

## We owe the EU nothing

There is general agreement that there is no legal requirement for the UK to pay the EU anything on exit. There is no provision in the Treaty for an exit bill. We received no payment on joining to deal with liabilities the other members had already incurred. No one suggests if a net recipient country wanted to leave they would receive a leaving bonus. No one in the referendum campaign said we would face a bill. The EU has never produced a legal base for a divorce bill.

Some seem to think we should nonetheless pay something to get a deal. It is most important that this is always called an ex gratia payment or gift, as the UK must not by its language and promises create some legal obligation under EU law that does not exist at the moment. There is a danger in seeking some signed promise of trade talks in return for some written offer of money in turn. Under EU law we could create a legal obligation if we use the wrong words where there is none at the moment. There is a danger that making a contingent offer subject to getting a good Agreement will just be banked by the EU.

Trying to keep discussion of payments to general indications and headings will not stop the EU putting a figure on any indication and applying moral pressure on us to pay that amount. Nor would it stop them trying to get that money without a good Agreement.

As we don't owe anything the best thing to do is to offer nothing. The public show in polls that they have no wish to pay large sums to the EU. It is time to spend the money at home instead.

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## Build rates and planning permissions

Wokingham Borough has made a substantial number of planning permissions for new homes available to the housebuilding industry. Sometimes the developers do not build these homes at the pace the local plan would like. Others then apply for additional planning permissions because the build rate is not fast enough.

The Council and I have made these points to the government. In the Budget the Chancellor announced that Sir Oliver Letwin will lead an Inquiry into how the build rate can be speeded up to avoid the unplanned consequences of failure to use existing permissions. I will take this up again with the Inquiry.

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# New garden towns and the Oxford to Cambridge corridor

The government has stated its wish to find locations for new garden towns, and to expand ambitions for the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor.

The UK's original garden settlements grew from the provision of housing for a workforce. Josiah Wedgwood built better employee housing near his new factory at Etruria in the eighteenth century. Later developments like Port Sunlight and Bournville continued the tradition of creating a village community for a workforce, with better quality housing with gardens, green spaces and community facilities.

The garden towns movement began with Letchworth and Welwyn. It extended its influence over larger and more recent new towns like Milton Keynes. The idea was to preserve a more rural setting for housing and to use good architecture and design to create a better environment. The developments contrasted with the more crowded housing of the Industrial Revolution in the large industrial cities where gardens were cramped or non-existent and space more restricted for each family.

These success stories of UK architecture and planning show that it is possible to build in ways that reflect the wishes of many to live in green surroundings and to harness the best of design.

Modern developers often build properties that draw on traditional styles of house with characteristics from former eras. There are contemporary variants of Elizabethan half-timbered, of Georgian classical and terrace, and of Victorian villa and terrace.

It will be interesting to see where the government might find support for new garden towns and to see what designs the advocates will propose. Milton Keynes is in my view a success story, with a very green environment to offset the grid pattern of main roads and service roads which place the town firmly in the age of the car.

Our traditional settlements that have grown more slowly over the years benefit from a rich diversity in styles as each era added or replaced some parts of the urban landscape. They usually retain an ancient road pattern which creates jams and bottlenecks as people try to get to school, work and the shops using their cars. The new towns offer a chance of design that accommodates the instinct for personal mobility that people share.

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# Animal Welfare

I am aware that there have been a number of misconceptions perpetrated by the media about last week's vote. As I strongly support higher standards of animal welfare I am pleased that the Government has explained current policy and how it is improving animal welfare standards without EU input and beyond the scope of Article 13.

Please find below the letter the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which sets out the Government's position.

Dear colleague,

This Government is committed to the very highest standards of animal welfare. As the Prime Minister set out yesterday, we will make the United Kingdom a world leader in the care and protection of animals.

Some voices have suggested that the vote last week on New Clause 30 of the EU Withdrawal Bill somehow signalled a weakening in the protection of animals. That is plain wrong. Voting against the amendment was not a vote against the idea that animals are sentient and feel pain. That is a ridiculous misconception.

Ministers explained on the floor of the house last week that this Government's policies on animal welfare are driven by our recognition that animals are indeed sentient beings and we are acting energetically to reduce the risk of harm to animals – whether on farms or in the wild. Last week's vote was simply the rejection of a faulty amendment, which would not have achieved its stated aims of providing appropriate protection for animals.

And at Prime Minister's Questions yesterday, the Prime Minister made it crystal clear that we will strengthen our animal welfare rules. This government will ensure that any necessary changes required to UK law are made in a properly rigorous and comprehensive way to ensure animal sentience is recognised after we leave the EU. The Withdrawal Bill is not the right place to address this, however we are considering the right legislative vehicle.

We are already proposing primary legislation to increase maximum sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years, and the creation of a new statutory, independent body to uphold environmental standards.

The truth is that the current EU instrument – Article 13 – has not delivered the progress we want to see. It does not have direct effect in law – in practice its effect is unclear and it has failed to prevent practices across the EU which are cruel and painful to animals.

In contrast, here in the UK, we are improving animal welfare standards without EU input and beyond the scope of Article 13. We are making CCTV mandatory in all slaughterhouses – a requirement which goes above and beyond any EU rule. We will consult on draft legislation to jail animal abusers for up to five years – more than almost every other European nation. We propose

combatting elephant poaching with a ban on the ivory trade which is more comprehensive than anywhere else in Europe. Our ban on microbeads which harm marine animals has been welcomed by Greenpeace as “the strongest in the world”, and is certainly the strongest in Europe.

Once we have left the EU there is even more we could do. EU rules prevent us from restricting or banning the live export of animals for slaughter. EU rules also restrict us from cracking down on puppy smuggling or banning the import of puppies under 6 months. Article 13 has not stopped any of these practices – but leaving the EU gives us the chance to do much better. We hope to say more in these areas next year.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Gove

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## [Universal credit to be improved](#)

In the Budget the Chancellor announced:

- the removal of the 7 waiting days before a claimant can apply for Universal Credit
- significant improvements to the advance payments system – including increasing the amount available so someone can receive a full month’s claim within five days.
- Any new Universal Credit claimant in receipt of Housing Benefit will continue to receive it for two weeks.

These are welcome improvements to the system. I had made representations to Ministers along with others on how to make it easier for people first applying for Universal Credit, and am glad the government has listened and responded well.