

Public spending review

This autumn will see a major public spending review. There will be the usual pressure for higher sums for the NHS, for education and other crucial services. There will be some good cuts to announce, as the subsidies and support payments needed during lockdown fall away. There also needs to be some detailed work done on problem areas where expenditure has been rising in ways that are not offering value for money or reflecting preferred policies and outcomes.

I will start examining some of these areas. They include the need to get better control of our borders to cut the costs imposed by illegal migration, as the government seeks answers through new legislation and policing. There is the big question of what should the railway look like post pandemic if as many think there will be a big decline in peak hour commuting which has been the high volume staple of the passenger business. Whilst the government is wedded to HS2, a very expensive project, there remain other pressures on capital spend to examine. There is the issue of how much money should be spent on housing subsidy at a time when the housing market is awash with private money. Do we need to subsidise the provision of homes given the way we offer financial help to those who cannot afford the homes on offer without benefits?

We need to look at the issue of how much the UK state buys from abroad, and whether there could be cheaper procurement from UK sources when you take into account tax flows on the businesses producing the items. We need to ask why the UK is still sending so much cash to the EU after we have left, with insufficient push back on the EU's view of the cost of the Withdrawal Agreement. Your thoughts on areas where reductions in spending could happen would be welcome.