

Safer roads with better junctions

Many people tell me of the difficulties they experience getting around in our local area. I sympathise as I get stuck in the same jams. Some of it comes from roadworks, where they are best done at less busy times of year and need to be done as quickly as possible. Much of it comes from inadequate junctions.

Junctions are also the place where there is most danger, with traffic of all kinds in potential conflict with each other and with pedestrians as cars and bikes, pedestrians and lorries try to cross lanes and change direction. I am encouraging the Councils to take another look at all their main junctions with a view to making them easier to use and therefore safer.

Traffic light controlled junctions can be improved by

1. Changing phasing of lights to reflect relative traffic flows
2. Introducing traffic sensors to regulate phases
3. Allowing main road priority with traffic sensors for side roads
4. Introducing right turning and or left turning lanes to segregate traffic
5. Allowing left turn phases on a filter .
6. Removing lights from roundabouts or making them part time only for the peak
7. Introducing short phase right turn off a main road with longer phase for main road with green in both directions
8. Pedestrians to have green phase lights, phased with the road traffic lights.

Roundabouts

Often a better choice than light controlled junctions.

Large roundabouts need clear lane marking where two or more lanes of traffic possible and permitted

I would be interested in feedback about these principles, and open to suggestions to pass on to our local Councils about how individual junctions can be improved.

Correction – when will Parliament vote on the Withdrawal Agreement?

This blog contains substantial fact based analysis of the current economic and political situation worldwide. I use published official sources and wish

to be accurate. It also provides my views and forecasts, which are distinguished from the factual analysis. I often compare what governing institutions say they are planning to do with their outturns as captured by official figures and reports.

In a recent blog I said that the government has delayed the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement until January 14th. I had not read this in an official source, but relied on press and media reports which I assumed were based on official briefings. I need to correct my piece, as there is still no official statement of when the Withdrawal Agreement will be voted on. All we know is the Parliamentary debate on it starts again on Wednesday 8th January and continues on the following two days. I will keep you posted as to when the debate will conclude and when there might be votes.

[Middle Eastern Wars and the US alliance](#)

Secretary of State for Defence, General Mattis, has resigned over a dispute with the President. The President wishes to keep his campaign promises to pull US troops out of Syria and Afghanistan. The General thinks the US should stay in these countries to be close to its allies.

It is true that the world's leading power will have more influence and be more likely to succeed if it builds and maintains alliances. The US can depend on NATO, whilst understandably objecting that many NATO members fail to meet the minimum financial contribution which the US and the UK manage. The US will also have more influence in the Middle Eastern war torn region if it maintains local alliances and keeps troops there. This does not mean, however, that the President was wrong to campaign to reduce US military commitment to the Middle East, nor does it prove he is wrong to insist on keeping his word.

When the President asks his staff what US military intervention in Syria has achieved so far, there is no easy answer. The US and her allies did not want the Assad regime to continue, but had to assist the Assad regime in getting rid of ISIS, seen as an even bigger threat. Vacillation by the West over who the true enemy was – Assad or Isis – led to indecision and to growing Russian influence, based on strong backing for Assad. The roots of President Trumps wish to exit can be found in the unwillingness of the Obama regime to commit fully to helping Assad against Isis, or the failure of President Obama to come up with another strategy to rid Syria of both, which would have required huge force from the US and her allies to have any chance of success.

When the President asks what good can current low levels of troops do in modern Syria, where Assad is close to controlling the country again and where Russia is well dug in as a substantial external influence, there again is no great answer. If the USA and her allies are not prepared to commit many more forces, and if they have no clear alternative to the Assad tyranny backed by

Russia, there is not a lot of point in staying.

In Afghanistan things are a bit different. The USA and her allies does have a government to co-operate with, and the western coalition in the past has spent much blood and treasure on resisting extremists in that country. There, too, however, defenders of western involvement have to answer how much longer do we have to stay? How much more training do the Afghan security and defence forces need? Are we happy with the political results of the long war?

On both sides of the Atlantic there is war weariness over the Middle East, and some disappointment with the results of substantial past intervention. The military have done a brave and good job in difficult circumstances, but the politicians have found it difficult to translate that into successful political action to form war free states following democratic principles.

The European fall in car sales

Some in government wrongly worry that Brexit could damage our car industry. Latest sales figures show there is plenty of damage being done by EU regulations, UK taxes and a credit squeeze before we leave. Why doesn't any of this worry them? Why don't they do something to stop it?

Managed migration

Yesterday the government published its draft Immigration and Social Security Bill.

There were some good bits to it. The intention is to treat the rest of the world fairly and equally, with no special treatment for EU citizens. The aim is to encourage tourism and visitors. There will be no visas required for EU tourists coming here, and all tourists can stay for up to six months without the need for additional paperwork. Anyone gaining a place at a UK HE institution will be eligible for a permit. All those graduating from a UK university can stay for an additional six months to look for a job or to enjoy their time with us. These are important principles to assist our HE sector and tourist industry and show that the new global UK is outward looking and engaged with the wider world. Citizens of Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, the USA and Canada will be able to use the e-gates and faster entry system at our airports as EU people can today.

The proposals also include lifting the current quantitative controls on visas for people coming to undertake higher paid and skilled jobs in the UK currently applying to non EU citizens. The government argues that the UK is

good at generating jobs and business activities and needs to be able to attract talent from all round the world to take up these opportunities. The provisional proposal is that such jobs would need to pay more than £30,000 a year to be free of controls.

The government is also suggesting a transitional system of allowing people to come in to work for up to a year at lower pay levels. They would not be eligible for benefits and would have to return home at the end of the year. The longer term aim is to stop inward migration to take low paid jobs, to seek to drive up productivity and pay and to give UK based individuals more chance of getting employment. Having access to fewer people from abroad willing to accept low pay should increase investment in machine power to do some of the tasks, and to make the remaining workforce more productive.

The Common Travel area with the Republic of Ireland is maintained, as before we joined the EEC/EU.

We read that the Chancellor and the Business Secretary are unhappy about any policy which reduces the flow of migrants from the EU into low paid employment. The Home Secretary himself seems unhappy about continuing the policy aim of reducing inward migration substantially in line with the Prime Minister's often stated wish and with the Conservative Manifesto.