

South East Transport Strategy

I attended the Parliamentary launch today of Transport for the South East's strategy. I stressed to them the road improvements we need on the recently identified strategic local networks, where they now have a role in progressing or lobbying for schemes.

They said their immediate priority was to get the government to back a third river crossing for Reading, where Oxfordshire has been reluctant in the past.

The Executive summary they gave me mainly concerns general principles and a thirty year view. They are consulting on it, so people with ideas and views might like to log onto their site www.transportforthesoutheast.org.uk

The German plan for net zero carbon

A recent German study puts the cost of taking Germany to net zero carbon by 2050 at Euro 7.6 trillion. Much of this will fall on German consumers to pay. They will need to buy different cars, insulate their homes, change the heating systems in their homes, pay more for their travel and the rest.

Some of this cost will be displacement of investment renewal that takes place anyway. Cars, boilers, trucks, planes all have a finite life. The additional cost comes from replacements that are dearer than the originals, and above all from regulators requiring early retirement of the existing investment.

The business world will be at the forefront of this transition. The petrol companies have to move from a big chain of filling stations to a big chain of electric chargers. The airlines have to buy a new generation of jets that burn alternative fuels. The plastics industry has to close capacity whilst the paper and wood industry needs to expand for packaging and other items.

It would be good to see a proper costing for the UK, and more work on what this means by way of transformation of our shops, homes, industrial plants and transport systems. Clearly there need to be plenty of closures of hydrocarbon based ways of working, living and travelling. Car plants making petrol and diesel vehicles, oil and gas companies exploiting natural resources, manufacturers of traditional heating systems, fuel intensive production of many things will all need to adapt or be closed down.

What timetable do you think acceptable for this big change? Or do you think this is a wrong course of action? How much should an individual be expected to spend on home improvement and transport change?

A new programme for a new government.

Today is Queen's speech day. It is the day to discuss where we want to take our country and what should be the priorities for public policy.

To those who want this site to write about Brexit every day I have just two things to say. The first is I do not change my views on the advantages of Brexit or on the need to get out on 31 October, so I do not need to keep reaffirming them.

I have set out my advice to the government on how best to do it on many occasions. The second is I see no point in responding to every rumour, leak and piece of misinformation about the talks and the possible outcomes. Meanwhile there are crucial issues that matter that we do as a country need to debate and tackle.

My main priority for the government is to confirm the action it will be taking to stimulate our economy and to distance ourselves from the German recession and the advanced slowdown on the continent. I want to see additional good measures to promote growth, following a couple of years of fiscal and monetary squeeze from the UK authorities.

I wish to see a defined programme of good investment, public and private, in transport, broadband, water and energy. We need more capacity in each of these areas. I want to hear of the tax cuts we can now afford so net take home pay is higher and businesses and entrepreneurs keep more of their profits to allow reinvestment.

I see from briefings that we can expect legislation and or administrative changes to alter the way we own and run our railways. I will write more about this as we await conclusions from the latest review of our system.

The government does need to review its tax and regulatory policy towards cars given the worldwide impact EU and various countries' policies are now having on motor manufacturing. It also needs to talk about the way the move of the EU to zero tariffs on Japanese cars over the next few years may impact the balance of Japanese manufacturing as between Japan and the EU as a whole.

I am glad the government has confirmed the higher sums for state schools for next year, which will be welcome in low funded areas like Wokingham and West Berkshire. The new money going into the NHS needs to be wisely spent, with Ministers telling us what improvements we will be buying with the cash.

Farming for the future

One of the big wins from Brexit can be a new agrarian revolution in the UK. We should develop policies to rebuild our self sufficiency in temperate food, as we virtually enjoyed before joining the Common Agricultural Policy. We should also look at other ways of increasing the use we make of our farmland to increase farm incomes.

Cutting food miles should be part of the aim. Investing in better farming methods should be the means of achieving the improvements. UK farms could do with more capital and successful farmers need access to more land to farm.

The UK has not invested as much in market gardening to produce vegetables and salads in the way the Netherlands has done. Our climates are very similar, but the Netherlands have gone much further in putting in glass houses and other protective systems to extend growing seasons and raise crop output.

We need improved funding of tenant and farm owner capital from both the commercial sector and from government as part of its financial support. In many cases forward contracts from leading retailers will make it possible to finance this type of expansion.

In the dairy sector more joint working with the leading food manufacturers and retailers could create more milk demand for conversion to value added products like cheese and yoghurt.

Landowners and tenant farmers can also add other incomes from making land available for solar arrays, battery storage and other green energy activities. We also need to stimulate more tree planting. Our growing conditions are often better than Scandinavia and Canada yet we import most of our wood.

With a massive £20 bn food deficit with huge EU there is plenty of scope for new farming expansion here at home.

Deal/No deal – a false description

The choice before us is not leaving with or without a deal. The choice is simple. We either leave without signing the Withdrawal Agreement or we stay in for an indeterminate transition period with no agreement on what we are trying to transit to.

Were we to sign a version of the misnamed Withdrawal Agreement we stay in for 21 to 45 months more under full EU legal control and making large payments to them. This time is available to try and negotiate an exit. Who can doubt

throughout such a time Remain would be urging more delay in exit? And why should the EU rush to offer us good terms for exit when they had secured everything they wanted in the deliciously misnamed Withdrawal Treaty? They would have the UK's money and compliance without facing our voice, vote and veto as they develop their centralising plans further.

What Mrs May and her officials probably had in mind for the eventual Future Partnership Treaty was a beefed up EU Turkey or EU Ukraine Association Agreement, locking us in in Perpetuity to many of the features of the EU we wanted to leave. Mr Johnson has made clear he just wants a Free Trade Agreement, which is greatly preferable. In which case the best course is to short cut these things and find out now if the EU will sit down and negotiate one or not. Either way we can then leave on 31October.