

Happy New Year

"Pour me another, lets toast the new year
Here's to a better, put fizz in our cheer"

Tonight's not for sorrows, no mulling old wounds
Come banish our troubles, lets sing some new tunes

Caught in the present is a moment to choose
To look forwards or backwards, to win or to lose

If you comfort yourself holding what has past
This precious moment of hope will never last

Grasping the future and its so unknown way
Could bring success and many a wonderful day

The past is well trodden, we know the ending
The future is for moulding, shaping, bending

As last year expires, hopes and promises broken
Change things this time, leave pledges unspoken

So pour me another, drink to the new year

here's to a better, put fizz in our cheer

If your life is a drama you can change the plot
If your friends are the actors you can recast the lot

If people around you are holding you back
Tell them you're changing, cast aside their rack

Lets hold on to new clichés that drive us to more
Lets venture out from behind that closed door

We can stretch for the stars and strive for the sun
We can soar with the wind making life more fun

You are only out of the game when you give up the play
So write some new words so you have a new say

Aim for something better, embrace the best
You may fall short of target but gain from the quest

So cast off the old
Live a new dream
Grab the future foretold
Mine a new seam

So pour me another, lets toast the new year
Here's to a better, put fizz in our cheer

I know tomorrow can be better than today
Let the future empower us with its new way

The future is only ours, my friend, if we want to race it
Tonight is the night to embrace it

So pour me another, lets toast the new year

Here's to a better, put fizz in our cheer

Tier 4 and school openings

During a very busy and long day yesterday I joined on line conference calls with Health and Education Ministers and their senior officials to tackle issues about the pandemic response locally.

I was assured that computers will continue to be made available for on line at home learning where needed by qualifying families. Many have been supplied and more will be coming, as it is important that where an on line education is offered all have access to it.

Ministers confirmed that they do wish exams to go ahead this summer, with appropriate adjustments by Examining boards to take account of some pandemic disruption to normal learning. Year groups most affected by public exams will return soonest to school in January.

Ministers recognised that late changes to school opening dates and other arrangements are not ideal, but pointed out there has been a rapid acceleration in the spread of the virus and changes in NHS advice which has required some changes.

The NHS experts insisted that the only thing we can do prior to greater roll out of the vaccines is to cut down drastically on social contacts, other than those essential to work, food buying and other necessities. They were particularly worried about New Year celebrations.

I have not been notified of any worries about the way our local NHS is coping, and send my renewed thanks to all those NHS staff who are working hard to handle CV 19 cases.

Where are the EU and UK giants of the technology revolution?

One of the many things that should give us on this side of the Atlantic pause for thought is the way Europe has failed to produce the large global players of the digital transformation.

The UK and the EU have many talented and well educated people but none of the exciting corporate giants of the internet revolution.

Most of our software comes from Microsoft, our social media from Facebook and Google, our phones and pads from Apple or a far eastern source, much of our on line shopping goes to Amazon, a lot of internet entertainment comes from Netflix and Disney. We zoom to our friends and relatives and Teams for our businesses and professions.

The main challenge to US dominance worldwide has come from the separate and differently policed Chinese system, spawning mighty Baidu, Tencent and Alibaba.

The EU response to the attractive offers and great service the US giants offer us is to look for ways to tax them more and regulate them more to penalise them for their success. The question we should be asking is how can we do it better? How can the UK if not the EU create the right climate and policy background so we can encourage giants of the new age to emerge here as well?

As we pass from the EU's single market to our own we need to learn from the EU's mistakes. There is the hostility to enterprise and small business, with legislative solutions favouring costly and intrusive regulation suited to incumbent large companies trying to keep out challengers. There is very prescriptive regulation which makes innovation more difficult.

We need to tackle three main areas of concern

1. Encouraging a large population of start ups, self employed consultants and small businesses, to try out ideas and innovations. No more IR 35.
 2. Encouraging growth of the most successful into larger companies, with ready access to the large UK capital markets to fund future ideas and expansion.
 3. A tax and regulatory framework for the largest success stories which is sensitive to their needs as global players requiring good access to the wider world , whilst also paying their dues and being good corporate citizens for the wider UK.
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[My speech during the debate on the European Union \(Future Relationship\) Bill](#)

My speech from today's debate is available to watch here:

<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/72f1ffe9-c018-4739-9834-cb9bbf56968c?in=13:34:32&out=13:37:41>

The text of the speech will follow shortly.

[Sovereignty](#)

The legal advisers to the ERG have stated that the EU/UK Agreement clearly sets out the sovereignty of the UK. There is no recourse to the ECJ, and the UK can pull out of the Agreement unilaterally if it wishes. I set out the relevant text on this site recently illustrating these matters which they confirm.

They also accept that there are unresolved questions in Northern Ireland under the Withdrawal Agreement. This new Agreement is silent on them. There is a five and a half year wait until the UK can take all or most of the fish catch in UK waters.

This form of Agreement around a free trade proposal will still require UK Ministers and Parliament to use or assert sovereign rights to change laws and administer trade and industry matters in our national interest. It is one thing to be legally sovereign, it is another to use the powers to diverge from EU laws and practises where that makes sense for the UK. We are not truly independent unless we feel free to vary matters as we wish.

I have spent the last few days pressing the government to clarify its approach to the legal acceptance of independence. In particular I have asked for three main things

1. Early legislation in areas identified on this site to improve the UK tax and business regime in UK interests
2. A strong fishing policy based around better standards of marine environmental protection immediately, and plans to recruit and provide a much bigger UK fleet of trawlers and associated harbours and food processing to take advantage of the modest extra quota available now and taking proper control of our fish in 2026
3. Greater clarification and resolution of Irish border and tax issues