

Trade with the EU

The EU has failed to approve the Astra Zeneca vaccine and have said they need to take more time to check it out. Now they are also saying that they want more of it delivered than the company can currently produce. That is a matter to be sorted out between the EU and the company. The EU then threatens to interrupt exports contracted by customers outside the EU as punishment for difficulties in supplying sufficient vaccine under another contract.

Supporters of the EU are always telling us they uphold the legal and international order. This looks like the opposite.

The EU are also making life difficult for business in GB, Northern Ireland and the Republic by their interpretation of rules and the Protocol. It is high time the U.K. legislated to restore the integrity of the U.K. single market. No goods going to and from GB and Northern Ireland should face any additional impediments compared to transit of goods within GB. Any goods certified to travel onto the Republic from Northern Ireland can be treated in accordance with EU import requirements by agreement between the EU and U.K. or by the EU at their border.

Wokingham West PCN is one of the highest performing Covid vaccination areas in the country

I have today received this update from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care:

Dear John

I am writing to update you on the fantastic efforts of your local Covid vaccination teams. I am delighted to inform you that Wokingham West PCN is one of the highest performing Covid vaccination areas in the country, having now covered over 85% of those over 80.

Britain is leading the global fightback against the virus, being the first country in the world to approve a clinically-trialled vaccine and now deploying the vaccine on the ground faster than almost any other country in the world. And this is down to the tireless efforts of all those involved – especially those on the ground in our communities, from nurses, to GPs, to pharmacies, to volunteers, and so many more.

It's incredible to see this community spirit, as people pull together to lead

us collectively out of the pandemic. I hope you will join me in thanking and congratulating all those involved in your area for the part they are playing in this national effort.

Yours ever,
MATT HANCOCK

My Question during the statement on Covid protections at the UK Border

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I congratulate my Right Honourable Friend on the what she has been doing. Will she strengthen the law against people trafficking which remains a worrying danger and can she ensure the necessary travel controls do not stop essential work travel?

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): My Right Honourable Friend is absolutely right. First of all, in terms of people trafficking, he has been assiduous on this. He has heard me a number of times in terms of the measures that we are bringing forward in terms of legislation and plans around tackling people trafficking and the smugglers. We have some good reports on that in terms of the some of the criminal penalties and sanctions that have been levelled against individuals.

Secondly, he is absolutely right in terms of fines we are putting in place and the exemptions that are required around key areas such as goods in particular coming into the country.

My Question to the Government on medicines provided to treat Covid-19

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (133606):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the progress that has been made in the testing of (a) anti-viral treatments, (b) immune modulators and (c) other existing medicines to help provide improved treatments for covid-19. (133606)

Tabled on: 06 January 2021

Answer:

Jo Churchill:

The Department is carefully considering all available evidence from clinical trials in the United Kingdom and overseas around the potential of different drugs across a variety of different modes of action for use in treating COVID-19.

On 7 January 2021, the REMAP-CAP clinical trial published results showing that two immunomodulators, tocilizumab and sarilumab, reduced the relative risk of death by 24% for critically ill patients and time spent in intensive care by up to 10 days.

The UK national priority platform clinical trials – RECOVERY, REMAP-CAP and PRINCIPLE – can test both licensed and unlicensed drugs. These are adaptive trials, meaning that results are monitored on an ongoing basis and treatments which are clearly ineffective will be discontinued. Trials may also add new potential treatments if other evidence suggests promise.

The future of the Union of the UK

I am pleased the UK held a referendum in Scotland to see if people there wanted to leave the UK, after years of pressure from the SNP to break up the Union. It was a great contrast with the tactics used by the Spanish government to prevent such a vote in Catalonia over the future of the Spanish union. I agreed with the SNP in the Commons before the vote, when they said it would be a once in a generation event. These votes are of course divisive, as each side needs to heighten the differences to bid votes its way. They are necessary divisions to reveal the views of the public and to provide instructions to the politicians. They are not a good idea to keep repeating. They are also asymmetric, as the wish to have votes to ask if people want to be independent would presumably stop were a vote ever to be won for independence. Seeking to re enter a Union you have left is altogether more problematic and would clearly require the consent of the Union as well as of the country which had left.

Gordon Brown's intervention in the debate was predictable and unhelpful. It was his recommended policy of offering devolution that failed to stem the tide of Scottish nationalism, though he thought it would. He now wants to try it again. He as always wishes to split up England into artificial regions, when England wishes to be afforded the same level of devolution and self government as Scotland enjoys. He has not taken on board the rejection of elected regional assemblies in England as an unwanted and expensive burden on the taxpayer. A few of my critics do not like my wish to save public money by asking Westminster MPs elected for English seats to handle the devolved business for England and want an English Parliament with more politicians.

The UK government says it does not intend to legislate for another referendum

as it is too soon to re open this issue. The government currently needs to show how the Union works well for all parts of the UK. It needs to revisit its Single market legislation to make sure we have full powers over GB to Northern Ireland trade which matters to Scottish, Welsh and English businesses selling into Northern Ireland. The government could set out clarifying legislation to say that any load certified as a load for a final consumer in Northern Ireland should not suffer any further or additional checks to those that applied prior to Brexit. The UK would of course police against smuggling product via Northern Ireland to the Republic without the EU checks they want and co-operate with the Irish authorities as they did when we were both in the EU where smugglers tried to evade Excise and Vat differences between the jurisdictions..