

Letter from Minister – School building condition improvements

Please find below a letter that I have received from the Minister concerning Schools which will benefit from funding improvements to buildings.

Dear John Redwood,

Condition Improvement Fund Outcomes

Further to the letter from my right honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Education, about our funding to improve the condition of school buildings, I am delighted to confirm that there are 2 projects which will be funded in your constituency. The list of successful projects has been published online and includes projects at:

- The Forest School
- The Coombes Church of England Primary School

The successful schools in your constituency have also been informed today, and officials will now be contacting schools about the terms and conditions of projects and delivery and payment schedules. Further guidance and information can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund.

Data on the amount of funding provided for projects in each region is available at: Condition Improvement Fund: 2024 to 2025 outcome – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). We will also publish project-level funding at a later date, only once a sufficient number of projects from the round are complete, to avoid influencing the local commercial tender processes before that point.

For any schools in your constituency that have not been successful, we will provide feedback to support them with future applications. We will publish guidance for any applicants who may want to appeal their outcome. Schools will be able to find this guidance on our online CIF Portal.

If any schools in your constituency have further enquiries, they can enquire via the Education and Skills Funding Agency customer help portal: <https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Barran

Minister For the School System and Student Finance

The threats from Iran

President Biden changed US policy towards the Middle East in 2020. He pulled out of Afghanistan too suddenly, losing a crucial air base and undermining his allies. It led directly to the Taliban taking the country over, after 20 years of the west losing lives and spending huge sums to stop them. He then tried to get a negotiated settlement with Iran. President Trump had negotiated successfully with the Gulf states to achieve their peace with Israel and to try to do the same with Saudi. All agreed Iran was a threat.

President Biden has ended up with worse relations with Saudi and the Gulf states, with OPEC pushing up oil prices by withholding production and now with US forces shooting down Iranian drones and missiles. Iran was always constructing a ring of hostile forces to the west with the Houthis in Yemen now firing on civilian cargo ships, with Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria and Hamas in Gaza.

The UK needs to be super vigilant to stop terrorists gaining access, to continue to work closely with allies to ensure good intelligence

Wokingham Borough opens Wokingham up to more development

I have worked with a group of MPs to secure the promise from Mr Gove of the ending of top down targets for more housing set in Whitehall. This now allows a Council like to Wokingham to have more say over how many new homes will be built in the years ahead in our area. In order to control the numbers the Council needs to produce a new local plan setting out how many, where and why.

The Councillors in charge of Wokingham Borough have wasted time and delayed bringing forward the necessary plan. If a Council does not have an up to date plan developers can apply for permission where they like and then appeal if they are turned down. On appeal the Inspector may well grant permission. Only if there is a clear modern plan covering forward years will the Inspector be guided by local wishes embodied in the plan. Without it the Inspector is more likely to be guided by the need to build more somewhere. The Council does not like the current ageing plan which expires soon, so why the delay? The current plan offers no protection for building after next year.

In opposition the Lib Dems were fiercely against too much development, and promised a No when it comes to Hall Farm as a location. Now in charge of the Council they fail to set out limits to development, and are reported to be

considering major housebuilding on Hall Farm. Why? Why do they always let us down and override clear wishes expressed by the public in consultations? Why have they not moved promptly to take advantage of the new approach?

Why do no other MPs want to stop the Bank of England mistakes?

The political classes seem incapable of understanding why we have so many boom bust inflationary cycles. I want more MPs to be demanding a change of policy by the Bank so we can have a growth policy with lower tax rates and better funded core public services.

It is no accident or external force which gave us an inflation in 1975. It was the Bank conducting a policy called competition and credit control badly leading to fast money growth and a secondary banking crisis. In 1977 it was an overspending over borrowing Labour government which ended with a humiliating trip to the IMF to bail us out.

In 1990-92 it was Bank and Treasury policy to put us into the European Exchange rate mechanism which ballooned the money supply backed by PM Major and gave us more inflation.

In 2007-9 it was Bank and Labour government policy to allow commercial banks to lend much more which led to inflation, egged on by high public spending and borrowing.

In 2023-4 the inflation came from Bank Quantitative easing and a big boost to the money supply.

In each case the Bank over corrected for its errors pushing us into recession.

Why doesn't the Bank learn from this string of errors and give better advice?

Gradual introduction of a smoking ban

The Commons is being offered a free vote on the introduction of a smoking ban. Over many years the ban would gradually extend from young people to older people.

I have received little feedback on this topic. I am interested to hear from constituents who have strong views either way on this proposal. I would like to take into account constituency opinion before voting.