

Wokingham Town Centre

I was pleased to see the Council opened Peach Place for people to see what it will be like last week-end. I look forward to early completion of the remaining pavement works, so new shop tenants can move in.

What would a Manifesto for the European elections say in the UK?

As someone who wants us to leave now and not fight the EU elections, I think the parties will struggle to write their Manifestos for May 22nd.

Presumably the Brexit party and UKIP will write similar documents urging a WTO exit as soon as possible. They should look forward to not having to take their seats or to giving up their seats after October 31st on the assumption we have then left the EU. Their problem will be differentiating their approaches from each other and avoiding splitting their pro Leave votes.

The Conservative party will presumably draft a Manifesto today based around Mrs May's Withdrawal Agreement. The problem with that approach is if her Agreement were to pass with Labour support anytime soon then the elections will be cancelled, as the UK's new status of in the EU without vote and voice would then kick in removing the entitlement or need for MEPs.

If the Agreement does not pass, this would leave Conservative candidates with a Manifesto made irrelevant by events.

If instead the Conservatives draft a Manifesto based on the proposition that the Agreement has not gone through, they follow a logical but politically dangerous path of hypotheticals. What then should it say? I would want it to say because there is no support for the Withdrawal Agreement we are leaving without signing it. That invites the response of "Get on with it, and spare us the election". Alternatively the Conservatives have to set out in the document how they might get talks with the EU retriggered even though the EU has made clear its refusal to re-open the Withdrawal Agreement. Likely tough responses from the EU make that a fraught approach.

Labour too has a difficult task in compiling a Manifesto. It faces all of the above problems facing the Conservatives over what to offer, with added grief from the factions wanting dilution or cancellation of Brexit within the party. If it includes a second referendum it is alienating all Leave voters who see no need to answer the same question again. If they leave out the second referendum they upset many of their pro Remain MPs and supporters especially in heavy Remain areas like London and Scotland. If they stick with

their wish to enter a Customs Union they will be asked why they have failed to support Mrs May's Agreement which is a necessary prelude to a customs union solution according to the EU. They will also generally be asked why they have been such an obstacle to leaving the EU and why they rule out leaving without an Agreement which most Leave voters and some Remain voters saw as necessary leverage in the talks.

The Lib Dems, Greens and nationalists who want us to stay in the EU have the easiest task. They will presumably set out why they think the people were wrong to vote to leave and how they wish to reverse the decision. They can then go on to explain how they want to spend 5 years in the European Parliament voting on EU laws, budgets and taxes. They will write off any chance of winning votes from more than half the public who want to leave or accept we need to leave in the light of the referendum result.

[The funeral of Councillor Bob Wyatt](#)

Yesterday there was a moving civic service to commemorate the life of Bob Wyatt. He gave Wokingham years of service as a Borough and a Town Councillor. He supported charities, and offered kind advice and help to many in need of assistance. His son and grandson made moving tributes to him, whilst Councillor David Lee and the Leader of Wokingham Borough told us of the great work he did on the Councils.

Bob was the founder of a the Classic Austin car society, so the procession to the Church included vintage Austin vehicles. Bob left behind a loving family and many books. He was an avid collector of military memorabilia and an author on the subjects that interested him.

It was fitting that Wokingham remembered his life and work for the Town and many who live here.

[More jobs in the UK and wages rising](#)

The February figures show the UK economy generated another additional 179,000 jobs. Wages rose by 3.5%, usefully ahead of prices. This all occurred against a backdrop of Italy in recession and the German economy stuttering badly. All those commentators who wrongly ascribe any bad economic news to Brexit should be rushing to thank Brexit for this good news.

The Agreement to delay our exit is not one the UK should have signed

The EU have required the UK to accept there can be no re opening of the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement during the delay in our exit. They have also stated we cannot start discussing the future partnership despite it being sketched vaguely in the Political declaration, until the Withdrawal Agreement is signed.

This new agreement says if the UK does not fight the European elections we will automatically leave on 31 May. That would be the best outcome from here, and is to be recommended to a government that does not really want to hold the elections yet seems drifting to them for want of accepting the Withdrawal Agreement is not about to pass.

If the government wants to carry on with the delay despite the fact that it cannot be used to renegotiate anything with the EU, then the UK is subjected to major constraints on its rights as a continuing member of the EU. despite paying a big financial contribution and acting as importer of last resort for many continental producers, the UK is required to behave in a way the EU finds acceptable. The Agreement says " The UK shall facilitate the achievement of the Union's tasks and shall refrain from any measure which could jeopardise the attainment of the Union's objectives, in particular when participating in the decision making processes of the EU. "

Worse still they act as if the Withdrawal Agreement is in effect when the delay has been caused by the unhappiness of most voters and many MPs with it. "Any unilateral commitment, statement or other act by the UK should be compatible with the letter and spirit of the Withdrawal Agreement, and must not hamper its implementation." This is an unusual idea that a country has to follow an international treaty which its Parliament refuses to ratify!