

My visit to Tepeo

On Thursday, I visited a business in my constituency. Tepeo is a Winnersh based company that produces zero emission boilers and I was kindly shown around their facilities by the CEO.

I have long campaigned for green products to be VAT free and will make the case for zero emission heaters to be included. Heat pumps are not practical or affordable for many homes so I welcome ideas to offer other heating solutions. The government should not use expensive subsidies to favour one heating solution over others when the market needs to develop new choices for consumers. I do hope new heaters can be made in the UK to ensure more people benefit from this technology here at home.



The Bank of England brings us a technical recession

The Bank of England printed too much money. They bought too many bonds at crazily inflated prices. They kept interest rates too low for too long. That gave us a big inflation, as some of us predicted.

They then blamed the inflation on rising energy costs following the Russian

invasion of Ukraine. They refuse to explain why inflation was three times target before Russia attacked. They are silent on why big energy importers Japan and China did not have the high inflation when energy shot up.

Too late they shoved up interest rates. They destroyed money. They sold bonds at depressed prices. They sent the bill for all the losses to the Treasury to make taxpayers pay to bail them out. This has now delivered the shallow recession and downturn some of us predicted.

So why do we put up with this level of incompetence? It was obvious to anyone who studies money and credit that they lurched from too much to too little. The Bank refused to comment on money and credit, and revelled in a model of the economy and forecasts that were wildly wrong. They forecast 2% inflation for the period when it hit 11%.

What should they do now? Change their model to get their forecasts more accurate. Strengthen the Monetary Committee with some who do think money and credit matter. Stop selling bonds at huge losses. Allow sufficient money and credit to accommodate a bit of growth.

Dear Colleague on NHS Dentistry

I was pleased to see the government adding to dental services through the methods set out by the Minister. I am keen to see Wokingham's needs recognised, so I put to her the issue of ensuring we add additional dentists and dental surgeries as more housing is built and the population expands. She said she also wished to see this and understood the point.

Please find below the Dear Colleague Letter from the Minister which sets out the Government's plans.

Dear colleague,

Faster, Simple and Fairer: Our Plan to Recover and Reform NHS Dentistry

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England have today published Faster, Simple and Fairer: Our Plan to Recover and Reform NHS Dentistry.

Our new plan will help patients can get the dental care they need when they need it and support NHS dentistry to deliver 2.5 million more appointments for patients.

The plan will address the series of challenges facing NHS dentistry which affect patients' oral health and ability to access the care they need, as well as workforce recruitment and retention. Our plan will deliver faster, simpler and fairer access to NHS dentistry. The new measures being announced include:

- Offering a New Patient Premium to support dentists to take on new NHS patients
- Introducing dental vans to deliver care to under-served areas
- Attracting dentists into areas of need with 'Golden Hello' payments
- Launching our 'Smile for Life' programme to focus on prevention and good oral health from birth so that every child includes toothbrushing as part of their daily routine by the time they reach primary school. We are keen to embed good oral health habits at an earlier stage, given the evidence that doing so later – for example, through supervised toothbrushing programmes in the later school years – will have less impact on outcomes but add administrative burdens to primary school teachers.
- Streamlining and tackling bureaucracy to support and maximise the effectiveness of our entire dental workforce
- Expanding dental training places by 40% as set out in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan
- The full plan can be found here
<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-recover-and-reform-nhs-dentistry>

The plan is backed by £200 million across the next year and will immediately introduce the new bonus payment scheme for dentists taking on new NHS patients from March. As well as reforming NHS dental contracts to make NHS work more attractive and encouraging practices to take on new patients, the government is also boosting the number of dentists. There were 1,352 more dentists doing NHS work in 2022/23 compared to 2010/2011, and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan will expand dentistry training places by 40% by 2031/32.

The plan also includes new measures to attract dentists to work in the NHS, including supporting more graduate dentists to work in NHS care. We will consult on a 'tie-in' to explore whether dentists should be required to work in the NHS for a period upon completion of their training.

In 2022, 46% of new dentists joining the General Dental Council's (GDC) register were from overseas. A lack of flexibility in international registration processes can create unnecessary delay to overseas-qualified dentists providing NHS services. That is why we are making it easier and simpler for NHS practices to recruit dentists from overseas by reducing bureaucracy and streamlining systems.

Geographical variation in access to dental care remains a challenge across the country, particularly in rural and coastal areas. To make access fairer, 'golden hello' financial incentives will be brought in for dentists who commit to working for three years in areas of need, and mobile dental vans will be rolled out to bring care and treatment to the most isolated and under-served rural and coastal communities later this year.

Tooth decay is a significant, yet largely preventable public health problem and is the most common oral disease affecting children and young people. In the plan we have set out a new emphasis on prevention and embedding good oral health in all parts of society, particularly babies and the youngest children, where outcomes are best, through an ambitious new programme called

“Smile for Life”. The government will support nurseries and early years settings to incorporate good oral hygiene into children’s daily routines by the time children get to primary school and provide advice to pregnant mothers and expectant parents on how to protect their baby’s gums and teeth. This will include dental teams going into primary schools in areas of need and applying fluoride varnish to children’s teeth.

We will also consult on expanding water fluoridation, initially to the northeast of England, to protect more people from the risk of tooth decay. The northeast of England was chosen based on a combination of factors including the oral health needs of the region and water company experience operating schemes.

Our recovery plan is ambitious, with immediate impact on access through the new patient payment which will start from the 1st March, alongside proposals to deliver improvements through the rest of this year and beyond.

Our ambition is for everyone who needs an NHS dentist to be able to access one and today’s announcement puts us on the right path to achieving this.

THE RT HON DAME ANDREA LEADSOM DBE MP

Growing anger about anti driver measures

I was talking to a London plumber. His invoices for work include extra charges for parking, for ULEZ and for Congestion charge. It is a daily battle for him to get to a new job given the closure of so many streets and then to find an all day parking place. Protesters are still going out and putting boxes or other drapes over the London cameras to show their opposition without damaging these expensive spies prying into our lives. This site does not support law breaking protests.

This week Wokingham Borough has had to put out a press release at our expense telling people not to argue with the workers carrying out another of their hated anti driver projects. Of course people should not shout at or threaten Council contractors. The need to say this shows just how much the Council misjudges the mood as it seeks to wind up all those of us who need a vehicle for work. Wasting £5.5 m of tax on a scheme which will cause delays and put people off driving to what were easily accessible local shops and a garage is a bad idea.

These cameos are part of a much bigger picture. Lib Dem and similar Councils show scorn and disdain for working people who need a car or van to get to work. They show no sympathy for busy parents who need to drop children off at school so they can get to their job. These Councils consult and ignore.

They revel in the misery they cause others. They explode with self righteousness if anyone argues back that they need to use a car or van. Yet despite this many of these preaching Councillors still rely on a gas boiler, go in fossil fuel cars and take jet planes to their holidays.

The collision of green demands by many in the governing class with the needs and pressures of daily life is becoming acute. Many of the green campaigners are hypocrites, flying off to air conditioned hotels to hold forth again about the need to lower other people's carbon footprints. If government press too far with their bans, their surveillance cameras, their schemes to fine people off the road with ultra low speed limits, special lanes and box junctions, they may find instead they become very unpopular. Going too far has already changed the Dutch government.

Dear Colleague letter – LONG TERM PLAN FOR HOUSING

13 February 2024

Dear Colleague,

Today, we are taking the next step in our long-term plan for housing, announcing a package of measures to ensure more homes get built where they are needed most – in our inner cities – helping protect the Green Belt and countryside.

We have a strong record of housing delivery. We are on track to meet the manifesto commitment to build one million homes this Parliament, and to have delivered over 2.5 million more homes since 2010. This includes almost 696,000 affordable homes, and supporting over 876,000 households into home ownership. Over this Parliament, we have delivered the highest number of new homes for over thirty years, with the greatest number of first-time buyers in a single year for two decades.

The changes we made to national planning policy in December were designed to support delivery by addressing legitimate concerns about weaknesses in the planning system, which in turn led to frustrations about the nature of development. That is why we moved to protect the Green Belt, clarify how housing targets should be set, safeguard the character of suburbs, and ensure urban authorities play their proper part in meeting housing need. The further targeted action we are announcing today builds on those changes by making it easier to pursue the right kind of development on brownfield land – because we want to see more new housing in the hearts of our cities, rather than the unnecessary tarmacking over of the countryside.

Brownfield development

Last summer, I used my speech setting out our Long-Term Plan for Housing to draw attention to the particularly poor record of housing delivery in London, where housing affordability challenges are most acute. Only 35,000 new homes were delivered in the capital last year, which amounts to just over half the 66,000 homes the Mayor of London's own plan identifies as needed each year. That is why I urged the Mayor to take urgent action, and when he failed to do so, commissioned an independent review of the London Plan led by Christopher Katkowski KC.

This review, which we are publishing today, reveals the problems plaguing delivery in London – concluding that “the combined effect of the multiplicity of policies in the London Plan now works to frustrate rather than facilitate the delivery of new homes” and “four years into [the] ten-year [London Plan]...there has been an undersupply of more than 60,000 homes, more than a year of equivalent supply”. It recommends that to tackle this under delivery, a presumption in favour of brownfield development is introduced into the London Plan.

The Government intends to deliver the spirit of this recommendation – but believes it is important to tackle under delivery not just in London, but in our other major towns and cities that serve as engines of jobs and growth. We are therefore proposing to introduce a new ‘brownfield presumption’ in the twenty most populous cities and urban centres in the country, where housing delivery has dropped below expected levels. These twenty places, which include London, are the ones to which an ‘urban uplift’ already applies when determining the need for homes. This new presumption will make it easier to get permission to build on brownfield land where an authority is underdelivering, by raising the bar for refusing applications – ultimately helping more young families to find a home.

We also want to support brownfield development more widely, by making clear to every local authority in England that they need to be more flexible in approving planning applications on brownfield land. To make this happen, we are proposing a change to national planning policy that would require councils to give significant weight to the benefits of delivering as many homes as possible where there is a shortage of land for homes. This change would also tell councils that they need to be pragmatic in applying policies on the internal layout of developments – cutting through what can sometimes prove too complex a web of constraints that misses the prize of building new homes.

I want to note that neither proposed change affects the definition of previously developed land in national policy and so would not alter existing protections, including for residential gardens, nor amend other relevant policies on the character of suburban neighbourhoods. A consultation on these two proposals launches today, and will close on 26 March. Subject to that consultation, we will introduce these changes as soon as possible, through an update to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Permitted development rights

Complementing these changes on brownfield development, we are also helping

developers overcome tiresome bureaucracy by slashing red tape that stops appropriate commercial buildings being turned into new homes. Following a consultation last year, the relevant secondary legislation will be laid in Parliament today to extend current Permitted Development Rights such that commercial buildings of any size will have the freedom to be converted into new homes – this means shops, offices, and other buildings all quickly repurposed, resulting in thousands of quality new homes by 2030.

In parallel, we are launching a further consultation on proposals to support millions of homeowners to extend their homes outwards and upwards, freeing new extensions or large loft conversions from the arduous process of receiving planning permission, while ensuring continuing protection for neighbours' local amenity. Our proposals will also allow homeowners greater freedoms on installing heat pumps and Electric Vehicle charging points, ensuring these rights deliver what people want for their homes.

London delivery

These planning reforms are important, but our changes to policy come alongside additional funding too. We are announcing £50 million of investment to unlock new homes and improve the quality of life for existing residents through estate regeneration in London. Working closely with the London Borough of Camden, we are establishing a new Euston Housing Delivery Group to explore maximum regeneration and housing backed by £4 million. We are also announcing £125 million loan funding from the Home Building Fund Infrastructure Loans portfolio and Long-Term Fund for sites in East and South London which will unlock 8,000 new homes – and to help tackle undersupply in the medium-term, we are announcing our intention to legislate at the earliest opportunity to remove the current block on Homes England's role in London.

Support for SMEs

It is right that we do what we can to unleash the capability of housebuilders across the housing sector. SME housebuilders play a vital role in our communities, and we are already backing them through our £1.5 billion Levelling Up Home Building Fund and £1 billion ENABLE Build guarantee programme. Today we are going further by expanding the ENABLE Build scheme to cover more lenders and increase the availability of SME finance to the sector. To support access to land for building, we will also introduce SME-only sales of Homes England land, with pilots starting this year in the Southeast and Midlands. We will also update the Community Infrastructure Levy guidance to discourage higher rates being charged on smaller sites, responding to feedback from the sector.

Public sector land

It is also crucial for Government to play its part to release more land directly. That is why we are working with the three main landowning departments – the Department for Transport, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Health and Social Care, as well as Homes England – which have pledged to set aside suitable unused or unwanted land for housing. So far departments have pledged to release Government owned land for at least 15,000

homes before March 2025, and we have set up a ministerial Taskforce to assure and accelerate delivery over the longer term.

Second staircases guidance

Finally, our focus is of course not just on building more but building safely. I have already announced my intent for second staircases in new buildings above 18 meters, and the associated transitional arrangements that will allow projects that are already underway to continue as planned. The Building Safety Regulator will publish detailed guidance to support a second staircase by the end of March, and this guidance will set out that the second staircase will not come with additional provisions such as evacuation lifts, providing housebuilders with the clarity they need to progress developments.

I would welcome your support as we take the next step in our long-term plan for housing that will ensure more safe, warm, affordable homes get built in the places that need them most.

With every good wish

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP

Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations