

The blame game over the EU

The official UK government wants a deal. Some of the Ministers want to avoid the blame for break down of the talks. As a result the talks continue after we were promised we would be getting ready for a WTO exit. This is holding the UK back, and diverting Whitehall attention from the many wins we can achieve if we just leave.

It is silly to carry on talking just to try to avoid the blame for breakdown. If there is no deal after all the wasted time so far, both sides will blame the other. Most people will lay the blame on the side they oppose, whatever the alleged or actual news background to the final break. I and many Brexiteers have seen enough to know the EU has never negotiated in good faith. It has peppered its statements with making it clear the UK must be seen to lose from exit. It has failed to accept that the UK voted to be free of EU laws, budget demands and their Court. It cannot even accept we will run our own fishery. The EU has never agreed to implement the clear requirement of the EU's own Treaty to pursue friendly relations with a neighbour based around free trade, nor to implement that part of the Withdrawal Agreement and Political declaration.

I want us to leave on WTO terms. I want us to cut tariffs on imports from non EU countries where we have been made to pay high tariffs on food, but to impose these new lower tariffs on the EU. This will allow us to rebuild our market share of food and fish. If we do not have all the boats to catch as much fish as the EU currently catches in our waters, then let us rebuild our over fished seas with more fish stock whilst we expand our own fishing fleet.

During our time enmeshed in the nets of endless EU red tape we have lost large amounts of market share in food and some manufactures. Let us follow a policy aiming to rebuild our home position with laws, budgets and incentives which suit us.

The rule of 6

On Tuesday night Parliament will have the chance to debate and vote on the Rule of 6 and the related restrictions against larger gatherings.

The decision will be about the Coronavirus Restrictions (No 2) (England) Statutory Instrument.

As someone who wishes to see more moves to relax controls that damage business and prevent large sectors that need social contact from working, there is a good case for not supporting this measure. As someone who wishes to see the death rate down and agrees that too much social contact can spread

the virus too far too fast I need to listen to those who say there is a case for trying these controls for a bit longer.

The rule of 6 is the government's latest attempt to create a simple universal rule that might provide some brake on the spread of the disease. It has not been going for long, so the government says it should be tried for longer. You can also argue that we have had controls in place for many months, but they have not proved able to keep the disease down in the way a near total lock down for most did in April. Some think the virus has a life of its own regardless of controls and see the fall from April as a coincidence. Others seek to find patterns in the numbers to prove controls do reduce the spread.

The Conservative party membership is shifting its view from a substantial majority behind lock downs and strong government action, to the largest group now favouring the more relaxed Swedish approach to create a better balance for business and normal life. Polls of the wider public still favour tough action to limit social contacts. There is a lack of specific scientific data to show which of the various measures tried in the areas visited with extra controls have a beneficial impact. There is also a worrying delay in getting results in those special areas and in some cases no evidence that the controls are working. The 10pm curfew is the most dubious and contentious ban, but that is not up for a vote on Tuesday.

I am interested in your views as I make up my mind concerning Tuesday's vote, particularly if you are a constituent.

[New grant scheme to cut home fuel bills](#)

Annex – Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme Further Details

1. Who is the scheme for? • The voucher scheme is open to owner occupiers (freehold/leasehold), park homeowners and landlords who let privately or through the social rented sector in England. It is not open to non-domestic properties or to new build homes which have not yet been occupied. • Homeowners can apply for a voucher that funds up to two thirds of the cost of hiring trades people to upgrade the energy performance of their homes – up to a maximum contribution of £5,000. Low income and vulnerable homeowners, including park homeowners and those on certain benefits, will be eligible for a voucher covering up to 100% of the cost, up to £10,000. • The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery element will focus on owner occupiers, those in the private and social rented sector, with a household income of under £30,000. Local Authorities will set out detailed eligibility criteria in due course.
2. What are the specific benefits of the Green Homes Grant to the consumer?

- The Green Homes Grant scheme will deliver energy efficiency improvements to over 600,000 homes, supporting over 100,000 jobs if all vouchers are claimed. It could help save families up to £600 a year on their energy bills.
- It will make people's homes warmer and more environmentally friendly. It will deliver average savings of nearly £300, and significantly more per year for those living off the gas grid in the low-income and vulnerable households' scheme.

3. What can the voucher be spent on?

- Vouchers will contribute towards the cost of specific home insulation and/or low carbon heating measures. Homeowners and social and private landlords will be required to install at least one of the following, using a voucher which they will receive before works commence:

Primary Measures

1. Solid wall, under-floor, cavity wall, loft, flat roof, room in roof or park home insulation; or
2. Where the home is suitably insulated, air source or ground source heat pump, solar thermal, biomass boiler or hybrid installation.

- A voucher may be used to help meet the costs of installing top-up insulation (for instance top-up loft insulation) but may not be used to cover the costs of removing and replacing existing insulation.

- In addition, households can use their voucher for further energy saving measures. These include one or more of the following:

Secondary Measures

1. Draught proofing: draught-proofing your home (for example around windows and doors) can block up unwanted gaps that let cold air in and warm air out.

3

1. Windows and doors: Double/triple glazing (where replacing single glazing), secondary glazing (in addition to single glazing), upgrading to energy efficient replacement doors (where replacing single glazed or solid doors installed prior to 2002).
 3. Hot water tank thermostats and insulation
 4. Heating controls: e.g. appliance thermostats, smart heating controls, zone controls, delayed start thermostat, thermostatic radiator valves
- The total amount households get towards the cost of secondary measures cannot exceed the total amount they get for primary measures.

Consumers can check their eligibility for the voucher and receive tailored advice at the Simple Energy Advice website and make applications at the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-green-homes-grant>

1. How can I participate in the scheme as a business/tradesperson?

To carry out work under the scheme, all tradespeople and businesses will need to be certified to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures to relevant standards and to register their certification with TrustMark. Registered businesses can sign up to take part in the scheme at <https://www.gov.uk/register-as-green-homes-grant-installer>.

What will the future railway look like?

60% of the passenger use of the railway was commuter traffic into our main cities and towns prior to the pandemic.

Today commuter traffic is massively down. There are many businesses talking of adopting a new model even after the pandemic has gone, with more working from home and flexible working.

The railway needs to research and assess these trends. It will need new fare offers, as we have discussed before, to encourage part time office goers to use the train, allowing them flexibility over when they travel. It might, for example, be necessary to offer a system of rebates or free tickets when people reach certain totals of tickets purchased for the same journeys.

The railway has a leisure business. This often relies on heavily discounted tickets. If the base load of commuters are going to spread their journeys out over different times of day there may not be the same amount of empty capacity to offer. What is a realistic target for leisure travel? What kind of financial contribution should it make to cover costs?

There is business travel. Currently this is down by a huge amount, as people hold their meetings, customer contacts, exhibitions and conferences on line. How much will return to physical meetings, and how much of the train travel will return?

Trying to determine how much train travel there will be in 2021 and 2022 is difficult, but becoming a necessary task. The government has nationalised the losses and taken control of the whole railway. We now need from it a vision of what a modern railway looks like and who it will serve. It is going to take some brilliant marketing, new fares structures and compelling offers to fill the trains again.

Parliament needs more control over lock downs

I supported the Brady amendment by co sponsoring it on the Order paper. I apologise to readers for a rare mistake of a bad forecast in thinking the Speaker would accept it for debate and decision as a majority of the House clearly supported it.

The important thing is that nonetheless the amendment served its purpose. It did result in the Speaker warning the government they needed to change and to allow debates and votes in government time on the controls, just as we had argued. He had legal advice against taking the amendment which I do not question. The government agreed to come to Parliament over these powers. As an early demonstration of good faith, there will be a proper debate on 2 Statutory Instruments imposing controls, with a vote on each next week.

Many of the Statutory Instruments which have imposed the restrictions on our freedom of movement were not debated or voted on in the past but will now need to be to comply with the Speaker's ruling. Many of them were not put into effect by the government under powers in the Coronavirus Act but under other emergency powers legislation, so trying to vote down the Coronavirus Act would not have dealt with the issues many people are raising. The Coronavirus Act is the source of authority to assist public bodies manage the crisis, which I and others did not wish to stop all the time the restrictions are in place. We want to get at the freedom removing SIs which are mainly issued under the 1984 Public Health (Control of Disease) Act. That will become clearer next week.