

Thanks to the CAB in Wokingham for helping people

Today I visited the CAB. I thought I was just dropping by their stall in the Marketplace to hear how well they were doing encouraging people to save money on their energy bills. CAB were telling people about how to switch tariffs or supplier to get a better deal. They were also explaining how to improve insulation and efficiency of boilers and machines at home to cut demand. I am all in favour of green policies which save us money, letting us stay warm and clean whilst using less power. Thats a win win for us all. Getting on the cheapest tariff can also help with the family budget.

Whilst at the stall I was invited to visit their offices and meet more of the staff and volunteers. I was pleased to learn they are recruiting more people who would like to help others in the community, and are training them so they can be confident in the advice they provide. I like to keep in touch with the CAB and hear of any problems affecting a number of people, especially where government might be able to help or to do something better or differently to cut down on the numbers.

I said a big thank you to all involved. The CAB are always interested in recruiting more volunteer advisers. It can be very worthwhile and interesting work.

The Treaty of Aachen and the European army

This week President Macron and Chancellor Merkel signed a Franco German Treaty at Aachen. It sets up a governing committee for a common European army, to be based on establishing a common culture in the German and French forces and engaging them in more joint operations. There will be common weapons procurement and an integrated supply industry.

The same Treaty also wishes to erode the distinctions of government and culture in the border areas between the two countries. There will be an overall joint governing structure, encouragement of bilingualism, and joint government programmes. The Treaty in addition sets up an economic council of experts to advise on bringing together economic policies. The two countries pledge themselves to even closer governmental working and more convergence of law and action. France promises to take the common EU line on the Security Council of the UN, and to seek a permanent seat for Germany on that body as well.

They presumably chose Aachen as the resting place of Charlemagne, a great figure in European unification. The Rathaus at Aachen where they met was the setting for the coronation of 31 Holy Roman Emperors, and it houses replicas of the crown jewels of the Emperors. The two leaders wish to reaffirm their enthusiasm for a political unified Europe.

The Rathaus has also seen other events that remind us of the trials of European history. There was the period of occupation by the French Napoleonic forces, when France tried to unite a large part of Europe by force of arms. There was the 1923 sacking by Rhineland nationalists, and the bombing of the building by the allies seeking to reverse German militarism in the 1940s.

True to form, signing this Treaty to try to unify more, the political forces in France and Germany have included strong criticism from their oppositions. The German populists are concerned that Germany will be dragged into spending more German money on French economic developments. The French opposition is very concerned about giving Germany a role in the government of French border areas. These are all matters for French and German debate, not for UK opinions.

I highlight this event because during the referendum Leave was told by Remain there was no question of a European army, yet the language of this Treaty develops the idea a long way. It is clear again that the main drivers of European integration do wish to have a joint military capability distinct from NATO. This in turn requires a much higher degree of political integration and joint decision taking.

[The pound rises against the Euro and dollar](#)

Good silence from the anti Brexit commentators over recent rises in the pound as we get closer to the date to leave the EU.

They are none too noisy about the latest IMF forecast either where the IMF think the UK will grow faster than Germany this year.

That's the magic of Brexit!

[Project Fear takes another hit –](#)

employment and wages carry on rising

The latest employment figures are good. Unemployment has fallen to 4%, with strong jobs growth continuing. Vacancies are also at good levels, implying no immediate fall off in employment in prospect. Average earnings hit £27,500 a year as we go into 2019, with real wages now growing at around a 1% annual rate.

This means over the two and a half years since we voted to leave, the economy has continued to generate a lot of extra jobs, bringing unemployment down. Most of these jobs are full time, and many are well paid, boosting average earnings. That is the opposite of the recession allied to big job losses we were told by the Treasury and Remain experts to expect after the referendum decision.

Many in Parliament wish to increase the uncertainties and carry on portraying a gloomy outlook from their own pessimistic imaginations. Many of them now are desperately searching for a delay to Brexit so they can prolong the uncertainty and spend many more months rowing over what kind of Brexit they want or will allow, regardless of the views of the voters and regardless of what the EU might agree to. It is particularly cheering that employment has grown so well recently, when the national conversation has been dominated by gloomy Remain MPs telling us the future is dreadful, and when the chances of us just leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement have risen thanks to the huge defeat of the Agreement in the Commons.

It also shows that the authorities attempts to slow and damage the economy with a series of tax attacks on homes and cars, and with the slowing of credit, have not been sufficient to stop overall jobs and wage growth, though they have of course done damage to the targeted sectors.

My letter to the Post Office Ltd regarding their proposal to move the Wokingham Post Office to commercial premises

I have written to the Post Office regarding their proposal to move the Wokingham Post Office to commercial premises citing my reservations about the move. They are currently running a consultation and I would encourage residents to contribute to the consultation to make their views known. You can find the consultation at: <https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/national-consultation-team/wokingham-rg>

I, along with Wokingham Councillors, will be meeting with Mr Gale next month.



THE RT HON JOHN REDWOOD MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS
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17 January 2019

Dear Mr Gale

Thank you for your letter concerning the Post Office in Wokingham. You do not explain why you think there needs to be a new retail partner and why these important local services have to be absorbed into a different kind of shop. People are used to the range of services the Post Office offers, and to the location of their main Post Office on Broad Street. It would be possible to improve the internal configuration of this property, by adding more counters and using the full width of the building for customer service. It also has the advantage of keeping collection of undelivered items in the same location as an important part of the modern postal service.

As you should know the Wokingham area is expanding rapidly with the construction of new homes. The current counters of the Post Office are insufficient often leading to delays and queues. Cutting back to just three positions at the rear of the WH Smith store is going to make this problem worse, when you should be planning for expansion.

Placing the Post office at the back of the WH Smith store makes it more difficult for people to get access, requiring them to get past shoppers browsing between the Smith displays and avoiding the till queues which are also a feature of WH Smith at busy times of day. It will be particularly difficult for people with pushchairs, wheelchairs and walking frames. The only gain for customers is the longer week-end opening hours which could be accommodated at your existing premises.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Redwood'.