

## My intervention during the debate on Exiting the European Union (Structural and Investment Funds), 19 February 2019

**John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** Before the Minister moves on from the money, will he explain how the money would be calculated, and whether we would have to make a contribution to the administration costs or just to the actual costs of the programme?

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) (Mr Richard Harrington):** If I may, Mr Speaker, I will use this opportunity to answer my right hon. Friend's earlier question about the dispute resolution. Any disputes in relation to how funding is spent are dealt with through the audit and default functions and the provisions set out in the existing funding agreements. As for his second question, I will have to give the matter some thought, as I must confess I do not know the answer. If I do not think of it in the next half an hour or so, I will certainly write to him with the answer on that. My memory is quite good and usually things come back in due course, as I know they do to you, Mr Speaker.

I mentioned that the EU is making separate legal provision for us to continue to participate in the Peace and Interreg V-A programmes. That provision is intended to enable continued access to the programmes in the event of no deal, but it does not resolve the problem of payment powers, which is why we need both the EU regulation and this statutory instrument to safeguard those programmes and to ensure the continuation of their benefits. Not having this instrument in force by exit would also prevent the Government and our devolved Administrations from paying out the guarantee to UK partners of other territorial co-operation programmes, risking their financial viability.

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## My intervention during the Urgent Question on UK Nationals Returning from Syria, 18 February 2019

**John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** How will the UK authorities go about finding the evidence concerning those UK citizens who went abroad to join a terrorist organisation and to fight or intervene in acts of brutality or support those who did?

**Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr Sajid Javid):** My right hon. Friend highlights an important issue. Members will understand why it is very difficult to gather evidence when someone has gone to a completely ungoverned space where we have no consular presence and no diplomatic relations of any type, and nor do our allies.

That said, we put a huge amount of effort—I take this opportunity to commend our security services, the police and some of our international partners—into gathering battlefield evidence and having that ready to use whenever appropriate. If we can supply that evidence in some cases to our partners for cases that they wish to bring in front of their courts, we will try to work constructively with them. The UN has also been looking at this. New measures are being considered on battlefield evidence conventions, and Britain, through the Ministry of Defence, is making an incredibly important contribution to that.

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## [Fiscal squeeze continues in UK](#)

Tax revenues were up by a massive 9.7% in January, creating a record surplus in a month where the government usually collects more money than it spends. Public borrowing is running 46% lower than last year and is on target to hit the Chancellor's wish to cut it sharply.

Stamp Duty revenues are down for the year so far and down in January, reflecting the continuing impact of higher rates. The government should cut the rates to help the market and would then collect more cash from this source.

Income tax revenue was particularly strong.

The government is squeezing the economy too much and could do with some cuts in tax rates to promote growth. The right tax cuts would also boost revenue. Property taxes including business rates are particularly damaging at a time when we need to see more redevelopment and change of use as the digital revolution sweeps through our High Streets and industrial parks.

State debt as a percentage of GDP is falling, and now stands at 62% after deducting the debt the Bank of England has bought up

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## [The Independent Group and anti](#)

## semitism

Yesterday we had a moving and important debate in the House about the rise of anti-Semitism in the UK. Most of us agreed that it is a nasty racism which no-one in a decent democracy should have to confront. James Brokenshire made a powerful speech for the government setting out how we must all take action to prevent it. The Labour spokesman Barry Gardiner apologised to the Jewish community on behalf of the Labour party and confessed that there has been a strand of virulent anti-Semitism within Labour that they need to control. He spoke with passion and feeling.

The new Independent grouping of Labour MPs were well represented. They gave good support to Luciana Berger who catalogued the abuse she has faced from Labour party members and social media for her Jewish ancestry. Another group of active Labour MPs sitting on the two back benches behind their Shadow Spokesman also delivered powerful asides and interventions, demanding that their party did more than just offer an apology but tackled the backlog of cases that have been referred to the National Executive alleging anti-Semitism. They showed considerable sympathy for their former colleagues and expressed similar feelings. They were keen to see the expulsion of Derek Hatton, recently admitted to the Labour party again.

Into this emotional rift came the resignations of three Conservative MPs from the Conservative party. They too wish to be seen as independent, though it is not clear they are the same kind of independent as the Labour group. Their reasons seemed somewhat different to the Labour explanations given the day before. They have yet to articulate exactly what they want to stand for, or why they have moved away from the 2017 Conservative Manifesto with its clear pledge to leave the EU and its customs union and single market in order to fulfil the mandate of the EU referendum. They say in general terms they object to the very Brexit which helped get the Conservatives elected, and that they think the modernising agenda has been overthrown. They also dislike austerity, which ironically came from the modernisers David Cameron and George Osborne that they professed to like.

The Labour independents have said they are not forming a new party and will not be contesting elections. The polling assuming they would shows them capturing just 14% of the vote, mainly at the expense of Labour who go down to 28%, and squeezing the Liberal Democrats down to 7%. The sense from yesterday is the main reason they have split from Labour is one of attitude and tone from the leadership. They dislike Mr Corbyn and dislike the intolerance they find in the party. Others might follow them judging by the reactions of some other Labour MPs during the debate.

The Conservative party will come together again as soon as we are out of the EU. It has been the delay in our exit for 2 years 9 months that has allowed the argument about how and when to fester. The Labour party has deeper seated disagreements within it which pose a problem for the leadership. At Prime Minister's Question time neither leader wanted to mention the difficult topic of defections.

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## Development in the Wokingham Council area

The Council is in the early stages of considering the next local Plan and where development might go. I have suggested that we make a case for a slower pace of new housing development in the next plan period given the large amount of housing and its impact on our area currently underway.

The issue of Grazeley and a possible large settlement there is under discussion. I have said that this should only be considered if it was instead of development elsewhere in the Borough, as we would not wish to commit to a large new settlement and have substantial sites elsewhere as well. I have also said there must be an up front considerable investment in infrastructure not just for any new development but also to tackle the knock on effects on transport, health and schools in the wider area affected. I am not myself committed to any given location for development for the new plan.

I would be interested to hear your views.