could only agree to a diluted sentiment that coal would be phased down, without timetables or pledges from the main users of the fuel. Germany kept a low profile, though she as an advanced country is holding out to burn coal in power stations through to 2038. The Greens are wanting to form part of the new governing coalition after the recent German election, and are pressing to bring this down to 2030 to bring Germany a bit closer to other advanced countries and the UN approved policy of phasing out coal quickly. It still shows how difficult it is to agree the end of coal when a major advanced industrial country clings to it as a prime source of energy.

The problems besetting COP 26 were not just the divided world over how feasible it is to decarbonise, nor even just the disagreement over how much money rich countries should send to poorer countries to help them change. Central to the whole debate is the question of people's buy in to what the transition means for their own lifestyle. It is only when there are sufficient affordable and good products available to heat your home, to travel to work and to fill your plate with carbon free food will the green programme take off. So far the elites who come to summits have lectured the many that we need to change our lifestyles whilst they themselves fly in jet planes to air conditioned hotels to eat meat diets as if none of their advice applied to themselves. When challenged they might claim that they have spent money on carbon offsets, whilst seeing no choice for their own purposes but to carry on using jet fuel, gas heating, traditional food products and the

rest. The digital revolution sweeps all before it without government requests or demands, without subsidies and taxes to drive it. People want mobile and smartphones, computer pads, entertainment downloads and the other services that the digital giants can offer. For COP 26 to succeed it needs to spawn a new generation of products and services that meet the carbon requirements whilst also being affordable and better solutions to the problems of everyday life.

Levelling up can of course help produce the range of new jobs and skills which a popular green revolution could generate. The main thrust is to electrify much more of life and then to generate more power from renewable or carbon neutral sources of energy. As governments bring this about they need to reassure people that there are ways of keeping the lights on when the wind does not blow and the sun does not shine. COP 26 set up various working groups of countries to explore new technologies to provide better travel, heating and industrial process. The sooner they produce results the better. If there are more breakthroughs with cheaper and better ways of doing these things that cut the carbon, then India, China and Russia will also want to adopt them. If there are not even the advanced countries will find it difficult to sell the practice of decarbonisation to their own electors.

[Remembrance Sunday in Wokingham](#)

On Sunday November 14th civic leaders and representatives met in the afternoon in the Town Hall to lay wreaths on the indoors war memorial. We marched down to All Saints for a service with members of the Borough and Town Councils, and the uniformed services.

In the service there were touching memories of those who lost their lives in war, as we were invited to explore the power of love to overcome hatred and fighting.

[NHS reorganisation](#)

I read little about the wide ranging management reorganisation of the NHS underway as the institution wrestles with recovery from the pandemic and continues to fight the continuing virus. The reorganisation is one sought by the management rather than being a political blueprint, which may account for the absence of debate.

The NHS in England has been recruiting Boards to run 42 Integrated Care

Systems. These in turn work with Integrated Care Partnerships. They are designed to promote collaboration and common working between GPs, Councils, providers of community and mental health services and Healthwatch. In parallel all the provider trusts – hospitals and other institutions providing healthcare and treatment- are to join provider networks, to work with others and to increase their scale of activity.

The Integrated Care Boards will be responsible for finance. They will procure the health services their area needs from a range of providers. Their budget will include “community commissioning money, GP budgets, specialised commissioning spend, budgets for certain other directly commissioned services, central support and national transformation funding.” They can delegate funds to the Partnerships based on their area.

The boundaries of these new bodies create bodies of different sizes and often combine several Council areas. Wokingham for example will come under Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West. Its eastern neighbour will be Frimley.

It has proved difficult to get much background information about the costs and benefits of these changes. It is important the new bodies are well primed to procure the services we need to cut the waiting lists and to maintain or improve the range and quality of services on offer so that all are of a good standard.

Remembrance Parade and service at Arborfield

On Sunday 14th November I joined the British legion in Arborfield for the march to the War memorial and for the service. I laid a wreath alongside others from local Councils and the uniformed services. It was a poignant moment when the names of all those who died in the 1914-18 war were read out. it was too many young men from what then was a small rural village. We looked across at the green fields beyond the road to a glimpse of the rural England they knew and would have kept in their hearts during the terror of the trenches.