Meeting over the closure of the Reading driver licensing test centre

I met with concerned driver instructors over the planned closure of the Reading test Centre. The Licensing Agency has said it is seeking an alternative site, as they seem to agree with local opinion that we do need an accessible driver testing centre in our area. Reading is a central location for Wokingham and the villages in most of my constituency. There could be an acceptable alternative, but so far the Agency has not shared with us its thoughts on where that might be. Clearly any new location should also take into account local opinion about the suitability of the chosen site.

How does the Prime Minister break free from his Parliamentary captors?

The Prime Minister has been taken hostage by Parliament. This Parliament has decided to oppose the people by denying us the result of our people's vote. The Prime Minister threatened to implement the people's view, so they decided to strip him of the power of his office to stop him. Revealing their true anti democratic nature they stopped him holding a general election to let the people reassert their will. This is surely the worst chapter in Parliament's usually democratic story. It is quite wrong of Parliament to both prevent a government governing and to refuse an election to choose a new government. It is Parliament against the people.

It is something worse than this. It is deliberately placing UK government entirely under the control of EU government. The PM is hostage to stop him taking us out of the EU. He is hostage to stop him negotiating from a position of strength with the EU. He is hostage so the EU can pass any law, make any legal judgement, make any financial demand it wishes and a weak UK will have to obey and pay.

So what are the Prime Minister's options from here?

He should obey the law, but he should expect Parliament to pass laws according to our rules and conventions and not to abuse the legislative powers it holds.

He should not resign. Resigning would give the EU faction what they want, control of the executive as well as of Parliament. They would delay an election and seek to make it even more difficult for us to leave the EU.

He should mount the case that Parliament legislated to keep us in

unreasonably. It overturned the need for a Money resolution and Queens consent. It is seeking to make a law out of a political instruction to a Prime Minister it refuses to remove from office by voting him out. If Parliament does not like the government's use of its powers, then it has to vote it out of office. It has refused to even consider a No confidence vote followed by an election if the opposition wins. The PM should not back down from his refusal to ask for another extension to our membership for no obvious helpful purpose.

The Prime Minister needs to seek an early election. He could on Monday try to amend the Fixed Term Parliament Act as that would only require a simple majority, not a two thirds majority.There could then be sufficient decent individual Opposition MPs who would support, seeing the damage delay is doing to Parliament and to their parties reputation with voters other than those wedded to the EU. There is the issue of whether that could invite worse amendments. It would need to have very narrow scope to avoid amendments that seek to change the franchise or undertake other constitutional changes, so once again lawyers and arguments over procedure would need to precede tabling anything.

He should rally the country against those MPs and parties who have created this mess. He should urge other member states to deny any move to delay the UK's exit further, making clear that the UK forced to stay in the EU against the will of the people is not in their interests any more than ours. How can the EU proceed when one of its largest members has no intention of joining the Euro, no intention of helping pay for the Euro scheme and no wish to support any of the necessary moves to greater political union?

Government should obey the law. Parliament should follow the rules and conventions when passing laws,

Government should obey the law.

Parliament should obey the rules when legislating.

The law Parliament is seeking to pass is an unusual law seeking to control the conduct of the Prime Minister in an international negotiation.

It is not a criminal law creating a new crime. There are no proposed penalties, fines or prison sentences in it should the PM not obey it. It is not a general law applying equally to all of us, nor even a law always applying to government. It is a Parliamentary instruction or political opinion on one issue at one time passed as a law.

This Bill has passed this far without a Money Resolution to approve the large extra spending entailed in delaying our exit, and without Queens Consent to Parliament taking over the power vested in government to negotiate treaties.

The law courts wisely decided not to back the government's Parliamentary critics over prorogation. Recent events have shown, as the government argued, the prorogation did not prevent Parliament returning to the issue of Brexit and making its views clear anyway. Parliament will have yet more time to debate Brexit in October after the conference break.

The attempt to control the PM's conduct of an international negotiation through the courts is also unwise. It is Parliament's job to control the PM in his international negotiations. It does this, as with Mrs May, by ratifying or refusing to ratify the results of the talks. It does it if it wishes by endless debate and pressure during the course of the negotiations, often with unhelpful effects on them. If enough MPs in Parliament strongly disapprove of the PM's negotiating stance then they need to remove him from office by voting him down in a motion of no confidence and triggering an election.

Meeting with Wokingham Citizens Advice Bureau

I dropped in to our local CAB in Wokingham to thank the volunteers and to see what are the latest issues and worries.

They told me that debt and Council Tax remain lead issues. They asked me to pursue with the Council what more can be done to help with managing Council Tax debt. I welcome the introduction of help sessions by the CAB with a representative of the Council tax collection department of Wokingham Council to assist people who are finding it difficult to meet the bill. Details of these are on the CAB website.

They also alerted me to the growing numbers of cases about family break up which are also reaching them. They can sometimes help with providing more information for people on how divorce proceeds, what might happen over care for the children and other important matters.

The art of the deal

Life requires a series of negotiations. If you are buying a good or service the negotiation with the provider may be over price, quality, specification or other matters. You may start as a buyer with an idea of the service you want and an idea of a low price. The provider may have to explain that the available service is different and dearer.

Sometimes you the buyer recognise that what you thought was on offer is not. You could decide to buy what is on offer, and accept it is dearer, but you are more likely to decide that as what you want is not available it's better to save your money or buy something else.

Other times you reach agreement over the style and quantity of service, and have to strike a compromise over the price. The buyer has to weigh up how much the provider needs the business, and the provider needs to guess how much you want the service. More often than not a bargain is struck, but one or both sides may miscalculate and end up with no deal. If one or other side is unable to walk away from the deal, then they will usually get a bad deal. The other party will exploit their weakness to a greater or lesser extent.

Most people understand this. Many people have bought a house, bought a car, or negotiated with a builder or some other domestic service provider. They have also often walked away from a house or a car as they turned out not to be good deals. They know you walk away unless you really want something, and that you have to be willing to walk away if you want to keep pressure on for good quality and good value. This makes people all the more frustrated when they see how the UK has not done this in negotiating with the EU. We have seen time and again how the opposition to Brexit in Parliament and in the establishment have constantly been undermining efforts by the UK to pursue a firm line in the negotiations. Mrs May refused to walk away when the EU came up with a very damaging sequencing to the negotiation, giving them all they wanted in the first part, the Withdrawal treaty, and leaving everything the UK might want open until after the first part was signed. She then refused to walk away when the draft Withdrawal Agreement took shape with a huge move to keep our money, keep us under the EU control for longer, and to invent an Irish backstop as a possible means to keep us indefinitely in the customs union and following single market laws. Now some of these same people have decided to cripple the UK's attempt at a renegotiation by ruling out walking away, our best card to get the attention of EU negotiators.

The big advantages we have are manifest. We pay them money, they don't pay us money (net). They sell us far more imports than we sell them. Much more of their trade faces tariffs if we leave with no agreement than we face. We can trade quite successfully under WTO rules, with lower tariffs on fewer products out than in. We can regain control of our money, our laws, our borders and our fish. If only the opposition would let the government negotiate against the possibility of No deal. Armed with such formidable advantages we would have a decent chance of getting them to agree to free

trade talks and no new barriers on exit. As it is the EU sniffs weakness and continues to offer nothing in the hope that the opposition will do their work for them. As Mrs May used rightly to say, no deal is better than a bad deal. In this case a lot better as what is on offer is a very bad deal.