

# Christmas message

I am writing to wish you a happy Christmas and to look forward to a better new year. I have been keen to support those in government determined to avoid any ban on family get togethers and visits to local restaurants and cafes over Christmas in contrast to 2020. It looks as if we will enjoy some of our traditional freedoms.

I have not taken this view without considering very carefully the evidence of how we can best control the pandemic. Reliance on vaccines is our first line of defence and they seem to be working well. The gradual introduction of better drug treatments also helps cut serious case rates. I have been urging completion of more drug trials and more work on better air extraction and UV cleaning of circulating air to cut the risk of the virus in indoor public spaces. The government promise me they are pressing ahead with this. The early evidence on Omicron suggests this is for most a milder version with less infection of the lungs which has been the danger in other variants.

We are going to have to live with strains of this virus for some years to come, just as we do with flu which can also be a nasty killer for some. The U.K. government did well to back and support one of the first successful vaccines and then to roll out a large and early vaccination programme to greatly reduce the risks of death for many people. Armed with other improvements we should now let people make more of their own judgements about how to cut the risks of the disease themselves.

I am pressing the government to get on with measures to promote more prosperity, more and better paid jobs, and more U.K. self reliance in everything from energy to food. I am proposing how to cut supply shortages which lead to inflation and how to reduce the cost of living squeeze which will be bad in April without further changes of approach.

There is some disquiet about the apparent breaching of covid rules by senior officials in government. The PM is right to commission a proper enquiry and will then need to take disciplinary action if offences occurred.

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## My GB News Interview with Alastair Stewart

<http://johnredwoodsdiary.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/GB-News-interview-20.12.21-1-1-1-1.mp4>

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## The long shadow of Project Fear

I am all in favour of experts. I read a lot of expert opinion. Daily I learn something new from reading someone's research findings about issues of public interest.

Reading plenty of experts has taught me several things. It has taught me that some so called experts are not up to the title, producing ill thought through material with insufficient proof. The BBC is specially good at mistaking establishment propagandists for experts. It has reminded me that in many difficult areas the experts disagree amongst themselves, which is often a welcome way of moving towards a greater understanding of the issue. I have also discovered in fields I study that there can often develop an expert consensus, held by many for fear of getting out of line. This can result in a catastrophic establishment failure because most of the tenured individuals dare not disagree. In economics the Exchange Rate Mechanism boom and bust and the banking crash great recession are two examples of groupthink gone wrong.

The worst feature of recent years has been when the establishment consensus allies itself with political forces and tries to dominate the democratic debate about a topic. The Treasury and Bank of England forecasts prior to the referendum we now know were wildly wrong and were clearly designed to help the Remain campaign. They forecast a fall in house prices, a fall in employment, a rise in interest rates and a fall in the pound if we left. Instead in the early months after we finally left the reverse of all those forecasts occurred. In the year immediately after the vote as well house prices rose, employment went up and interest rates went down. This poor forecasting undermines public confidence in official forecasts. It also angers the majority who disagreed with the establishment political view on the underlying question.

Today expert epidemiologists need to grasp that their forecasts will be carefully scrutinised and subjected to commonsense checks because of past forecasting errors by government advisers. Net zero advisers keen to speed

the transition will need to ask why the public does not rush to transform their lives in the recommended ways. They will find they need to overcome scepticism about some of their claims.

Democracy places non experts in positions of power to take advice, to consider conflicting expert claims and to apply some commonsense to recommendations. It remains the best way of proceeding in a world where the future is always uncertain. For a democracy to thrive we need to debate the cosy and sometimes horribly wrong consensus views of a self selecting group of experts in any given area. No one peddling views gets a ride free from criticism in a thriving democracy.

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## What a recovery package would look like

We soon will need to put the worst of the pandemic measures behind us and concentrate on the promotion of prosperity for the many. Controlling the disease should rest on the offer of vaccinations, better treatments, individual decisions about reducing the risk of infection and better air extraction and cleaning in public buildings.

The Treasury needs to acknowledge that its policy is going to squeeze the economy too much in the first half of next year. If they persist with their raft of tax rises in April, hitting just when energy prices rocket with the shifting of the price caps, we will see an unwelcome relapse in confidence, incomes and output.

The Treasury should announce now that it will not impose the hike in national Insurance, a tax on jobs and on take home pay, at the peak of the cost of living troubles. It should remove VAT on domestic fuel to ease the large rise in energy costs for consumers.

The Treasury should work with the Business department to increase the supply of domestic energy. Gas is a so called transition fuel which will be much needed this decade before new nuclear and other reliable carbon free electricity comes on stream. Gas also remains the dominant way of heating homes, as people are not yet ready to adopt electric and heat pumps based home heating. The government should give the go ahead of additional UK gas production, starting with the Jackdaw field and other projects ready to go. The government should also commission more gas storage capacity to help smooth wild fluctuations in spot market prices of gas.

The government should procure more reliable electricity supply from domestic sources as we are too dependent on imports when there is little wind. The Treasury should work with the Environment Department to fashion support schemes to promote more food production at home instead of offering money to

prevent farming here, supporting imports.

All the time government advisers tell us to avoid social contact the Treasury needs to offer help to social contact service businesses. It needs at least to continue business rates relief and lower VAT, and should offer direct assistance for cash flow problems of otherwise solvent businesses.

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## [NHS Ministers/planners do not trust the scientific forecasts of more Omicron cases to plan capacity](#)

### **Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of hospital beds that will be needed for cases of the Omicron variant of covid-19 in January based on the latest forecasts. (91819)

Tabled on: 13 December 2021

### **Answer:**

#### **Maggie Throup:**

In the absence of any data on disease severity or the likely transmission rates in the community, it is not possible to make any reliable estimates of predicted future hospitalisation rates or the number of hospital beds required for cases of the Omicron COVID-19 variant. As data on transmission rates becomes clearer over time and the initial hospitalisations allow assessment of severity and care needs, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will be able to generate projections of predicted future hospitalisation rates. The UKHSA and NHS England and NHS Improvement are working together to collate this data as quickly as possible.