

Clean air

Many of us want clean air. In past ages people paid a health price for industrialisation, and for keeping their homes warm with coal fires. Soot, particulates, smoke and dangerous gases came from factory chimneys and from domestic heating and cooking.

In more recent times there has been a successful and concerted effort to clean our air. Coal fires were replaced with gas and electric heating. Factory chimneys are now strictly monitored and dangerous emissions are contained or rendered harmless.

The Green movement urges us to do better. They would like us to switch away from gas boilers at home, and wish to cut the impact of transport on air quality. If you live near a main road or major airport or railway line with diesel trains there can be dirt in the air.

The issue of small particles of material that can damage lungs is no longer a question of too many diesel cars as some suggest. The modern Euro 6 standard diesel car is only allowed to put out 0.0045gms per km travelled. This is such a low level that it is difficult to measure whether it is there or not, and is the same limit as for petrol cars. There are still some old diesel buses, lorries and cars that do emit higher levels of particulates.

The more important sources of particles from transport now comes from tyre wear and brake dust. These are often more severe in heavier vehicles. Buses and heavy trucks are likely to generate more than a car. Electric cars generate at least as much as petrol and diesel, and if they have heavy batteries for range and performance reasons they may create a bit more tyre wear from greater weight. There are also dust and particles in tube stations and mainline stations. The quantity of tyre and brake dust may well be more than 1000 times higher than the tiny amounts from a modern diesel or petrol exhaust.

It would be good for more work on tyre materials and brake friction to see how these particles can be reduced. Switching to electric cars does not fix this – it is a common problem for all transport. Even a bike has brake pad and tyre wear.

My question during the statement on UK Telecommunications, 14 July 2020

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): There could be offsets to the delay and cost if, as a result of this, we design and manufacture many more of the

components we need here at home. What exactly can the Government do to make that more likely to create jobs and technology?

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Oliver Dowden):
My right hon. Friend is right to raise the point, which is the opportunity created by open RAN technology.

It will take a very long time, were the UK minded to do so, to create a new mobile vendor like Ericsson, Nokia or indeed Huawei, but with open RAN we can get UK technologies into the provision of telecoms infrastructure, and that can sit alongside contributions from other like-minded countries around the world. That is how we will create jobs and provide a long-lasting solution.

Flood and coastal erosion policy

I have received this update from the Government:

Dear John

I recognise the immense impacts that flooding and coastal erosion can have on homes and businesses across the country. That is why this government is committed to reducing the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy from flooding and coastal erosion – as shown by our £2.6 billion investment in flood and coastal defences since 2015 to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

At the Budget we committed to double our investment in the flood and coastal defence programme in England over the next six years to £5.2 billion which will better protect a further 336,000 properties by 2027. In addition to this record funding, I am today announcing a further investment of up to £170 million to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes to boost jobs, businesses and economic growth as part of economic recovery from coronavirus. These projects will commence in 2020 and 2021 to drive growth and unlock a range of benefits for local economies across the country – from Sheffield to Bude.

As part of the government's continuing action to tackle climate change, we have today set out a package of measures to better protect and prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion for the long-term. I have today published a new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Policy Statement for England which represents the most substantive update to our national effort to tackle flood and coastal erosion risk in a decade – since the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

I am announcing further details of the £200 million programme which will support 25 local areas to drive innovation to increase resilience to flooding and coastal erosion – and I am proposing to take forward changes to the Flood

Re scheme which will accelerate uptake of property flood resilience measures.

The long-term Policy Statement sets out the government's ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. It outlines five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.

These actions will not just reduce the likelihood of flooding and coastal erosion but will also reduce the impacts if flooding does happen. They will work together to increase resilience across the country. The Policy Statement will encourage wider and more comprehensive action by all those with a part to play to drive down flood risk from every angle through these five policies:

Upgrading and expanding our national flood defences and infrastructure

We will continue to build the new flood defences that the nation needs, investing in more permanent, demountable and temporary defences – building on the success of our £2.6 billion investment to better protect 300,000 properties since 2015. As announced at the Budget, over the next six years, we will invest a record £5.2 billion in the flood and coastal defence programme in England. This will better protect a further 336,000 properties and reduce national flood risk by up to 11% by 2027.

Managing the flow of water more effectively

We will deliver an integrated approach to managing water to better protect communities from flooding and provide wider benefits for water resource management and the environment. As part of this, we will increase the number of water management schemes within and across catchments to reduce flood risk and help manage drought risk. We will also do more to tackle surface water flood risk.

Harnessing the power of nature to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk and achieve multiple benefits

We will double the number of government funded projects which include nature-based solutions to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk. We will strengthen links between natural flood risk management and wider environmental and social benefits and explore how we can do more to deliver multiple benefits.

Better preparing our communities

We will ensure that every single home currently at high risk of flooding is better protected or better prepared. We will maintain and enhance our planning policies that direct new development away from areas at risk. We will ensure our communities and businesses have the information they need to take ownership of their resilience. Our policies will help to ensure that buildings, important infrastructure sites and key public services are better prepared to manage flood risk. We will work together to support communities, including when flooding happens and in recovery.

Enabling more resilient places through a catchment-based approach

We will adopt a catchment-based approach which means considering the full range of actions that could be taken in an area, upstream and downstream, by a variety of bodies to improve resilience. We will transform the current approach to local flood and coastal erosion risk planning so that every area of England will have a more strategic and comprehensive local plan by 2026 which drives long-term local action and investment. In areas facing significant coastal erosion and impacts from sea levels rising, we will support local areas to implement long-term plans to manage risk.

Alongside the Policy Statement, the Environment Agency will shortly lay before Parliament its National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The Strategy which will provide direction to the work of risk management authorities on the ground and includes strategic objectives to improve the resilience of the nation through to 2100.

The new £200 million innovative resilience programme will test and demonstrate actions which are needed to deliver the ambition outlined in the Policy Statement. As well as delivering innovative actions in 25 selected areas, the evidence gained from the programme will enable successful approaches to be identified and implemented more widely.

In July 2019 Flood Re published their first Quinquennial Review into the scheme – a legislative requirement every five years – and made a number of proposals to government. Having carefully considered these proposals I am today announcing that we will consult on a number of them, including some proposals which go further in order to increase the uptake of Property Flood Resilience and better support customer and insurers to recognise the benefits. The proposals will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme and incentivise the use of property flood resilience measures to make properties more resilient to flooding.

The actions the government is committing to today will strengthen our approach to tackling flood and coastal erosion risk for the long-term and demonstrates the UK's world-leading work to tackle climate change. They will improve our health and wellbeing, enhance our environment and support our economic recovery. Taken together this means that our country will be significantly more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and will ensure that every place can thrive in a changing climate.

RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP

National resilience

Yesterday in the Commons the Culture and Digital Secretary announced a change of policy for the roll out of 5G mobile telephony. Following new official

advice on national security , the government decided to ban Huawei components in the 5G network from the end of this year, and to work away to remove Huawei altogether by 2027.

The government accepted this would delay provision of the new network by between 2 and 3 years and could cost an extra £2bn. The Minister given the job of explaining this stressed that national security must come first, so this was a necessary price to pay.

This was a crucial moment in the evolution of UK policy. It marked a decisive departure from the pro China approach of the previous 15 years, where buying more than whatever the degree of sensitivity of the product or component was fine. Our policy towards China was based on the proposition that they would do us no harm and be there for us when we need their supplies. It was a grand partnership where we became more dependent.

The immediate trigger was a tougher US stance limiting Huawei's ability to make and export. The further deterioration in the relationship over Hong Kong, the treatment of minorities in China, the aggressive approach to the South China Sea and the action on the Indian border also influenced the decision.

The UK needs to have enough control over strategic networks and over crucial intellectual property for our wider security. Immediately the UK needs to catch up with the leaders in mobile telephony.

Green grants come home

I am urging the Chancellor to say that anyone undertaking home insulation, buying double glazing, improving the energy efficiency of their homes should be able to claim one of the new Green grants for work underway since the announcement.

The Chancellor proposed £5000 per household by way of a grant to cover a possible two thirds of the cost of green energy projects undertaken. The short term problem is people are delaying or cancelling projects they were planning until the terms of the grant are clear and they can apply to get the money. More is on offer to people on low incomes.

It is one of those ironies of life that an intervention in the market designed to be good news to boost certain kinds of home improvement should lead to cancelled work owing to understandable delays in setting out the detail of the scheme. All can be put right by a helpful immediate statement, allowing applications for grants to follow commitment to the work this week. This will keep the orders flowing for an industry just trying to get over lock down and temporarily closed businesses.

Yesterday evening the Commons approved the Bill to cut Stamp Duty. There, contrary to some press stories, the government brought the measure in straight away and legislated afterwards. Otherwise the big temporary cut in Stamp Duty would have set back the housing market by putting people off buying until the tax cut came in. It is good news for first time buyers and for those wishing to trade up their primary residence that no Stamp Duty is payable on £500,000 of any purchase. This means 90% of all homes will be Stamp Duty free for those buying them as their prime residence.