

The chilling silence about our money



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One of the oddest things about this out of touch Parliament is the refusal of most MPs to talk about how we should spend the windfall from leaving the EU without signing the Withdrawal Agreement. Worse still the Opposition parties rush to tell us we must go on paying large sums to the EU come what may, and even some in the government seem to be dreaming up ways to go on funding the EU after we have left. Given how central to the Leave case saving the money was, this is denying us our democratic decision. There is no legal basis to justify payments to the EU after we have left. The origins of the large £39bn Treasury forecast, itself an underestimate, comes from Mrs May's wish to delay our exit for 21-45 months which of course would lead to big additional payments, and her wish to dilute Brexit so we could remain entangled with new financial commitments thereafter.

Margaret Thatcher recognised that the UK had a bad deal on financial contributions, and got a substantial improvement to our deal as PM. Mr Blair gave away some of that improvement on the promise of a thorough reform of the Common Agricultural Policy which never happened. Many UK taxpayers are fed up with having to pay more tax to send to rich countries on the continent. These contributions give us no benefit at home, and add to the deficit on the balance of payments.

At a time when the world economy is slowing, and when Mr Draghi of the European Central Bank recommends some government reflation from tax cuts or spending rises, the UK needs a growth budget. Using the substantial money we save from October 31 if we just leave could give us the boost we need. We can spend all of the net contribution we save, whilst paying the same level of farm grants and other sums that the EU sends us from the high gross contributions we make to the EU.

The deliberate misinformation about EU grants throughout the referendum campaign sought to persuade voters that we would lose these payments when we left. They should have pointed out that as we sent them the money in the first place to pay these grants, we can simply pay them direct. More importantly, we save all the money we send and do not get back as well. We can boost the UK economy by 1% of GDP out of the savings and the tax overshoot this government has gone in for.

How likely is No Deal?

No Deal is a misnomer, like much of the rest of the Brexit debate. No deal means leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement, but with a number of other agreements in place governing trade facilitation, aviation, haulage and government procurement. It would also mean using the extensive rules and regulations of the WTO to govern our trade with the rest of the EU just as our trade with the rest of the world is governed today. The Withdrawal Agreement was not of course allowing exit any time soon, as it was a decision to delay exit for 21 to 45 months, with uncertainty about how to get out thereafter.

The Withdrawal Agreement has been three times rejected by Parliament, and overwhelmingly defeated in the European elections with only 9% supporting the party that proposed it. It is possible a new Prime Minister will be able to negotiate enhanced arrangements before October 31 that add to the various agreements available for exit then without the Withdrawal Treaty. The new Prime Minister should offer a comprehensive free trade agreement, with a text based on EU/Canada and EU/Japan. We could then proceed to leave without imposing tariffs if the EU agrees to negotiate such an agreement.

Some say Parliament can block leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement. That would be very difficult for Parliament to do. If the new Prime Minister wishes just to leave he need not ask for a further delay to our exit after 31 October, so we will just leave. How would Parliament be able to make a Prime Minister seek a delay when he does not wish to do so? Parliament anyway cannot legislate to require a delay, because a delay not only needs a Prime Ministerial request of the EU but also a positive response by the EU. Mrs May decided she wanted a delay and asked for it regardless of the view of Parliament last time this arose. European law is superior to UK law all the time we stay in, and under EU law we are out on 31 October unless something else happens.

In this issue the PM is central. If the PM is determined to leave without the Withdrawal Agreement and keen to keep to the specified date, it would be very difficult for Parliament to find a way to stop him.

The EU Viet Nam free trade agreement

All those who write to me to complain that the UK might sign a Free Trade Agreement with the USA not to their liking might like to concentrate on the Free Trade Agreements we have to accept, entered into by the EU for us. This

week the EU has signed a new agreement with Viet Nam. There has been no debate in Parliament about it, and the UK has no right to reject it or to require improvements and amendments.

It is a long and complex document. The tariff reductions are asymmetric, with 7 years to get EU tariffs to zero, and more than 10 years to get all Viet Nam tariffs to zero. Both sides pledge themselves to the doctrine of equivalence over sanitary and phytosanitary matters. The provisions on animal welfare are unclear.

EU trade with Viet Nam is not large. The EU imports some clothing, telecoms products, computers and shoes. I think these agreements ought to be subject to proper Parliamentary control, with UK negotiators taking the views of public and Parliament into the negotiations.

[Heathrow consultation](#)

I attended the Heathrow consultation at Parliament this week. I renewed my lobbying concerning excessive plane noise when the wind comes from the east following changes to flight routes in 2014.

The airport said they would be consulting again about the noise issue later this year and were working on ways of abating noise. They are looking into steeper ascent and descent so planes are higher for longer and at whether they should revert to the previous routes which did not produce such concentrated noise for Wokingham. I asked them for a written statement for me to share with constituents over how they will seek to mitigate the noise problem.

[Environmental lobby 26 June](#)

I agreed to meet constituents coming to the environmental lobby today. In the end only one came for the meeting, but we had a good conversation with a number of positive ideas.

My constituent raised the issue of too much plastic getting into the oceans. I explained how the UK government was leading the charge to try to cut plastic use and to stop so much ending up in the seas. The UK can do more to substitute degradable materials for plastic, and cut down the presence of single used plastics dramatically. We can also improve enforcement of laws against litter to ensure more waste is properly contained and processed by our domestic and commercial waste systems.

I was asked about motorcycle noise. I agreed to look in to standards and controls over noisy bikes. The problem of fast bicycles not using bells to warn pedestrians of their presence was also a matter of concern.

I was shown a number of containers and plastic cutlery items where better design and different materials could make a difference. I agreed to pursue with Wokingham Borough what more they can do to offer green leadership by their own purchases, I explained that the new leadership of the Council is seeking to pursue greener policies and are currently reviewing just these matters. I agreed to write to them encouraging a review of the Council's practises to offer good leadership on recycling and the use of suitable materials.