

## Site service

Some technical work is being undertaken which might affect service over the next couple of days I am told.

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## Business rates

I have been lobbying the government along with other MPs to do more to alleviate high business rate increases hitting some firms in our areas under the revaluation proposals. The government has offered substantial rate relief to many small businesses, but there remain numerous businesses that will experience rises in their rates bills at a time when they can ill afford the extra money.

Today the Communities and Local Government Secretary announced that he is working on a scheme with the Chancellor to offer more help, which will be welcome.

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## UK growth accelerated in the fourth quarter of last year

The fourth quarter saw UK growth speed up to 0.7% for the three months. The quarterly pattern last year according to the ONS was 0.2% in Q1, 0.6% in each of Quarters 2 and 3, and 0.7% in Q4. The ONS says this amounts to 1.8% growth for the year as a whole, though the four quarters as reported gives you a figure of 2.1%. What is clear from these figures is the economy grew faster after the Brexit vote than before by a decent margin, the opposite of the official and expert forecasts at the time.

As the ONS rightly said "In the fourth quarter the UK experienced the strongest arte of growth among European groupings and G7 countries". Let's hope the Treasury adjust their forecasts for our economy in the Budget statement, as their recent forecasts have been far too low.

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# Lords pass Brexit Bill unanimously

Parliament has now spoken. A large majority for Brexit in the Commons is now matched by a unanimous vote in the Lords.

The Supreme Court has succeeded in delaying the letter but not in stopping it. As I thought at the time of the discussions on the Supreme Court decision it is the view of Parliament we should send the letter. If it had not been Parliament would have said so and voted accordingly prior to the Court decision.

I expect the Lords to approve the Bill at third reading in a similar way. It would be odd indeed if they changed their minds after yesterday's important vote.

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## Design and use of UK airspace consultation

The Government is currently consulting on proposals to:

- Support the reform of airspace, thereby maximising the economic and social benefits of aviation
- Minimise the negative local impacts of aviation

Ministers are seeking comment on proposals to update policy on the management of UK airspace including:

- The role of an Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise to ensure noise impacts are openly considered
- Providing industry with the ability to assess noise impacts and guidance to help them manage change more effectively
- Bringing compensation policy for airspace changes in line with policy on changes to aviation infrastructure
- Greater flexibility for London's major airports, so they can adapt noise management to the needs of their local communities

The consultation can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2m3y2Hj>. **It closes on 25 May 2017.**