

New Year's Honours

I would like to thank all those who have sent me kind messages on the award of a knighthood.

I am very conscious of the debt I owe all my constituents. It has been their advice, problems and issues that has provided much of the impetus to my thoughts, has influenced my contribution to the national conversation and allowed me to undertake public service. I have learned a lot from those who support me and from those who disagree with some of the views I express. It is a privilege to serve as Wokingham's MP.

I also would like to thank All Souls College Oxford where I am a fellow. They have provided me with a platform and with academic discussion and criticism to develop views on public policy and give lectures and seminars. This too has helped develop my thinking and to make a contribution to the national debate.

I have also enjoyed offering some help to Variety, the Children's charity, who do such good work for our community.

Helping migrants

It is not a good idea to help people smugglers put more people at risk by selling them expensive trips in unsuitable boats across the Channel. The UK authorities need to issue clear safety warnings to people not to undertake these journeys, and not to expose themselves to the criminal gangs who sell these places of danger. The UK of course does not wish to see people drown in the Channel and should co-operate and assist the French authorities to prevent these boats taking off from the French coast, or intercepting them early and returning the people safely to France where they have committed themselves to the water. The longer they are at sea the more danger there is of inclement sea and weather conditions overwhelming them or of collision with one of the many large vessels using the busy Channel waterway.

The UK has legal routes for refugees and for economic migrants from the EU which people should use where they wish to seek a work and residence permit. It is not a good idea to offer an expensive rescue service to people to jump the queue or get round the rules. There is the danger the rescuers will not encounter all the boats seeking night time passage across the Channel increasing the risk of death and disaster for any given boat, whilst their presence may encourage more to think this is a low risk way of expediting admission to the UK. Some of the criminals who run these illicit boats are seeking to make criminals of their passengers by encouraging some of them to arrive and work illegally in the UK, where they would then be prey to

versions of modern slavery. The authorities need to be vigilant to clamp down on such vile practices. We want legal migrants to come through the proper routes and to then settle to a decent lifestyle here in the UK.

[Government fund to help Town Centres](#)

In the New Year the details of how Councils can apply for additional money to help modernise or improve town centres will be published. I have told Wokingham Borough of the opportunity to bid for funds, and will also contact West Berkshire to remind them.

[12 big wins from leaving in March on WTO terms](#)

- 1 Far from crashing out, we will be cashing in. We will get our money back to spend on our priorities. We will be better off.
- 2 We get control of our taxes allowing us to cut VAT along with other taxes. This will boost our growth rate and give all taxpayers a Brexit bonus.
3. We can hire more nurses, doctors, teachers, and police, and improve our social care with money saved from the EU
4. We can sign new trade agreements with the rest of the world to boost the majority of our trade currently with non EU countries.
5. We can remove tariffs on imported components to provide a boost to UK manufacturing.
6. We can restore and expand our fishing and fish processing industry.
7. We can have a farming and tariff policy that means we grow much more of food locally, cutting the food miles.
8. We can control migration and have a policy good for UK business and society.
9. We can make our own laws and refuse EU ones which are damaging.
10. We will end all the uncertainty for business
11. We can end the rows and the wild and usually pessimistic speculation about Brexit. We can turn to talking about other matters, and bring the nation together in discussing how to use the money and freedoms we have gained from exit.
12. We will become a self governing democracy again.

Leaving the EU is not a threat or a disease, but a huge opportunity.

8 things wrong with the Withdrawal Agreement

1. Signing the Withdrawal Agreement gives the EU what they want, taking away most of our bargaining power.
2. The financial commitments are open ended, with some very long lasting. They will doubtless be much more than the Treasury £39 bn forecast. This is money given for nothing in return that we do not legally owe them.
3. We have to accept and follow any law they pass for the next two years or more, without any vote or voice to try to stop laws that damage our interests.
4. We cannot sign any trade deals with other countries all the time we stay in the so called Implementation period.
5. Under the Agreement we might be another 45 months stuck in the EU, making a total of 78 months or six and a half years from our decision to leave. Parliament promised to enact the decision of the People's vote, not to delay it indefinitely.
6. The Irish backstop splits the UK up.
7. The Withdrawal Agreement is legally binding. The Political Declaration is a vague wish list including the contradiction of a possible free trade agreement and a possible customs partnership.
8. Far from ending business uncertainty it prolongs it and makes it worse, as it makes a good outcome for the UK less likely.

This is an unbelievably bad Agreement for the UK and a great one for the EU. It is not a deal, as it does not offer the UK any of the things the PM said she wanted. It is an invitation to much more uncertainty and more talks on worse terms for the UK.