

What should we offer illegal migrants?

There is a big divide in our society about people who cross the Channel by small boat to gain entry to the U.K. Some presume these people are asylum seekers or economic migrants from poor countries that we should help. Others are angry that the U.K. spends its resources on picking them up from the Channel and the placing them in accommodation with free board allowing them plenty of time to try to establish eventual legal entry. They point out these people cannot be asylum seekers as they are coming from France, which is a safe country. The migrants themselves are often frustrated that they are detained and not allowed to work whilst legal processes grind on.

Opponents say why cannot we return them, having made clear they are breaking the law by seeking passage without permission. They have often given substantial sums to criminal gangs to help them reach our shores, and have risked themselves and their families in unsuitable and overloaded boats. They have sought to cross one of the world's busiest shipping lanes in very vulnerable vessels. They must have calculated the U.K. will rush to their assistance because they and the people smugglers have chosen to put them at risk.

Supporters of the arrivals say we have a duty to rescue people from their own deliberate mistakes, and should show sympathy for people who are so keen to join us.

I would hope most could come to agree that people putting themselves at risk like this is undesirable, and devoting so much sea patrol and rescue resource to this dangerous criminal business unsatisfactory. The Home Secretary has promised new clearer law in the U.K. and a more united effort to crack the smuggling gangs and put them out of business. It should be an aim which unites most of us. I believe the Home Secretary wishes to do this, but has found the current law unhelpful for the task and is looking to amend it. She has also initiated an enquiry into the recent actions of Border Force in going into French waters to pick people up, when the French should have taken them back to safety in France.

Time for the UK to tell the COP26 main players some home truths

There is a part of the UK establishment that is always keen to belittle and run the UK down, claiming we are small and unimportant now we have left the EU. They ignore the facts that we are the second biggest contributor to NATO, a member of the UN security Council, the fifth largest world economy, a member of the G7 and the Commonwealth, and an important influence on world

events. This autumn sees the UK chairing the COP 26 Climate conference, shortly after we chaired the G7.

There is however one important area where I agree with them that we are small and not very important, and that is in the list of countries and regions that put out the most carbon dioxide. Ironically here the establishment seem to think it is the UK that has to do so much more, when all the figures show attention needs to be focussed on the Big three carbon generators, China, the USA and the EU. Between them they account for 52% of the world output compared to our 1%. In other words if the UK eliminated all its carbon dioxide output it would have the same effect on world figures as the Big 3 cutting their output by just 2%.

China is still saying she intends to increase her massive carbon output further this decade before finding some ways to start to curb it. China needs to be challenged on her large and growing output. At 29% of world CO₂ she is by far and away the biggest single source. If the UK eliminated all its CO₂ that would not fully offset one recent year's growth in output by China. The USA has just experienced four years under a President dedicated to increasing US output and use of cheap fossil fuel energy. He successfully boosted US output of oil and gas to help power an industrial renaissance by onshoring investments that had gone abroad and expanding US output. The new President thinks this was a wrong policy but has yet to announce the ways in which he intends to redirect US activities. We await a detailed plan with timetables on how to get US people out of their internal combustion engines cars, eating less meat and putting in electric heating. The EU too has a similar issue. Germany remains wedded to a major car industry which largely sells diesel and petrol vehicles. The country burns a lot of coal and says it intends to keep coal in its power mix at least until 2035. How is this compatible with the EU's aims? The EU is around one tenth of world carbon dioxide production.

As Chairman of the Conference the UK needs to challenge the USA and EU to produce timely and convincing plans of how they will achieve demanding targets as early as 2030 as it is difficult to see them hitting them on current policy. All major participants need to see that if they do not get a much better offer from China and other leading emerging market countries world emissions will continue to grow.

Brexit

The European Movement still will not accept the result of a big democratic vote. They have sent me and doubtless many others a glossy brochure designed to show what they see as the bad news of Brexit. They urge us "to build back our ties with the rest of Europe", code no doubt for trying to rejoin. Had remain won I suspect they would have used such a win to justify every federal scheme and every further removal of power from the UK which the EU has in

mind.

So what are their latest quibbles? Gone are the absurdly wrong forecasts of a house price collapse, a jobs collapse, a GDP collapse as the UK looks forward to its best year of growth for a long time now at last it is out. Instead of a jobs collapse the UK discovers it is short of people for all the jobs that are being created. They still want us to try to re enter the Erasmus scheme instead of backing the new UK scheme which will help many more UK students. They bemoan a loss of certain EU monies, when the UK has promised to spend more than we were getting under EU rules. They are worried about rights of refugees and of EU citizens settled here, yet this has all been taken care of. They are right to highlight problems with fishing and Northern Ireland, but these of course stem from having an Agreement with the EU instead of running our own affairs. They should blame their EU for those troubles.

When people ask me what have been the wins so far, I say the biggest win is the right of our country to decide for itself what to raise in tax, what to spend, what to pass into law, who to negotiate Treaties with and how to contribute to the treat causes of prosperity and democracy worldwide. It is true that many of these freedoms have not yet been used. Much opportunity lies ahead, as a Brexit public seeks to educate an anti Brexit establishment into the joys and advantages of making our own decisions and making government accountable directly to us through elections in a way Commissioners never were. There are so many areas where we can do better now we are free to do it our way, which I have often set out here.

We have already seen the big advantage of attracting our own vaccine solutions and production capabilities, drawing on the excellence of UK science. We will create Free Trade Agreements with Australia, New Zealand and the TPP as well as keeping all the FTAs we and the EU held jointly. We have detached ourselves from the pressures to join the Euro or to send ever bigger transfer payments to relatively rich countries on the continent.

Letter to Transport Secretary about season tickets

Dear Grant,

I am glad the railway has considered the issue of season tickets and discounts in a new era of flexible working where many full time employees will become part time in the office . I raised this early in the pandemic with Ministers and the industry.

The response of a 15% discount for eight tickets a month is disappointing and inflexible. It is in the railway's interest to encourage more use of the excessive capacity it currently provides. No one can be sure they want just

eight returns a month.

The model to adopt should be a rising discount model. The more you travel your chosen route the cheaper the extra journey should become. The accumulating discount could be a quarterly system, or a longer or shorter period. The first time you went to the office it would be full fare. The second time there would be a small discount, with a progressively higher discount. Frequent users would end up paying perhaps just a 20% fare for an additional journey.

This would give most of the advantages of the season ticket which allows additional journeys over the basic five returns a week free, whilst always giving the railway marginal revenue from more travel. It also incentivises travellers to go more often. If a traveller choose off peak the fare would be an off peak one. The railway will need to see if the peak changes and be ready to change peak period pricing to reflect travel reality.

My speech during the debate on Planning Decisions: Local Involvement, 21 June 2021

I support the Government's passion for home ownership. They are right that we need to do more to extend that opportunity to a new generation. It was, after all, an opportunity that previous generations took advantage of, enjoying the pleasures that can come from owning one's own home and doing with it rather more of the things one wishes to do.

I support the Government's wish to bring forward more brownfield development, because there are still many sites around the country that could be tidied up and better used. I trust that, within that, the Government wish to ease the planning system sufficiently so that where we need to convert tired or redundant commercial buildings into residential properties there will be no great planning impediment in doing so.

I strongly support the wish of the Government to do something extra to make sure that developers with planning permissions build out the permissions they have under a proper local plan. In the borough of Wokingham, of which I represent a part, we have been afflicted in recent years by some landowners and developers gaming the system. Thousands of planning permissions are outstanding, and yet the local plan, which tries to protect areas, has been overwhelmed at times by people lodging appeals on land not within the local plan for development and inspectors deciding that we did not have enough land because of the slow rate of build against all the permissions that are there.

Above all, we need a planning system that can reconcile our wish to protect

the green gaps, the green fields, the farms and the woods—indeed, to expand the woods—and at the same time to make enough land available for housing. The Office for National Statistics has shown that, in the year to March 2020, we welcomed some 715,000 extra people into our country.

Although 403,000 people also left, that meant that there were still 312,000 extra people to house, and not all of those going freed up homes in the right place for the incomers. We need to have sustainable immigration. Of course we need to welcome people into our country, but they should expect decent standards of housing, and the gap is too large. We now have a backlog of demand and need, and if we keep inviting in hundreds of thousands of extra people, we are not going to catch up. I urge the Government to make things easier so that the trade-offs between environmental protection and more concrete for housing are not so difficult.

Finally, on levelling up, which I strongly support, over the years a large number of executive homes have been built in Wokingham and places like it, attracting people with great qualifications—people capable of commanding well above average earnings. We need to provide that kind of housing if we wish to attract companies and the investment to level up, and we should not put all that housing into the areas that have already been very successful.