

The spread of the virus and herd immunity

According to global figures 0.3% of the world population or some 20 million people have now had CV 19. Of these sadly 750,000 have died, a death rate of 4% of known cases. Given the shortage of tests in large countries like India and Mexico these figures may be an underestimate. In some other countries using the formula on death certificates of death with rather than death caused by CV19 there may be some compensatory overcounting.

The numbers do imply however that we are a long way off having the herd immunity some scientists talked about in the early days of the pandemic. The virus has not found as many superspreaders as feared so far. There is also medical and scientific doubt about whether someone who has had it is likely then to resist having it again. If it turned out to be more like flu or colds you could get it or a variant of it again.

If this is the case cautious scientists will continue to argue in favour of social distancing to limit further spread. The scientific community remains wedded to the idea of a vaccine, whilst accepting it could take a long time find a safe and successful one. How many readers here would not wish to take up the offer of vaccination if one were available?

Meanwhile the better medical news is Blood clot busters, steroids and anti viral drugs are all now being tested and some Approved and mobilised to improve treatment and lower the death rate.

What you are most interested in

Over the last few weeks the two blogs that have attracted the most comments were about illegal immigration and the future of the EU.

I particularly enjoyed the indignant comments of a handful of contributors who daily condemn U.K. voters for voting to leave the EU. They argued I should never comment on the EU now we have left. It is apparently too delicate or precious to withstand normal analysis and comment. These are the same people who regularly condemn USA policy when the U.K. is not a member of that Union either.

I will return soon to the state of the project to ever closer union, as it is important and of general interest.

Leisure and Council trading

One of the areas to look for economies lies in Council trading activities. Some Councils spend large sums on setting up business activities in competition with the private sector. Particular favourites are to provide a wide range of leisure services. Where these become loss making, and subsidised, they can impede provision by the private sector whilst also lumbering taxpayers with liabilities. Councils claiming to be short of money should sell off businesses that the private sector can run better, transferring the risk of losses away from taxpayers.

There is a case for joint use facilities shared between secondary schools and the wider community. Swimming pools, gyms, courts, pitches and the rest can be reserved for school use during weekdays in term time, but made available to others in the evenings, at week-ends and during the school holidays. Good schemes can bring more capital to improve school facilities, with returns from charging the wider community. Councils can of course buy season tickets for free access for groups of people they wish to help.

Some Councils have large asset holdings offsetting large debts. Given the high level of total public sector debt there is a case for reviewing these holdings and drawing up a disposal programme to bring debts down where a Council claims it does not have enough money.

Council provision of car parking and waste services cause frictions with taxpayers. Waste disposal for households is meant to be a free service, covered out of general taxation and the Council Tax. Many Councils now have decided that garden waste, larger items and other specially designated waste should be paid for by the householder. Car parks long owned and paid for by taxpayers are used as ways of getting a substantial income out of part of the community. This can become a flare point with voters, and can put people off going into town centres where the parking is expensive and the enforcement often energetic and hostile. In both these areas there is a conflict between the concept of community service and the use of public assets with a wish by Councils to generate income to spend on other things.

Letter to Defence Secretary

Dear Ben

I am writing in support of more UK procurement of defence equipment in general, and about naval vessels in particular.

The MOD has promised to reboot the competition to acquire three supply vessels in the Fleet Solid Support Programme. This would be a good opportunity to add them to the list of vessels that are put out to tender for UK shipyards. I appreciate we need to increase the UK capacity and competitiveness of ship yards, but we will only do so by offering them a more sustained workload. The MOD did buy the large tankers from foreign yards recently which missed an important opportunity.

I was pleased to see the UK taking delivery of 5 Offshore patrol vessels, and inviting proposals for renewal of smaller patrol vessels for Gibraltar. As we move to take control of our fishing grounds at the end of this year, and need to reinforce our border policing against various types of crime, we will need more offshore patrol capability.

Building back better should include expanding the UK's maritime capacity, creating many more opportunities for UK jobs and skills. It will provide a bigger taxable base of good employment in the UK, and is also necessary for our defence. It is important not to rely on imported spares and service for naval vessels or other strategic defence equipment.

Yours ever

John

[The language of the left](#)

People complain to me that they can no longer say what they wish. They feel they are losing their right to free speech or to independent thoughts. They have to follow the fashionable mantra of the left who dominate language and attitudes on law and order, immigration, transport and energy amongst other topics. They were hoping for some change of tone or lead from the top with a change to a Conservative majority government at the last election.

Some people try it on with this site, wanting to cast generalised allegations against religions, nations, large groups of people or named members of a global elite. I do not allow it, as I do not like unpleasant or dangerous language casting possibly false allegations and adding to divisions. Nor do I have time or legal resource to check out allegations against named individuals. There are campaigning media with better resources and more appetite to root out individual cases of law breaking, excessive influence or whatever you should go to for that.

I do, however, agree that we need to be able to talk sensibly about matters that worry people, and need to analyse problems like the cost and availability of energy or how we police our borders, free from attempts to prevent us by making false allegations against us over our motives and attitudes. We need to keep open the right to talk of these things and to

disagree with the authoritarian left who wish us all to say the same things and to come to the same conclusions, when often their priorities and remedies are damaging to both our freedoms and to people's prosperity.

If we are to recover our economy, enhance our freedoms, level up around the UK and promote individual prosperity, we do need to challenge some of the left wing assumptions which make all that more difficult. I encourage people to write in with a better vision of the future. That is why, for example, I have been working on energy policies to keep the lights on and provide more affordable energy for consumers and business, and why I have been urging the government to direct its powers to stamp out people trafficking and illegal migration risking lives to get people into the UK. We do need new approaches to a variety of problems that challenge the tired soundbites of political correctness.