

A modern growing railway

Greens like trains. They seem to think they are free or low on CO₂ though all the time there diesel trains and electric trains running on power from a fossil fuelled power station that is a lie. One day when all the trains are electric, and when all the electricity is from renewables maybe this will be a sensible view of theirs. In the meantime we can harness their enthusiasm for trains with plans to maximise use of the substantial railway assets the nation owns.

The best green and commercial use of rail capacity could be for goods movement. Taking many more lorries off the road and using rail tracks more at night would be a double win. To work well there needs to be more track spurs from mainline to retail and industrial parks. The rail businesses need to offer good pricing for waggon loads, not just whole train loads. There needs to be a network of tractor units to collect from stations and do the last few miles where there is no track direct to factory or warehouse.

To win back commuter travel the industry needs to find the best way of charging. Flexible season tickets where the more you travel on the specified journey the cheaper per journey it becomes is the obvious way to go. Discounts could be bigger for Mondays and Fridays the less popular days.

The railway needs to experiment with events, leisure, short breaks and holiday travel. This is becoming the most common, with huge discounts in fares to win heavily loss making business. This is a very bad model for the taxpayer and generates more CO₂ creating discretionary travel. Prices need to be more realistic, and entrepreneurs need to venture with event, hospitality and travel organisers to make it an attractive package.

The current losses on rail are unacceptable. Too many little used passenger trains run, whilst some popular times and routes lack capacity. Freight could be economic.

Labour's net zero disaster

Labour's big difference with the Conservatives was going to be a big programme of net zero state investment and subsidy. This would be backed up by stricter targets to be enforced by tougher and earlier regulation to force us out of our cars and into our heat pumps. How they complained when the PM made a speech favour of a slower and less regulated pathway to low carbon. Conservatives want the PM to do more to show he has turned away from unrealistic targets, dirigiste regulations and wasteful subsidy.

The Labour approach was full of lies and implausibilities. Where did they get

£28 bn a year from to pay for the programme? They now admit there was no £28 bn and they cannot find it.

They say they will have moved over from fossil fuel electricity by 2030. No way. We still cannot store much wind and solar for wind and sun free hours and still lack grid to handle so much more interruptible power.

They say many more people will insulate , buy heat pumps and switch to electric cars. You cannot achieve that by just spending more taxpayer money on subsidies and tax cuts. Half the country will not even accept a “free” smart meter let alone have their homes made into a building site for a heat pump.

Maybe they would get us to deindustrialise at a faster pace to make us ever more dependent on imports whilst cutting CO₂ produced here. As for the favoured green jobs they would create plenty of those in China. No sign of realistic plans to wrestle the manufacture of solar panels, wind turbines, big batteries or electric cars away from now well established Chinese dominance.

Letter from the Transport Minister – money for resurfacing roads and potholes

Please find enclosed below the letter that I have received from the Secretary of State for Transport on how much Wokingham will received for resurfacing roads and filling potholes:

Dear John,

Local Roads Resurfacing Funding

I am writing with details of how the Government is helping local authorities in your constituency to resurface more roads and fill more potholes.

We are providing **£8.3 billion** of extra roads resurfacing funding for English local highway authorities between 2023/24 to 2033/34. This money will, over time, transform the condition of local roads, allowing all road users smoother, faster, and safer trips - paid for with savings delivered by the Prime Minister's decision to cancel HS2 Phase 2. All HS2 savings that would have been spent in the North or the Midlands will still be spent there, with savings from a revised approach to delivering Euston station shared across the rest of the country.

Individual [highway authorities' allocations](#) are online, as is the [Network North Command Paper](#), which makes it clear this funding is in addition to transport funding from the last Spending Review and on top of what authorities were expecting to receive.

As per the command paper, every penny committed to the Northern leg will go to the North, every penny committed to the Midlands leg to the Midlands, and every penny saved from our new arrangement for Euston station will be spread across every other region in the country.

Wokingham is covered by two local authorities in receipt of this additional funding: West Berkshire and Wokingham. The table below sets out the funding that West Berkshire and Wokingham are receiving in the current year and the total additional funding they will be receiving over the years from 2023/24 to 2033/34.

You will naturally want to ensure that your constituents benefit in full from this funding uplift, and you may therefore wish to raise this as appropriate in meetings with your local authority leaders and the relevant local cabinet

members to ensure that West Berkshire and Wokingham are putting the money to good use and complying with the new reporting requirements that the Government has introduced, as set out below. You may, for example, wish to ask which roads they are intending to resurface and/or which other highway assets (such as bridges) they are intending to maintain with the additional funding.

Local authority	Funding increase for 2023/24 made possible by reallocated HS2 funding	Funding increase for 2023/24 announced at Spring Budget 2023	2023/24 total funding including baseline set at SR21	2023/24 approx. % increase on 2022/23	Total indicative additional funding allocation 2023/24 to 2033/34
West Berkshire	£679,000	£957,600	£7,023,600	30%	£21,279,000
Wokingham	£418,000	£589,200	£4,321,200	30%	£13,095,000

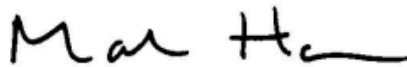
Table note: The funding increase made possible by reallocated HS2 funding is part of the £8.3 billion uplift for roads resurfacing; £150 million is being allocated for the 2023/24 financial year. The Spring Budget in March 2023 allocated an additional £200 million for highways maintenance for the 2023/24 financial year. Total funding is these two funding allocations in addition to the £915 million baseline fund for eligible local authorities outside of London and those receiving City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) set at Spending Review 2021. CRSTS allocations, along with all allocations highlighted in this table, can be found on gov.uk.

To ensure transparency we are asking all authorities to publish on their websites:

- by 15 March 2024 a summary of the additional resurfacing work they will deliver with the new funding over the next 2 years;
- thereafter quarterly reports, with the first by the end of June 2024, summarising the additional work they have done and listing the roads that they have resurfaced; and
- later in 2024/25 a long-term plan for their use of the full 11-year funding and the transformation it will deliver.

I hope this significant investment in your constituency is welcome news, and no doubt you will work closely with your local authorities to ensure that it makes the most positive difference for your constituents.

Yours sincerely,



**The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**

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Yours sincerely,



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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**

[Why won't Wokingham Council mend the potholes? More money for Wokingham and](#)

West Berks.

The state of Wokingham's roads is atrocious. I am getting plenty of complaints about the increased number of potholes and the poor surfaces which have deteriorated badly in the last two years. The Lib Dems seem to want the roads to get worse to deter people from driving to work or school.

I have successfully pressed with some other Conservative MPs to make tackling potholes a priority. Wokingham is getting a current baseline sum of 3,314,000 from government each year for road maintenance. The government is also providing an additional £418,000 extra this year and again next year for additional work on potholes. The minimum promised uplift in road money between 2023-4 and 2033-34 will be £13,095,000.

So Wokingham Council, what is your excuse now? This is another increased sum and new money the Lib Dems do not want to tell us about. Time to do something with all this extra money.

West Berkshire with more road to maintain gets £5,387,000 as base sum, with a pothole uplift of 679,000 this year and next.