

The EU Viet Nam free trade agreement

All those who write to me to complain that the UK might sign a Free Trade Agreement with the USA not to their liking might like to concentrate on the Free Trade Agreements we have to accept, entered into by the EU for us. This week the EU has signed a new agreement with Viet Nam. There has been no debate in Parliament about it, and the UK has no right to reject it or to require improvements and amendments.

It is a long and complex document. The tariff reductions are asymmetric, with 7 years to get EU tariffs to zero, and more than 10 years to get all Viet Nam tariffs to zero. Both sides pledge themselves to the doctrine of equivalence over sanitary and phytosanitary matters. The provisions on animal welfare are unclear.

EU trade with Viet Nam is not large. The EU imports some clothing, telecoms products, computers and shoes. I think these agreements ought to be subject to proper Parliamentary control, with UK negotiators taking the views of public and Parliament into the negotiations.

Heathrow consultation

I attended the Heathrow consultation at Parliament this week. I renewed my lobbying concerning excessive plane noise when the wind comes from the east following changes to flight routes in 2014.

The airport said they would be consulting again about the noise issue later this year and were working on ways of abating noise. They are looking into steeper ascent and descent so planes are higher for longer and at whether they should revert to the previous routes which did not produce such concentrated noise for Wokingham. I asked them for a written statement for me to share with constituents over how they will seek to mitigate the noise problem.

Environmental lobby 26 June

I agreed to meet constituents coming to the environmental lobby today. In the end only one came for the meeting, but we had a good conversation with a number of positive ideas.

My constituent raised the issue of too much plastic getting into the oceans. I explained how the UK government was leading the charge to try to cut plastic use and to stop so much ending up in the seas. The UK can do more to substitute degradable materials for plastic, and cut down the presence of single used plastics dramatically. We can also improve enforcement of laws against litter to ensure more waste is properly contained and processed by our domestic and commercial waste systems.

I was asked about motorcycle noise. I agreed to look in to standards and controls over noisy bikes. The problem of fast bicycles not using bells to warn pedestrians of their presence was also a matter of concern.

I was shown a number of containers and plastic cutlery items where better design and different materials could make a difference. I agreed to pursue with Wokingham Borough what more they can do to offer green leadership by their own purchases, I explained that the new leadership of the Council is seeking to pursue greener policies and are currently reviewing just these matters. I agreed to write to them encouraging a review of the Council's practises to offer good leadership on recycling and the use of suitable materials.

[VAT increase on solar panels](#)

Yesterday the government pushed through a tax hike from 5% to 20% VAT on solar panels. They did this to comply with EU law. I did not support them.

What is it about Mrs May's government that they are so wedded to the EU? We are leaving. We do not need to set our taxes in the ways they demand any more. The government says it wants to be more green, so why on earth make it more expensive to generate solar power?

I want a Brexit budget. That budget should include taking VAT off all green products like insulation, boiler controls, draught excluder and solar panels.

[TV licence fees](#)

Some constituents have written to me to complain about the BBC's wish to limit free TV licences to only those over 75 who are on a low income. This is clearly out of the spirit of the agreement with the government which gave the BBC the right to levy a higher tax to finance itself as long as it paid for free TV licences for the over 75s.

I am taking this matter up with both the BBC and the government. I think the government should apply more pressure to the BBC to honour the pledge made.