

Dear Constituent

Writing this letter is overshadowed by more sadness as we grieve the loss of life in Reading this week-end. We wish the police well with discovering who was involved and why, so prosecution can follow.

There is some good news about the pandemic. In the last week the latest chart I have been sent shows there were no new cases of the disease reported in Wokingham Borough and only one in West Berkshire. The pressures on the Royal Berks have abated, and I had no more complaints about the supplies of protective clothing or the availability of tests. NHS supplies are working well and testing capacity is greatly increased.

The government has given priority in all its decisions to getting the virus under better control and bringing down the death rate. It now is turning to its second important aim, saving livelihoods and allowing some recovery in business to save jobs. I have worked closely with Ministers on safe ways of working to get more people into work and more businesses trading, whilst encouraging more homeworking and remote working through internet technology wherever possible. I also urged the government at the start to provide financial assistance to people and businesses who temporarily were told not to work. The government came up with the furlough and small business schemes, which have helped many during a difficult time.

We are but part of the way through relaxations to allow more people to work and earn money for their businesses. It is good news that shops can now reopen, and many factories have returned to manufacture. We are now in the run up to two crucial dates. The first is July 4th, when it is likely hotels, restaurants and other leisure and hospitality venues will be able to re-open, subject to social distancing rules. The second is the new school year starting in September, when we hope the schools will return for all pupils.

Shortening the social distance from 2 metres to 1 is important to both these areas of life for re opening to have chance of some success. 1 metre is the required minimum recommended by the World Health Organisation. It can be made safer by the use of screens, air flow management, use of masks and other protective clothing, and one way systems for people where corridors and passages are narrow. Business and schools are currently working on getting the right configuration within their premises and thinking through how to operate safely.

I would like to thank all those teachers and school support and management staff who have provided an educational service for a limited number of pupils on the school site and a digital service for pupils at home during the crisis. I wish all well in planning the right approach to a return to full time education for all, which may continue to need more digital input than before and some reorganisation of the physical space.

I and many of you have thanked the NHS staff many times for

coping with the seriously ill during the height of the pandemic, and I do so again. The task now for all the NHS is to get the rest of the service back to normal. As the Health Secretary frequently reminds us, the NHS is open again for all those with serious conditions like cancer who must not be put off going for care in hospitals. The NHS also needs to set out a plan for tackling the backlog of non urgent surgery which has built up during the intense period of the virus.

Much now rests on the consumer. The majority have kept their jobs and have often spent less over the lock down, saving money on travel, leisure and a variety of services they were not allowed to use. We now need the Town Centres to be attractive and easy to reach to give the shops, cafes, restaurants and service providers every chance to rebuild their businesses and to tempt customers. I hope Councils will work with business to create a warm welcome in shopping areas, allowing good access.

In the days ahead we need both to avoid a major upsurge in the disease and to open up much more of our economy to save jobs. The financial support put in was necessary and has helped, but it is not an affordable answer for the future. It can only be a temporary measure, as it is all being borrowed. The future must rest on good co-operation over testing and tracing to keep the virus down, allied to safe rebuilding of as much of our former goods and services trade as possible so people can earn a living again.

I would also like to thank my office staff for helping cope with an unprecedented volume of emails and cases brought on by these extraordinary times and by the enforced temporary extension of government into so much of our lives.

Yours sincerely

John Redwood

[Tribute to James Furlong](#)

I was shocked to learn from the news today that one of the people senselessly murdered in Reading this week-end was James Furlong. I see that James was widely admired as an inspirational teacher at the Holt School. It adds even more poignancy to our grief, thinking of the good he was doing for so many pupils. They too are now directly plunged into deeper sadness by this evil act.

Reading murders

I send my condolences to the families of the three people murdered yesterday evening in a series of senseless stabbings. It is difficult to find words to console in such a dreadful circumstance.

I am glad many others evaded the planned mass slaughter and grateful to the emergency services for their interventions.

Freedom brings opportunity

The civil service seems ever keen to implement every last rule and regulation from the EU before we leave properly at the end of the year. For many years now there has been a large official legislative programme routed from Brussels by eager officials. Some of it may even have been encouraged by UK officials with doubtless some Ministerial sign off. Some officials realised a long time ago they could legislate through Brussels without any effective UK Parliamentary scrutiny, or without objections from any major political party or from most of the media. There was a conspiracy of silence about most wide ranging EU legislation, with successive oppositions unwilling to oppose it.

For officials it was a much more comfortable way of legislating. Some Ministers went along with or welcomed it. Any critical Ministers of either the process or of particular bits of legislation were usually told they had to accept as the UK was unable to stop it.

Some of the lengths they have gone to are absurd. The EU cumbersome data laws were incorporated into UK law by the general legislation continuing all such laws as good UK laws once we left. Nonetheless officials were so keen to keep exactly the same bureaucracy they got Ministers to legislate directly into UK law as well. As someone who values data privacy and sensible controls over data, it seems odd that this particular version should be so revered, with an obvious effort to try to prevent us seeking something better .

This government was elected to get Brexit done. It was returned with a large Parliamentary majority to take back control of our laws, our borders and our money. Ministers now need to get the civil service working on how we, the UK voters and MPs, wish to use the new freedoms we will gain on 1 January 2021. We have wasted 5 years putting off enjoying the benefits thanks to undemocratic political forces.

We need to revise our tax policy to get rid of some of the VAT and other EU impositions we do not agree with. We need a new fishing policy that is kinder to both our fish and our fishermen and women. We want a new energy policy that ensures national resilience and lower prices. We want proper control of our borders, so we decide who to welcome here, and how to keep ourselves safe. We want our own trade policy, with lower and fewer tariffs on trade

with the rest of the world than the EU makes us impose. We want more local and home grown and reared food, with fewer food miles. We want to cut the huge import bill from the rest of the EU, restoring some of the market share in our own market that we lost under EU rules and tariffs.

Leaving the EU is full of opportunity. It is vital the government gives no more ground. The French and others are threatening us with tariffs and the EU Commission is telling us we will suffer if we leave without a deal. It shows how worried they are that we will do better once we have our freedom back. With the huge surplus on trade they enjoy, they would be unwise to impose tariffs on us as it could jump start more domestic production in the affected areas if they do. We could impose tariffs on them, and cut tariffs for the rest of the world through a series of trade deals, offering better terms to those many countries who want to improve their trade with us and who do not threaten us.

Letter to the Business Secretary

UK energy policy has always had three aims. There is the need to ensure sufficient capacity to keep the lights on at all times. There is the need to keep prices down so energy is affordable for families and competitive for businesses. There are the environmental objectives.

Successive UK governments have achieved a lot in shifting to low or no carbon forms of generating electricity. Success in decarbonising must now shift to the parts of the world where there are still large increases underway in coal, oil and gas extraction and use. China is currently planning an additional 250 GW of coal based electricity capacity, more than 6 times the UK's total electricity output from all sources. India is planning a substantial expansion of her coal industry, and China aims to add another 900m tonnes of annual output, compared to our total use of some 10 million tonnes a year.

Policy has not been so successful in ensuring future self sufficiency in energy. Current plans assume a growing dependence on imported power from the continent, which makes no sense. The continent runs a lot of coal still in its mix, is very dependent on Russian gas, and may not have cheap power available when we need extra supplies. The policy is literally playing Russian roulette with our energy supply.

In order to balance a system which now contains a lot of interruptible renewables the government needs to create conditions for more pump storage flexibility, and for more combined cycle gas stations to provide base load when the wind is not blowing or the sun is not shining. It is an urgent requirement to examine the resilience of our system, to reduce its import dependence, and to ensure sufficient growth of power provision to take account of possible growing demand from transport and home heating.

There is also the question of cost. Some of the marginal power introduced into the system is expensive and requires substantial subsidies to maintain it. The system needs revision to bring down excessive subsidy costs, and to send the right financial incentives to those who can produce more power at low cost on any normal cost attribution and pricing system.

I would be happy to go into more detail of how the UK could rebuild self sufficiency, and offer more cheap power to consumers and businesses. The government has rightly said it wishes to encourage more industry in the UK, so it needs to ensure a plentiful reliable supply of competitively priced power to business. It does not currently do that, encouraging industry to locate in places like China where they keep power costs down by burning plenty of coal. This makes no sense for the environment or for our economy.