

## West Berkshire and Wokingham receive extra money to tackle potholes

Today the government has announced an extra £467,317 for West Berkshire to deal with road damage, and £282,055 for Wokingham Borough. This is welcome and I look forward to early use of this money by the Councils, as there are plenty of potholes in need of tarmac. I had raised this with Ministers during the bad weather.

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## Potholes and road capacity

The long and cold winter has not been kind to the roads. There are now many areas of damaged surfaces and a lot of holes forming through the tarmac. I am writing to government to urge them to do more to recover from this problem now we may have seen the end of the snow and ice. Prompt action before the holes get any bigger would be good in itself and cheaper in the long run.

I am also renewing my submissions on how to improve the capacity of the present road network through better traffic management, and how to spend on road improvements that can ease congestion and improve safety. The list of ideas includes:

1. Rephasing lights to give priority to main roads, with sensors for side roads
  2. Right hand turning lanes where possible
  3. Mini roundabouts and roundabouts in place of traffic lights where this can ease congestion
  4. More off street parking and less on street parking
  5. Better arrangements for drop off and pick up at schools, away from cars parking on the main road
  6. More bridges over railway lines to replace level crossings and to provide more routes into town and city centres, and more bridges over rivers.
  7. More cycleways away from main roads to provide a safer route for cyclists
  8. New and replacement utility pipes and cables to be buried away from the main carriageways of roads, with easier access points for repairs
  9. Clearer signs for times of bus lanes, with more use of lanes by other vehicles outside peaks
  10. More bypasses to take through traffic away from residential areas and High Streets
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## Grazeley

I visited a workshop to discuss possible development at Grazeley on Saturday. I explained again that there must be two matters that need resolving before considering accepting such a development. The Council should need some reassurance that such a large development would enable the area to say No to development elsewhere. The government would need to come up with substantial sums to support major infrastructure investment.

I am also working on the question of how much housing should Wokingham be expected to take in the next Plan period anyway, and the wider question of how the government should adjust its national figures down to allow for the new migration policy they have promised as we leave the EU.

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## Trade conflicts and contradictions

The UK establishment including the Blairite wing of the Labour party like contradicting themselves on trade. They tell us free trade is essential to the UK's prosperity, and for that reason we need to stay in the EU to have tariff free trade with the other states. They go quiet about the fact that staying in the EU and its Customs Union means we do not have free trade with the rest of the world, but have to trade over high food and drink tariffs, vehicle tariffs and numerous non tariff barriers to trade. Our trade with the rest of the world is larger than our trade with the rest of the EU, and usually faster growing, despite these obstacles.

They also gloss over the way the EU is responding to the the USA both in response to Mr Trump's words and actions where he is imposing tariffs and talking of more barriers, and as a result of the EU attacking various US companies and sectors. Mr Trump says he wants reciprocal trade arrangements, his word for fair. He says he wants the trade deal offered by the EU to the US to mirror that offered by the US to the EU. So, for example, Mr Trump says to the EU there is only a 2.4% tariff on EU cars into the USA but a 10% tariff on US cars into the EU. Does the EU intend to level this down, or is the EU relaxed about US retaliatory action on this matter? Is there some counter to this likely to see off more tariffs?

Instead of dealing with these issues the EU is busily seeking ways to regulate and tax US corporations who are good at the digital economy more. At the same time as the USA is cutting corporate taxes to make business more welcome in the USA the EU is trying to find a turnover tax which will hit mainly US technology companies operating in the EU. Will this wind the President up to further unhelpful tariff action and give him in his view more grounds for unhelpful action?

Mr Trump points out that the USA has a colossal trade deficit with the rest of the world, dominated by its large deficits with China and Germany. He is taking specific action against China as he is worried about alleged theft of intellectual property and unfair subsidies. He is concerned about the huge number of EU cars imported into the USA and the unfair tariff arrangements, and may make a move on that as well.

The UK pays to trade with the rest of the EU. It means paying to run a large deficit with them. The big imbalance in food and drink is particularly curious, as we are barred from importing more from cheaper places outside the EU by a high tariff wall, and impeded in the better answer of producing more of our own by the Common Fishing and Farming policies. It is difficult to see the EU as a paragon of free trade when you look at the complex and defensive structure of the EU Customs Union and its complex regulatory and subsidy systems.

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## [A necessary sacking](#)

Mr Corbyn was right to sack Mr Smith from the Shadow Cabinet. The Shadow Cabinet rightly agrees the UK will leave the single market and EU Customs Union when we leave the EU, and does not need a second referendum on whether we leave or not. Mr Smith does not accept this so cannot stay in the Shadow Cabinet where he has to take collective responsibility for the common view. Mr Smith clearly does not accept the democratic decision of UK voters, and ignores the strong feelings of all those Labour voters who voted for Leave and voted for Labour in 2017 because the party said they supported Brexit.