

I wish the USA well in restoring peace and good policing

I have had a number of emails from people understandably concerned about the death of George Floyd and the riots in the various US cities.

Before replying I decided to read what the President and what Mr Biden said to have some greater understanding. These are matters for the USA to resolve. As their friend and ally we wish them well in doing so.

The words of the President capture the problem. He said:

"All Americans were rightly sickened and revolted by the brutal death of George Floyd. My administration is fully committed that, for George and his family, justice will be served. He will not have died in vain. But we cannot allow the righteous cries and peaceful protesters to be drowned out by an angry mob. The biggest victims of the rioting are peace-loving citizens in our poorest communities, and as their President, I will fight to keep them safe. I will fight to protect you. I am your President of law and order, and an ally of all peaceful protesters.

"But in recent days, our nation has been gripped by professional anarchists, violent mobs, arsonists, looters, criminals, rioters, Antifa, and others. A number of state and local governments have failed to take necessary action to safeguard their residents. Innocent people have been savagely beaten, like the young man in Dallas, Texas, who was left dying on the street, or the woman in Upstate New York viciously attacked by dangerous thugs.

"Small-business owners have seen their dreams utterly destroyed. New York's Finest have been hit in the face with bricks. Brave nurses, who have battled the virus, are afraid to leave their homes. A police precinct station has been overrun. Here in the nation's capital, the Lincoln Memorial and the World War Two Memorial have been vandalized. One of our most historic churches was set ablaze. A federal officer in California, an African American enforcement hero, was shot and killed.

"These are not acts of peaceful protest. These are acts of domestic terror. The destruction of innocent life and the spilling of innocent blood is an offense to humanity and a crime against God.

"America needs creation, not destruction; cooperation, not contempt; security, not anarchy; healing, not hatred; justice, not chaos. This is our mission, and we will succeed. One hundred percent, we will succeed. Our country always wins."

He went on to offer National Guard help to State Governors, urging them to enforce the law and protect people and businesses from violence.

Mr Biden said:

"These last few days have laid bare that we are a nation furious at injustice. Every person of conscience can understand the rawness of the trauma people of color experience in this country, from the daily indignities to the extreme violence, like the horrific killing of George Floyd.

"Protesting such brutality is right and necessary. It's an utterly American response. But burning down communities and needless destruction is not. Violence that endangers lives is not. Violence that guts and shutter businesses that serve the community is not.

"The act of protesting should never be allowed to overshadow the reason we protest. It should not drive people away from the just cause that protest is meant to advance.

"I know that there are people all across this country who are suffering tonight. Suffering the loss of a loved one to intolerable circumstances, like the Floyd family, or to the virus that is still gripping our nation. Suffering economic hardships, whether due to COVID-19 or entrenched inequalities in our system. And I know that a grief that dark and deep may at times feel too heavy to bear.

"I know.

"And I also know that the only way to bear it is to turn all that anguish to purpose. So tonight, I ask all of America to join me – not in denying our pain or covering it over – but using it to compel our nation across this turbulent threshold into the next phase of progress, inclusion, and opportunity for our great democracy."

This was a more dignified statement than Mr Biden's comment "you ain't black" if you vote for Trump.

Bring back the fish counters

Sainsbury's and Tesco cut back their fresh fish counters to tackle the hoarding demand for other groceries at the start of the lock down. It is time to bring them back. Indeed, it is time to open more and reverse the trends of recent years. where some retailers were closing fresh fish and meat counters anyway.

The UK fishing industry had become very dependent on the catering trades and on export for its fish sales. Retailers are busily importing packaged fish. The Covid 19 policy assault on the hospitality industry, and the end of the Common Fisheries Policy, provides an ideal time for a re think.

The aims of getting control of our fishery back is twofold. We both wish to catch less to allow stocks to rebuild from the damage of the CFP, and greatly

increase the proportion of the catch to be landed in the UK so we can eat more of our own fish. This is not difficult given the huge amount of fish taken by other countries every year under the CFP.

So now is a great time for the supermarkets to work with the fishermen and women to offer contracts for more UK fish to be sold direct to customers in shops. It is ridiculous that this island nation set in a sea of fish has major supermarkets that do not allow us to buy fresh fish from the UK. I trust the government rejects any idea of giving much of our fish away in some new deal after we have properly left the EU in December. This provides commercial opportunities for the fishing industry and for retailers. Decent contracts from major retailers would allow the UK fishing industry to borrow to invest, to expand its capacity to serve the local market.

New Discretionary Grant Scheme to help small businesses

I have today received this update about the new discretionary grant scheme to help small businesses. Applications can be submitted from today to Wokingham Borough Council until Friday 12 June:

A new discretionary grant scheme to help specific types of small business during the Covid-19 crisis will be launched in Wokingham Borough next week.

The support is targeted at those small businesses with high fixed property-related costs that were not eligible for the earlier grant schemes that the council has been administering and will initially be funded from the same Government funding pot as earlier schemes.

The grants are primarily and predominantly aimed at:

- Small and micro businesses (as defined in Section 33 Part 2 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 and the Companies Act 2006).
- Businesses with relatively high ongoing fixed property-related costs
- Businesses which can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis
- Businesses which occupy property, or part of a property, with a rateable value or annual rent or annual mortgage payments below £51,000.

The Government has asked local authorities to prioritise the following types of businesses for grants:

- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces. Examples could include units in industrial parks, science parks and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment;

- Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- Bed & Breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and Wokingham Borough Council's decision making executive last night (Thursday May 28) approved a policy that will allow flexibility on what eligible businesses and self-employed people to support and those who believe they fit the criteria are encouraged to apply.

Cllr John Kaiser, executive member for finance and housing said: "We know businesses and the self employed have been hit hard by this crisis and want to provide as efficient and flexible support as we can. There has to be eligibility criteria to make sure the support goes to those who truly need it, but within the government guidance, we will take as broad a view as we can."

Applications to the new discretionary grant scheme **open online on Monday June 1 and close on Friday June 12**. Money will be allocated on a first come first served basis until the allocated funds have run out.

For full detail on who can apply and how, visit:
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-andlicensing/business-and-growth/coronavirus-advice-for-businesses/>.

Yours sincerely

Death rates and methods of control

There are a number of emails and comment around claiming the UK and the US have the highest death rates. They often go on to blame their two governments which they do not like and argue there should have been an earlier and tougher lockdown.

The authors should check their facts. We need to look at deaths per million, not at the absolute level, as of course larger countries are likely to record more deaths than smaller countries. On the published figures Belgium has experienced the highest death rate so far, followed by Spain, and then the U.K. The US is considerably lower, below France and Italy which are a little below the U.K.

There are differences in how the figures are compiled. The UK has gone out of its way to maximise deaths attributed to CV 19 by including care home and community deaths when other countries concentrated on hospital deaths. The U.K. has also recorded many care home and community deaths as CV 19 when no

test was taken to see if the patient had it, and when it may have been other serious medical conditions they suffered from that killed them.

The UK death rate is worrying , as are the rates of most European countries. In the USA the worst figures have been recorded in New York where a Democrat Mayor enforced a tough lock down early. It may be that very large cities like NY and London are particularly prone to virus spreading, so the absence of such huge cities in countries like Germany that have done a lot better may be part of the reason.

Sweden adopted social distancing but no lock down. Her figures are better than Belgium , France, Italy and Spain who went for a full lock down.

Now UK government officials claim they can test 200,000 people a day and have recruited a lot of trackers it is important every new case is followed up on notification to understand why and how it has been transmitted. There is no simple identity between tough and long lockdowns and low death rates on the numbers we have seen.

We also need evidence from the experts on which health systems have achieved the best recovery rates for patients and which treatment does most to lower the death rates in serious cases. There has been no full statement at U.K. government news conferences about recovery rates from intensive care and which treatments have worked best. There has been the recent adoption of an existing anti viral drug as a helpful treatment after initial resistance to the idea that current drugs could help, whilst we are told some other approved drugs are being tested on CV 19 patients. How did Germany and the USA achieve lower death rates?

The EU response to the pandemic

Despite the protestations of pro EU contributors that I should not be writing about the EU now we have left, I note that my recent post on the German Court and the Euro got a much bigger response than many other items I write about. I remain interested in our neighbours and wish them well. Today I need to consider the scale and nature of their possible response to the economic damage of the pandemic on the continent.

The Franco-German deal to propose raising Euro 500bn on the strength of the EU's total budget and to pass it on to member states to help with Covid 19 recovery has now been transposed into a Commission proposal. They recommend Euro 750 bn, two thirds for grants and one third for loans to member states to help them recover. As in the original idea the EU as a whole will borrow the money against the security of its budget. It will fall due for repayment sometime between 2028 and 2058.

In a new twist the Commission states that it will need to raise the overall

level of EU taxation on member states and their citizens from 1.2% of GNI (total national incomes) to 2%, a tax hike of 66.6%. The tax rises will take the form of new emissions taxes, carbon border taxes, digital taxes and the like, to be determined in the future. Each of these taxes will need negotiation and legislation. The disbursement of the Euro 750 bn will take place over an unspecified period within the next seven year budget cycle.

The EU seven year budget from next year will of course have to deal with the loss of 15% of its income with the departure of the UK, and a further drop from the decline in the EU economy being experienced this year. If we put this at a modest 5% decline only, that means they are short of one fifth of the budget next year. The proposed rise in tax would therefore only deliver a 33% increase in revenues in the first year, even if all the new taxes were in place as early as that.

The document is silent over how the Euro 750 bn will be divided between countries. The largest heading for spending will be a Recovery and resilience facility, with rules to be designed. There are smaller sums to promote the existing budget agenda of support and subsidy for the green deal and for digitalisation.

This package will need unanimous support as it is a matter relating to the 7 year budget settlement. Each country will be able to pick away at the tax proposals to finance it, and at the distributional issues which are unclear over payments. If it is to be a first essay in solidarity, bringing German and Dutch taxpayers to assist Italian and Spanish businesses and people, it will need to find ways to route more money proportionately to these latter countries under the various headings of the funds and programmes.

This does not look like a major gamechanger. Though a large headline sum of money, it will be spread out over the years ahead. The tax rises may be damaging, and imply a more inward looking and protectionist EU as they find ways to tax foreign digital success stories and overseas produced goods on grounds of their carbon content. It is good the U.K. should be free of the anti business and anti trade taxes about to be planned.