

What wasteful public expenditures would you like to see reduced?

One of the strange features of the much discussed age of austerity has been the barrage of demands for lower public spending that have gone unheeded by Ministers claiming they want to reduce public spending.

Foremost has been the £10 to £15 bn a year sent to the EU. A majority of the public voted to end this in 2016, only to find three years later some Ministers and MPs are insisting on still giving it away, with many wanting to lock us into more of the same for years to come.

Then there is the case of the world's dearest new railway, HS2. Many have made proposals for much cheaper and quicker ways of increasing north south train capacity. Many of us want more spent on northern commuter rail improvements into the main cities as a priority. This could be done much more quickly than HS2 and at a fraction of the total cost of the large project. Latest estimates of a total cost in excess of £70bn imply more than £5bn a year could be saved by cancellation, prior to allocating decent capital sums to faster introduction of digital signals and by pass sections of track on existing main lines to boost capacity, and similar improvements on commuter routes into the main northern cities.

There is the pledge to spend 0.7% of GDP on overseas aid. This Parliament is unlikely to want to cut that, but we should spend more wisely within that budget. The set up costs for the first year of a refugee or an economic migrant from a poor country are allowable expenses to qualify. Given the continuing large numbers entering the UK, we should allocate substantial sums to the housing budget from the overseas aid budget to cover more of the costs of provision of additional homes for new arrivals. There should also be larger transfers to the education budget to allow for the extra school places needed and the additional language skills to teach new pupils who have little or no English on arrival. This would increase those budgets whilst reducing total spending.

The new government should implement the agreed policy that any visitor to the UK needing non emergency treatment should have to pay the NHS. Visitors should be advised to come with health insurance or the cash. Migrant workers coming to the UK should not qualify for all the benefits for a specified period, as Mr Cameron wished to do but was unable to get EU agreement.