

Going for growth – rebuilding our fishing industry

One of the biggest missed opportunities so far from Brexit is the failure to rebuild a strong and sustainable U.K. fishing industry.

During the UK's long stay in the EEC/EU the U.K. accepted its large and rich fishery was a common EU resource. Our fleets dwindled. The Spanish came in from far away to fish our waters. Various EU countries gained more quota to fish than U.K. vessels enjoyed. Very large trawlers and industrial trawling pillaged our stocks and led to lower fishing quotas.

The idea of Brexit was to take back control of our fish stocks. Government today could work with the industry. Fish caught in our waters should be landed and processed in the U.K. to rebuild our food industry. Government should help with finance to build a bigger fleet of fishing boats in U.K. yards. Quotas for foreign vessels should be cut back where stocks are under pressure. Ultra large vessels and trawl methods that damage the marine environment should be banned.

Take back control and rebuild our fishing fleets. We should not be importing fish we can easily catch for ourselves

New towns or just more houses?

Even if the government reduced legal migration and stops illegal through its policing of the gangs the U.K. population is likely to continue to expand quickly from migration over the next five years as during the last 20 years.

This means the government needs to get to its target of 300,000 new homes a year, which is stretching.

The government has floated the idea of establishing new towns or cities to achieve this new higher target. It has yet to identify where and how these will be established. Previous new towns were pioneered by New Town Corporations charged with assembling land and granting planning permission. Public money or guarantees were used to get it going, by harnessing large amounts of private capital and ending up with plenty of private ownership. Milton Keynes was one of the later examples.

At the recent peak rate of 750,000 additional people coming to live here you would need to build 3 Southamptons a year. This has not been happening and is impossible. There is discussion of building 3 or 4 new towns over a period of years. They could be near Bristol, York and Oxford. There is Labour pressure

for a new town between Oxford and Cambridge along the improved east-west rail line being put in between them.

If they want to do this they will need to speed up the process and legislate to give them planning override and control of the area designated.

I would be interested in your thoughts on what is a realistic level of migration. Are new towns a good idea? Where should they be located? Is it right to override current planning controls and local opposition to large scale development?

[The economic records of past governments](#)

When Labour was thrown out of office in May 2010 they had just presided over a big recession and banking collapse. Unemployment was at 7.8% of the workforce. Inflation was 3%, above the 2% target. Real wages had fallen by nearly 1% over the past year. They mainly lost the election on the last few years of very bad economic performance.

When the Conservatives were thrown out of office at the beginning of July 2024 inflation was at the 2% target. Real wages had grown 2.2% over the previous year. Unemployment was at 4.2%. They lost office for a variety of reasons including their failure to carry out their promise to reduce migration and stop the small boats, and for the high inflation and higher taxes of 2022-3 which they blamed on Covid and the Ukraine war.

I will keep a record of these closing figures for what used to be called the Misery Index, Inflation plus unemployment, and for real wage changes. If Labour can improve on these figures I will give them due credit. If as I fear their policies produce a deterioration they will earn criticism.

The last government could have had a much better record on inflation and real wages over the full four and a half years if it had followed different advice on money policy and Covid lockdowns.

[California Crossroads Lib Dem scheme turns our local shopping centre into a](#)

wasteland

The shops and garage at the crossroads have been suffering loss of trade for many weeks, as the Council first closed one road access and then switched to closing another. More people could not get to the shops and gave up on the idea of a detour of several miles to do so. Now they have closed the car park as well! The place is deserted. Trade has collapsed. The food shops see fresh produce go to waste as so few people can get there to buy it.

Why does the Council want to do all this damage? Residents liked their old Crossroads and shopping centre and did not ask for more than £ 5m to be spent undermining it. There has been no compensation for the struggling businesses and no attempt to help residents get to the shops and garage. The Council is silent about the way it is wrecking good businesses and good services the local community liked.

I thought Lib Dems cared about the environment. Instead they are requiring people wanting to get their car fixed or filled, or needing to do a shop that requires a car to take the goods home to do many extra miles in their vehicles. They have bought expensive energy intensive paving and road surfacing products and employed contractors burning plenty of diesel and petrol in their machinery. This was a dreadful call which local people and Conservative Councillors begged them not to make. Why don't they listen to what we want? Why are they so selective in their concern for the environment?

Striving to save money

It was not just the big productivity loss that boosted the deficit and lay behind higher taxes in the last Parliament. I spent time throughout giving Prime Ministers, Chancellors and Chief Secretaries who came and went many ideas of how to save money in bloated state budgets.

There were the large sums being spent on energy subsidies as they intervened heavily to switch from coal and gas generated electricity to solar and wind. There were the over the top domestic energy subsidies for the better off as well as for those on low incomes. The Truss plan gave double subsidy to most MPs, as anyone with two homes qualified for two subsidies. There were the large loans to Councils to let them buy up property investment empires. There were the grants to Councils to take road capacity out. There was overseas aid for bad schemes and for some developing economies with their own budget capacity. There was the large expenditure on housing for illegal migrants, and the big cost of housing and public service provision for low income and no income legal migrants. There was the wasteful HS 2 project and the escalating losses of the nationalised railway.

By the last year I was hammering my big 3. The annual £20 bn plus of lost public sector productivity. The £20 bn of avoidable annual bond losses incurred by bad policies at the Bank of England. The £10 bn to £20 bn of overall cost and lost tax revenue from high levels of economic inactivity amongst people of working age after the pandemic. The government tried to do something about the first and third of these, but the benefits were neatly put forward into years after the election in the main by officials who did not see the urgency of implementing the necessary changes. . They would not budge on the easiest cut of all, to stop selling the bonds at a loss.