

What we missed by having an earlier election

My advice over the last 18 months to the PM and his advisers was to go for a late November election. I argued the government could over 2024 deliver much lower legal migration, benefit from the likely big fall in inflation, see interest rates come down a bit and be on a falling trend, deliver some economic growth, get more accurate NHS waiting list numbers and show decent falls in waits. Showing government could deliver all these things would strengthen the case for re election on a platform of more growth, lower tax rates, lower migration and better public services to come, building on the 2024 achievements.

The government did agree to change migration policy, putting in changes to cut numbers this January. I urged them to publish at least monthly figures showing the falls, and aim to get nine months published by an election. Instead we have seen one 3 month number showing falls. The government rightly wants to get numbers down from here.

Inflation did fall as expected and is almost back to target. It should fall further by year end.

Going early meant no interest rate cuts. There could well be two or three later this year after the election.

The government did get in 2 budgets with some tax cuts. It would have been good to have had 3 and to establish more growth for longer to underpin more tax cuts to come. The small VAT threshold increase could have been bigger. Getting rid of IR 35 would have boosted self employment more than the NI cut.

I was told Ministers were working on all the double counting and misleading entries in the NHS waiting list numbers, but did not complete in time for an early election. Numbers nonetheless were coming down until last month and may well fall further later this year. People who say they need to see a Dr for a review in 6 months time say they are on a waiting list yet of course they do not need an appointment for 6 months. Some entries are double counted. Some no longer need treatment. Many are awaiting first diagnosis, not treatment.

The economy has grown this year though not every month. It will take the lower inflation and lower interest rates to come to boost it, and would benefit from further pro jobs and business tax cuts.

Too much debate about who might win

After months of being ignored the BBC invited me on to the World at One to discuss the vote split between Conservatives and Reform! I pointed out I have set out crucial topics like nationalised industry losses, Bank of England disastrous money policy, revealed the public sector productivity collapse, wrote about controlling independent bodies and much else crucial to how we can have lower taxes, a growth strategy and better public services. The BBC resolutely wallows in ignorance of these issues and opportunities. I reminded them I am an economic and political analyst, not a pollster. I declined to play their game of creating a row between Conservative and Reform.

Their view as always mimics the Lib Dem's. The country is festooned with their self serving lies with every poster that announces "Winning here". Past experience and current polls say they will lose in most of those places. The slogan is all about them and their ambitions. It tells us nothing about what they want for our country or how they would serve their electors. They often ally this to nasty personal attacks on their opponents as they are understandably reluctant to talk about their record in local government or their work in coalition government.

No-one knows how in 3 weeks time many past Conservative voters will vote because they have not yet decided what to do. Currently some say they will vote Conservative, some say Reform, and many say undecided. What the BBC should be encouraging is a fuller exploration of the issues like budget pressures, wasteful spending, public sector losses and the productivity collapse to provide some balance to the parade of left wing experts who all conclude tax rises are needed.

Candidates contesting the election are best advised to ignore opinion polls, which tell the big majority of them they will lose. Candidates need to talk more about the big issues facing us, what they think about them and how they want to serve us. Too many shelter behind party sound bites that close down or skate round debate. Labour's endless repetition that they have a fully costed and funded programme is a silly way of trying to avoid big issues about affordability and value for money of public services.

Some propositions all should debate

Parties in the election say they want to promote growth and prosperity. Many of them want a bigger tax take to spend more on public sector activities, and to expand what the public sector does. To pay for this they plead growth then look around for people and businesses with money to tax more.

In order to break out of the UK's slow growth boom bust progress of our years

in the EEC/ EU under Labour, Labour/Liberal, Conservative and Conservative/ Liberal governments we need to change some stupid assumptions.

1. The Bank of England and Treasury know what they are doing and will get it right without political direction.

They designed the disasters of Competition and Credit Control (early 1979s boom/bust) ;European Exchange Rate Mechanism (early 1990s boom/ bust] ; Global banking with derivatives (2000 S boom/ bust) and Quantitative Easing and Tightening (COVID great inflation). Labour invented the overspend, overborrow IMF humiliation of the 1970 s and added to the 2008 banking crash its own private finance and public sector borrowing excess.

2. The U.K. can solve global warming by deindustrialising, importing energy and goods that generate a lot of CO 2.

By keeping our own gas in the ground we lose many well paid jobs, much tax revenue, and increase world CO 2 by importing LNG .That helps no one.

3. High levels of migration are good for growth.

We need to look at per capita growth. The Treasury needs to account properly for all the extra capital and revenue costs to house and support a low wage or dependent migrant.

4. Rejoining the EU single market and adopting all its laws would boost growth.

It would do the opposite. Our growth rate slowed on completion of the single market. It hit innovation and blocked trade with non EU.

5 Our public services would all suddenly work well if we put a few billions more in.

The NHS has enjoyed huge increases in money since 2020, way more than the Brexit bus promise. Productivity has fallen , staff relations have been poor so the money did not buy success.

[Who will control these dangerous independent bodies?](#)

I regularly advised senior Ministers to institute proper reporting and accountability for the host of so called independent bodies that rule us. They usually agreed, yet they seem to struggle to impose the discipline or to find the time to do it.

As a result we have The Environment Agency and Ofwat responsible for water often unable to stop floods and granting permissions for sewage discharges to

rivers owing to a long term lack of investment in sufficient pipe capacity. The Environment Agency wanted wilding instead of food growing and profitable forestry. The Bank of England charged with keeping inflation down gave us a peak inflation five and a half times target. The NHS England Board insulated the NHS from much ministerial involvement, then denied any responsibility for falling out with the staff or for the build up of waiting lists and the drop in productivity. Border force was unable to propose and implement a policy to carry through Ministerial wishes to end the small boats business across the Channel.

The role of the Minister should encompass an annual budget meeting to review finance and use of resources, agree fee and charge levels and any Treasury payment to the body. It should include a meeting to agree the annual report and review the annual performance. There needs to be special meetings to agree changes of policy and guidance, to lead to Parliamentary statements so we know what is expected of the body. Chairmen and Chief Executives should get bonuses for outperformance, but should not be paid a bonus at all when performance is poor.

Esther Mc Vey was working from the Cabinet Office on improved accountability for these bodies when the election was suddenly called. That work needs to be revived by Ministers after the election.

[The Opposition parties failed to oppose](#)

Judging Labour, Lib Dem and SNP by how good they have been in opposition reveals how they badly let the country down. Instead of opposing the three worst policy errors of the last four years, they supported them and wanted more of them .

The three biggest errors were putting us into too comprehensive and long a lockdown in response to COVID, backing the Bank of England policy of a big inflation followed by a technical recession, and wanting to close down fossil fuel power stations before we have enough renewable power we can rely on.

Worse still their failure to understand these errors means going forward they want to reinforce the right of the Bank of England to go on getting it hopelessly wrong. They want faster moves to close our gas power stations we rely on, and switch us to even more import dependence.

The Opposition failed to vote with those of us who said the state should take measures to protect the elderly and vulnerable over COVID but allow more people to go to work to keep things going. They failed to vote with us to end the measures earlier. This came with a big bill to subsidise people and business when they were banned from working.

The Opposition missed the obvious way Bank of England excessive money creation and bond buying in 2021 would be inflationary. They probably cheered in private when destroying money by cutting its bonds and hiking rates led to a technical recession the following year. Why do they like these wild lurches of policy with predictably bad outcomes?

Worst of all Opposition parties want to shut down many of our power stations without solving our shortage of grid, resolving how to store renewable electricity when it is abundant, or how to offset the coming big fall in nuclear power as stations close.