

# 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.

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# Wokingham Choral Society

I had the pleasure of attending the Choral Society's carol concert on Saturday at All Saints Church. The choir was in great voice, with the audience singing along to some of the better known ones. I would like to say a big Thank you to the choir for all the work they put in to entertaining us so well throughout the year, and wish them every success for 2019.

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## Deals galore in place of the Withdrawal Agreement

No deal has always been a misnomer of leaving the EU without signing the Withdrawal Agreement. Proponents have called it leaving on WTO terms, or a Clean break exit with global trading or some such. More recently others have called it a managed exit, drawing attention to the various areas of collaboration and agreement there will be on a so called No Deal exit.

So let me have another go at explaining the WTO option. It is if you like the "multi deal option" or deals on wheels, as the UK and the EU agree a series of measures to smooth transport and trade across the Channel and across the Irish border.

We now know there will be the following Agreements

The Common Transit Convention

The facilitation of trade Convention

WTO trading rules

Air Services Agreement

Continued arrangements for London based derivatives to trade and settle

Phyto-sanitary arrangements

Possible continuing membership of the Government Procurement Agreement

In other words a WTO Brexit will also include a number of important agreements to ensure the planes will fly, the trucks will move and the trade will flow after March 29

There will be the added bonus that we can stop all these groundhog day debates and show how absurd so many of these scare stories are.

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## **Network Rail will suspend Wokingham train whistles**

I was pleased to hear that Network Rail has agreed to suspend the train whistles from December 23 rd following complaints from residents and myself. They need to find a better way of ensuring safety if they wish to travel faster on that section of track , or revert to the old permitted speed. The noise is unacceptable to residents.

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## **UK to stay in Common Transit Convention**

The government announced this means “simplified cross border trade for UK businesses exporting their goods”. “It will provide cashflow benefits to traders and aid trade flow at key points of entry ..... traders will only have to make customs declarations and pay import duties when they arrive at their final destination.” How about some apologies from all those who said border friction would b e very damaging?