

Getting things done – rail line at Magdalen Green



Residents have complained to be about litter on and beside the rail line as it passes Magdalen Green.

I raised this with Network Rail and am promised it will be litter picked on 17th April.

Illegal parking in Beijing to face double punishments



Drivers parking illegally in Beijing may get double punishments. [File Photo]

Drivers parking illegally in Beijing may get double punishments if a new draft regulation is finalized, Beijing News reported.

According to the draft launched by the Legal Affairs Office of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality and open for public opinion from April 11 to May 10, a driver who parks their car illegally in a non-designated spot may be fined 200 yuan (\$29), and have three demerit points included on their driver's license.

In China, drivers will be disqualified from driving after accumulating 12 demerit points, according to current law. The city's traffic administration displays "No Parking" signs at busy roadsides and places around hospitals and shopping centers, the report said.

With seven sections and 61 rules, the draft also sets regulations on issues such as the planning and construction of parking facilities, and has specifications on companies that provide parking services.

The new regulation may take effect this year, according to the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport.

This will be the capital's first local law focusing on parking management.

Taxing whilst promoting growth

Most people's definition of the rich is someone better off than themselves. The millionaire feels poor in the company of billionaires.

Clearly, someone who has a decent home they own and sufficient invested capital to be able to pay their bills for the rest of their lives without needing to take a paid job is well off. Many retired people however, are by definition in that category. Many when they retire own their own home and have sufficient accumulated pension to live comfortably without recourse to work. People who achieve that well before retirement age, usually through success in business but sometimes through inheritance, have financial freedoms the rest of us do not enjoy.

I do not myself wish to punish people who through hard work and energy have bought themselves a decent home and built up financial savings for their later years. Governments of all persuasions used to encourage people to do both these things. There was mortgage interest tax relief to help home buyers, and unlimited tax free savings within a pension fund for the prudent. Recent governments have removed the tax relief on home purchase, and now have retrospectively limited the tax relief allowed to people who have saved and invested well for their old age.

I want to see the tax system allow people to succeed. Business success, when someone builds their own business from nothing, is a fine thing we should wish to encourage. High income and capital gains tax charges put some off building their business, or encourage people to sell out early. Buying and improving your own home is also a good idea. Why then make it more difficult with high Stamp duties?

There is a lot to recommend New Labour's tax settlement for the better off. They kept the Conservative's top rate of Income Tax at a maximum of 40% for most of their time in office. They cut Capital Gains Tax to 18%. These two rates were somewhere near the optimum rates from the point of view of the total amount of revenue collected. There is plenty of evidence that CGT above 20% raises less, and that Income Tax above 40% loses revenue. People with high incomes and substantial assets are much freer than others to move their domicile or place of business. They are also free to do less, venture less, earn less, if the tax rate goes too high. CGT is very avoidable. Many people refuse to sell shares from their investment portfolios above the tax free allowance. Many people are now sitting on second homes or BTL properties that they do not wish to sell because they do not want to pay the tax. It is easy to see CGT receipts going up if we went back to Labour's uniform rate for all assets of 18%.

Stamp Duties are now at very high levels for the dearer properties. Once a home goes above £925,000 the marginal Stamp Duty soars to 10%, or 13% for a BTL or second home. Over £1.5m the levels are 12% and 15%. In the Thames Valley I have seen some executive new build family homes on modest sized plots on the market for around £2.5m. That would mean the family that buys paying £213,750 of Stamp Duty. In Central London in the dearer districts £2.5m would not buy you a house.

These rates should be brought down.

Infectious diseases kill 1,589 in China in March

A total of 1,589 people died as a result of infectious diseases on the Chinese mainland in March, official data have shown.

According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission, there were 544,132 cases of infectious diseases reported on the mainland last month.

More than 325,791 cases were classified as Class B infectious diseases under China's Law on the Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases, resulting in 1,579 deaths.

Viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhoea as well as bacterial and amoebic dysentery accounted for 95 percent of these cases.

Category C diseases were responsible for 218,341 cases and 10 deaths. Infectious diarrhea, foot and mouth disease, and influenza were the most prevalent in this category, accounting for 90 percent of cases.

Former senior legislator sentenced to 14 years

A former senior legislator in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province was sentenced Thursday to 14 years in prison for accepting bribes.

Gai Ruyin, former deputy head of the Standing Committee of Heilongjiang Provincial People's Congress, was also fined 2 million yuan (about 291,300 U.S. dollars) and ordered to return all this ill-gotten gains by the First Intermediate People's Court of Tianjin, north China.

The court found Gai guilty of taking advantage of his various positions in Heilongjiang to help others secure projects, business opportunities and promotions from 2003 to 2015, according to a press release.

In return, he accepted money and property amounting to more than 23 million yuan personally or through other people, the court said.

The court decided to be lenient as Gai pleaded guilty, expressed remorse, returned his illegal gains and offered information about other crimes.