To: consultation on Government spending review

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Websites: Cowley Area Transport Group – [www.catg.org.uk](http://www.catg.org.uk)

[Steve Dawe at West England Bylines - <https://westenglandbylines.co.uk/author/stevedawe/> ]

*Both of these sites contain articles and submissions enlarging on many of the points made below and adding others.*

**COMMENTS ON SOME ASPECTS OF THESE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

**Generic: taxation issues**

**Suggestions:**

Air Passenger Duty: raise significantly for all long-haul flights, and those journeys possible by rail.

Land Value Taxation: Use this to replace CT/business rates after a full revaluation of property, as already done in Scotland. Ensure this is highly progressive with very low rates for flats, terraced 2 storeys and very high indeed for ‘green deserts’ of the largest properties covering the largest areas of the country.

Inheritance tax: lower the threshold at which this is paid more quickly than before.

Fuel duties: reintroduce increases in fuel duties as part of funding road and pavement repairs, pedestrianisation etc, and to increase rates of EV vehicle hire and purchases.

Electronic Road Pricing: to be introduced, see below/

VAT: increase on ICE new vehicles year on year to speed up transition to EVs; remove VAT or repair/renovation.

Income tax: raise the threshold at which this is paid each year by more than the rate of inflation for 15 years then review; raise highest level of income tax to 75% at £1.5m income per year, income to include bonuses, expenses for flights.

Financial transaction tax: to be applied wherever the UK Government has influence including Chancellor of the Exchequer changes of how this applied to increase income and crack down on avoidance without further reference to Parliament; set at 0.5% on any sum over £1000 per day.

Betting Tax: 50% tax on all wins – to be paid directly to the Exchequer.

Tax abolitions: When all of the above have been implemented, consider the future of Stamp Duty.

**Department for Energy Security and Net Zero:**

**Savings:** Cancel all subsidies and tax breaks and any other grants, etc which support Fossil Fuel industries on Climate and ecological grounds: minimum savings £10-12bn. Cancel all planned new nuclear power stations on grounds of ‘eternal costs’ when radioactive waste storage is included, and the cost disadvantages when compared with renewables/energy efficiency in buildings. Concern about nuclear power stations at or near sea level when Sea Level Rise is occurring do not seem to have penetrated UK Government so far. Given the exceptional costs, cost overruns and delays in nuclear power station projects, this cancellation will save billions.

Energy Security: is not possible without an end to Fossil Fuel imports, and appropriately higher public and private investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. Expedite investment in public sector installation of solar PV, onshore wind, better insulation, and far higher building standards. Energy security should be about reducing imports wherever possible and increasing security for households and businesses.

Adaptation and Mitigation in the Climate Emergency: neither global temperatures nor quantities of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere have responded to what little Governments or other institutional actions have done to stop the Planet from catastrophic Climate Change. Rises continue and projected continuing increases are alarming. Examination of the extreme weather events on this Planet since 2000 shows that even slow, incremental increases in heat and GHGs have led to destructive and life-taking events. Both adaptation and mitigation policies, and investments, must increase and least-cost, nature-based actions should be preferred. It is also worth considering in the UK how estuary protection could be combined with tidal barrages/other schemes to increase renewable energy production – bearing in mind needs such as powering electric aviation and shipping/ completing the transition to EVs/and ensuring protection for ecology/species.

**Department for Environment and Rural Affairs**

**Savings:** The minimum standards for this Department should be to replicate or exceed EU environmental policies and targets and provide enough funding to appropriate bodies to ensure nature restoration in the most nature-depleted country in Europe. Such spending will create employment, provide tax revenue, increase local consumer spending, and will help to address the £40bn ‘deficit’ in tourism spending as so many currently holiday abroad.

Policies: public ownership of water has very strong public support, as does re-nationalisation of other key industries. False ideas about what this would cost, since the companies involved are effectively bankrupt as market entities, do not help. The universal pollution of our watercourses and failure to make use of sewage as a resource show a failure to think holistically about water. It is also essential that FF and nuclear energy are separated from within energy bills from the real costs of renewables – to help keep costs to users down by providing regular advice about costs, and to marginalise the most costly and polluting energy sources. Adopt a ‘basket of policies’ to diversify agricultural incomes and to reduce GHG emissions from the sector; set minimum wholesale prices to increase farm incomes from supermarkets. Support local government in creating new farmers’ markets or expanding existing ones.

**Department for Transport**

**Savings**: Stop all trunk road building indefinitely. Reduce pressure on transport modes and transport infrastructure by legislation to support the maximum roll-out of remote working and of flexitime, reducing the household pressures of commuting often at enormous expense; introduce Electronic Road Pricing (ERP), following the Singapore experience since 1998, to compensate for decline of revenue from fuel duties as EVs are adopted. Set ERP at a level suitable to repair roads and pavements in areas where it is introduced, continue roll out of electric buses and add to Active Travel investment in public health and consequently promote avoidance of illness and improved productivity. I suggest phasing this at a rate of the 6 worst cities/towns for traffic congestion in England (with the other parts of the UK being able to opt in at will) – every 5 years. Drop the Cambridge to Oxford Arc idea as this will include many roads in practice and much additional induced traffic.

Car parking adds to road damage and need for repair. Set a general policy of reducing car parking within settlements according to levels of congestion e.g. biggest decreases for areas selected for ERP, but with councils wishing to be ‘early adopters’ of ERP supported in reducing car parking in areas where wider pavements and broad cycle tracks (minimum 1.7m, are needed). A Pavement Parking ban should be applied in the UK as a whole, with England needing this most.

Scrap airport expansion on Climate and air pollution grounds. Enact airport contraction for smaller airports by ending flights at these sites, making them sites for new employment, council & keyworker housing, and joined-up biodiversity corridors. Raise Active Travel spending in England to at least £2bn p.a. Fund expansion of pedestrianised areas to increase footfall in areas with shops. Roll out school streets and low traffic neighbourhoods everywhere, combined with Controlled Parking Zones, to resist the expansion of vehicles from current c41m to potential c50m and beyond over time. Abandon SAF and expand electricity from renewables to support essential aviation first, e.g. for helicopter ambulances and air sea rescue, and to serve the more distant islands of the UK.

Enact full public ownership of railways and a 50% rail fares cut to encourage use. Add more carriages and longer platforms where needed.

Shipping pollution is unrestrained. About half of freight tonnage moved by sea is fossil fuels. So, dealing with the Climate Emergency means prioritising reduction in all forms of FF use ASAP. In short, decarbonisation is not just about having all electricity from renewables, it is about electrification within aviation and shipping sectors too. The UK, with about 40% of Europe’s wind resources accessible within the British Isles, and ample light to use more solar panels on more buildings, is in an advantageous position Government has yet to recognise.

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

Savings: cancel greenfield housing developments which create a higher demand for new infrastructure and facilities than making maximum use of the empty built environment, especially near existing key infrastructure and facilities. Imports supporting the residential sector could be reduced by a rigorous use of existing empty buildings/brownfield. The empty built environment includes: empty homes of ANY size, shopfronts, offices, industrial buildings; empty brownfield sites to include zoning all private and public car parks above 10 spaces for apartments above surface level, to make best use of these spaces so often empty at night. This should form part of the Local Plan process to allow councils to see the full potential of brownfield sites which they can use for housing, according to need.

Essential policies: all council and housing association homes to have solar PV installed at no cost - helping Council bulk orders to push solar PV to even lower prices - covering as large an area of roof facing in any direction as possible. New build should have water conservation built-in e.g. all sink/shower/bath water to be used for toilet flushing. Boost local government funding to an acceptable level by removing Council Tax/business rates and substituting Land Value Taxation as a progressive tax encouraging best use of land including nature conservation, nature restoration, conversion of land for crops for animals to growing food for people, high density housing e.g on car parks as above, more ‘National Trust’ properties and taking very large empty homes into public ownership for council and keyworker housing. Abandon the idea of new market housing targets, substituting use of some empty industrial estate-science park sites from employment use (potentially) to self-build private homes covenanted as not being available for adding to the private rental market. All private landlords should, over time, become fully trained registered social landlords with strict rent controls to push rents down to now more than 30% of take-home income in any given council area. Abolish mayors wherever local people wish it.

Community Programme: as part of local government re-funding, the Community Programme of the 1980s should be revived with each local council/Unitary having a Community Programme of projects chosen with voluntary and statutory bodies to attract, and where desirable train, people drawn in from the 9 million people not in work or education – subject to careful consideration of their health/mental health and capacities. This would help address skills shortages (e.g. construction, health care-care work, etc) and stop flows of skilled people away from the poorer/most vulnerable areas. There would be benefits from resulting income tax, and a probable flow of people into various council jobs in an expanding council work force. But there could be other benefits:

Drawing people who have retired and are beyond retirement age back into some paid work of benefit to the community; as part of a much faster transition of asylum seekers into employment, allowing comprehensive assessment of their skills/preferences/needs as part of the Community Programme as a process.

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