

The benefits of taking back control

The establishment media has been concentrating on the Dover Calais route and expressing concern that there were no lorry queues there on our first Brexit days. Where were all the programmes to look at our options now we are free? The BBC , ever willing to interview me when they thought Brexit was in danger, wanted no statements from me of all the things we can now do as an independent country.

So let me have another go at reminding them what they are missing, and how they are failing to inform their viewers and listeners.

We take back control of our taxes. The Tampon tax goes, and I want to see the back of the taxes on green products from boiler controls to insulation, from heat pumps to draught excluder. Why did the Remain media defend these taxes?

We take back control of our farms. We can now offer grants and loans to promote more British food to high standards. cutting the food miles. We need to win back lost market share in everything from pig meat to flowers and from salad crops to dairy. We can now ban live exports of animals and raise our welfare standards by so doing.

We take back control of our trade policy. We can now hope to join the mighty Trans Pacific partnership of large and growing economies and move through that to a US trade treaty, denied to us during 48 years in the EU running our trade policy.

We can take back control of our fishing grounds. Immediately the government will ban pulse fishing which damages our fish stocks and marine environment. There now needs to be a big move to expand capacity of our fishing fleet ready for our full control at the end of a further transition period. We also need to attract more food processing and fish freezing businesses to support the trawlers.

We can take back control of our industrial grants and subsidy regimes. All too often in the EU they used grants and subsidies to divert investment away from the UK or even to achieve closure of a UK factory to be replaced by a facility elsewhere. Now we can spend our money wisely on helping rebuild lost manufacturing.

We can take back control of our Freeport and Enterprise Zone policy, creating many more around the UK as part of the levelling up drive without falling foul of EU rules.

We can as a nation resume our rightful place on world bodies, with our own vote and voice to be a force for the good, for peace, prosperity and democracy.

Better treatments for CV 19

As a non medic with a site which does not give medical advice, I have been asking questions of our doctors and scientists about the scope for better treatments for those who have caught CV 19, and for anything which people can take which might reduce their chances of getting a bad version of the disease.

I am glad to report more progress in the UK on how to handle this virus. The NHS now says that taking Vitamin D supplements over the winter may be helpful . It has announced free Vitamin D supplies to those on the at risk register for the pandemic. They will have received letters advising them to be careful. They can apply for Vitamin D supplements on the NHS. This vitamin I read can buttress the immune system needed to fight off infection.

Some time ago the UK made an important breakthrough, identifying some corticosteroids as a suitable hospital or prescription treatment for those with the infection. In an important minority of cases it speeded recovery and lessened the impact of the disease.

This week the NHS has also confirmed trials saying that Tocilizumat, an anti rheumatoid arthritis drug commonly available in hospitals can also reduce the time the disease lasts in a patient and reduces the severity. Other anti rheumatoids may have similar properties. This again increases the armoury of doctors fighting the worst cases of the disease and gives hope that more will survive.

The UK has not found chloroquine to live up to early expectations of some that it could cut the death rate. Regeneron has been given an emergency licence in the USA for doctors to use in a limited number of circumstances. Some overseas doctors recommend Ivermectin which is said to reduce the death rate. We await more news of the UK testing of this medicine.

It is good news that trial work is continuing and some of the drugs tried can help reduce the time people spend in hospital before recovering and can help cut the death rate. I will continue to press Ministers to encourage this important work.

Contributions to this site

This week when I have been very busy the volume and length of contributions has been too great for me to moderate. I will now be deleting more to keep up. If you want your item posted please keep it relatively short, do not

multiple post on an excessive scale, summarise other people's views rather than trying to post complex or unknown links and avoid allegations against named individuals or companies.

University challenge

The pandemic lockdowns have posed a series of difficult questions to universities. Today we live in a world where they have been told to go over to remote learning for all but a few courses like medicine and some other scientific areas that require laboratory and practical work in a specialist location.

There is first the issue of accommodation. Many students with or without help from parents have signed on for a year's rental in student accommodation. The students will not be able to use this and some are asking for rental reductions or cancellations of the agreements. Private landlords say they have to provide the facility whether the student uses it or not, pay any debt interest on the borrowings to own it, and meet service and utility charges to keep the building going. Some of the private landlords depend on the income from the letting to buy the basics and are not rich. Other private landlords are richer individuals or better financed companies or charities.

Some of the landlords are the Universities themselves, providing student accommodation on the main campus or owning properties nearby. They too may have taken on debts to build and own the housing and need revenue to pay the maintenance and utility bills.

The second issue is payments for tuition. Some students think there should be a discount or rebate for remote teaching. They argue that they agreed to tuition fees on the assumption of face to face teaching and lectures which are no longer available. The Universities reply that they still have the same staff on the same salaries and are providing teaching on line so the full tuition fee should still apply.

In a situation like this there is a tussle between the student, the University, the landlord and the state over should pay the bills. Where both students and university unite to say the state should subsidise, they are saying all taxpayers should make a contribution. This will include people who did not have the benefit of going to a university and people earning less than the student hopes to earn following graduation. The same may be true of smaller landlords, if they were expected to take some of the hit.

In many cases students are being told they have to pay for full tuition fees and accommodation even though they are living at home and learning on line. Do you think this is the right answer?

Education and lockdown

The decision to put the country back into lockdown ended the argument about whether the schools should stay open. It also strengthened the position of all those who wanted to have another year without GCSE and A level exams. The Secretary of State who had been defending keeping schools open and exams in the summer had to announce an abrupt change of plan. Numerous matters now need to be sorted out as arguments continue over how much longer schools will remain closed.

The loss of exams is a blow. Whilst many teachers appraise their pupils professionally and give them realistic grades, the reliance on teacher grades contains at least three problems for the Examining Boards. The first is how do the Exam Boards ensure common standards throughout . Working with a limited number of Examiners and a marking scheme for exam answers makes this easier when using professionally moderated exams comparing with previous years. . The second is how do you ensure a few teachers are not affected by the social skills and friendliness of the pupil which may not be the same as the work and talent on display. The third is how do you stop the natural process of wanting to do well and seeing the pressures on the school leading to Grade creep? Will there be surrogate school based tests and exams? What is the role of the mock exam? How much adult support and guidance is allowed for course work?

The loss of social contact and play with peers is a big loss for young children. They learn a lot from each other at school and need the challenge and stimulus of others of their age.

Have now all families in need been equipped with laptops or mobile devices that allow them to participate fully in remote learning? Have teachers been trained in offering good on line courses? What use is going to be made of bought in on line materials as opposed to teacher driven materials?