

### **Written evidence submitted anonymously**

Opening Comments. This pandemic has imposed considerable change to everyone's life & outlook. The national debt has increased beyond any anticipated level of affordability. Government has to refocus, review & initiate positive lasting reform. There are spending habits that have evolved over decades without consideration of their continuing need & fairness, starting with the plethora of centrally funded quangos & national bodies - these must be reassessed & cut. Parliamentarians should use the positive example of the thousands who have reassessed their priorities & reduced/paid off personal debt. This inquiry seeks ideas to re-appraise the enormous challenges that face the country & the affordability of everything, taking account of demographic change, the environment, & critical needs measured against the tax base. Government has to take a hard look at minimising waste, rebalancing the economy, & reducing the national debt without reinstating austerity.

Select Committee inquiries consider areas specific to their briefs e.g. the Integrated Review, Court Capacity & this inquiry, many of them have a link, akin to all Government Departments, in that they operate without much, if any, cohesion. This watershed moment is a chance to seize the opportunity to adapt our strengths, remove weakness & generate a genuine fusion of effort across Government & the nation, underpinned by a grand strategic concept to refocus, review & reform. A cross party approach, using Select Committees, could usefully develop ideas & concepts. Using glib terms/catch phrases may imply a change of direction, though they often become hollow & open to ridicule rather than making a statement of intent. The imperative must be to undertake deep reform, achieve more fairness, but with a simplified system that enhances the nation's long-term future. Tax reform, with some seismic change, is needed to remove the increasing sense of entitlement, projecting a refreshed mood, & to focus on four Government objectives.

- Security of the nation & the people.
- Health & welfare (environmental aspects).
- Education & culture (environmental aspects).
- Effective but suitable infrastructure (environmental aspects).

Key Point. The scale of this omnidirectional inquiry must grasp & encourage the need for real change, reviewing tradition, method & process. The outcome should help to refocus a great deal, rather than accepting idealism; savings can be achieved to generate positive improvements. The following have merit but do not cover everything.

#### Grand Strategic Concept - Refocus, Review & Reform.

- Palace of Westminster. The refurbishment is wasted public money & likely to be in excess of the RN carriers. This inquiry poses the interesting point for consideration, that of "environment and other factors" - has consideration been given to the inevitable rise of the oceans, pronounced threat of flooding & the impact on Government? Alternative sites, beyond the capital, could be found & exchanged with National Trust/English Heritage; a progressive relocation of Government & its whole apparatus would be prudent & possible.
- House of Lords. Reform has been alluded to for so long. Its archaic format, poor value, excesses & disbursements to staff & Members is overdue for reform. The Upper House should be reduced to less than several hundred with a rigorous process of selection; ennobling individuals is an archaic tradition that may be attractive but holds no modern value for an effective second political Chamber.
- House of Commons. The Boundary Commission's recommendation to reduce the number of MPs to 600 should be acted upon. The quality, integrity & broad experience of MPs needs improvement.
- Cabinet. Cabinet should provide the PM with Government Department senior MPs to collectively adopt policy & debate/discuss pertinent issues. A reduced Cabinet would promote economy by reducing appointees, focus debate & concepts with a fusion of cooperative effort, rather than retaining competitive fiefdoms. A broad Cabinet could include departmental ministers, coalesced into nine super Departments, with the AG, PM, COS & Cabinet Secretary creating 13 Members:
  - Treasury (& Pensions). Taxation elaborated below.
  - Justice. Reform the law, remove the criminal cloak & opprobrium allied to crime, thereby reducing the need to imprison so many. Apply technology, with an on-call judiciary, to promptly deal with "offences" or pass offenders to higher courts. Improve but simplify financial penalties: a percentage of income/worth, using fines to punish/reimburse costs (investigations; evidence; damages). Fines to be set at a national standard (£100) doubled for any further infraction. Create a Community Atonement Order benefiting local authorities: suited to the offence or lesser crime.

- Home Office. Generate regional police forces, with central procurement/training & flatter structures; generate a National Force around the NCA, by integrating SCO, Service Police, MDP, BTP, Nuclear Constabulary, CTC, traffic. Consider the creation of Civil Protection Organisation (CPO) - formed from the Environment Agency, accident investigation branches to plan, prepare, coordinate & respond to catastrophic incidents/natural disasters; give UK tertiary students the choice to write-down their education costs/loans for a contracted period - learn, support & appreciate the environment gaining skills, creating a national reserve for times of designated emergencies. ID cards used to prove a person's status, benefit & ease the change of accommodation/homes, confirm authorisation to vote, ease the administrative challenges when moving to a new job - in line with European states.
- Board of Trade (BoT). DEFRA - change to Agrivironment: farming, fishing, agriculture, forestry, waste disposal & potable water; Trade, Industry & Commerce; Infrastructure - roads/ports/railways/technology. Housing - new properties/developments to recycle/use grey water, integrate solar panels, use gravel rather than concrete for water run-off. Use contracting experience for MoD procurement.
- FCO. Coordinate, design, implement a long-term foreign policy - Cabinet guidance; thereafter MoD & Intelligence Services design their concepts/plans to enhance & create a fusion of effort. BoT to provide specialists to guide/drive overseas trade/investment. BoT specialists to embed with FCO.
- WHealthCare (Health, Welfare & Social Care). Develop an electronic Health Card to link all medical records (hospitals, surgeries, pharmacies). Generate local radiological clinics (X-Ray; MRI; scanners) & laboratories (blood & bio samples) to improve access & localised availability, thereby removing blockages at surgeries/hospitals. Regenerate Military hospitals for serving & veteran personnel (NHS funding). Create an ambulance taxi system, rather than using ambulances: off-set charges for use, or set a minimum contribution, with bookings via surgeries. Generate long-term care clinics by progressive integration of private sites into state monitored/franchised facilities: reduce hospital bed-blocking by elderly/fragile individuals.
- MoD. Generate a Coastal Force to oversee GIUK gap, ports & off-shore facilities, EEA & support to BOT; amalgamate coastguard, police, Border Force maritime elements, with aviation from Armed Forces training units (airships/drones later); enhance with corvettes - funding supplement from EU payments. More detail sent to Defence Select Committee.
- Education (Culture, Arts, Sport). Progress to 4 terms. Reduce exams to a school final exam, with three yearly assessment. From 13 consider academic or technical/apprenticeship stream. At 16 (annual holidays of 6 weeks) & undertake 4 weeks work experience with Agrivironment/CPO.
- Devolved Authorities. Create an England parliament with formalised English & Welsh regional authorities, allowing greater devolved authority & empowerment for day to day matters. Policy-design by Government with enforcement capabilities/inspection regimes by cross-party/civil servants.

Taxation. Taxes are too complex & lack fairness. Undertaking tax cuts or rises inevitably generates reactions that can turn toxic. National Insurance is an income/employment tax with onerous rules, copious compilation & should be unified with Income Tax. VAT is complex &, post-EU, suited to change. Community charges have created various difficulties with costs threatening the viability of small/medium sized business, increased pain on homeowners & renters. Pensions are increasingly unaffordable with many private provider-scandals; there is a window of opportunity to progressively reform & simplify the pensions' system, whilst the growing national debt needs to be reduced.

- Income & Gains Tax [IGT]. Align CGT, pension relief & reconstruct the income tax to create thresholds without change at retirement (stop NI contributions) & remove the tax allowance. Every employed individual to pay 10% ≤ £40K, then 20% ≤ £60K, then 25% ≤ £80K, then 30% ≤ £100K, then 35% ≤ 170K, then 40% ≥ £200K - illustrative figures to provide the concept. Those with a high income (40%) to buy medical insurance cover (France/Belgium system: set by statute). Any capital gain to be charged at an individual's tax threshold; all profit (after allowable home improvements) from sales to attract IGT at an individual's tax threshold.
- Government Sales & Ecology Tax [GST]. Reduce VAT rate to ≤15% but apply to all goods & limit reimbursements wherever possible. All road users to pay an annual fee towards use of roads/cycle paths with proof of payment issued by the insurance company (bar code readable): cycles (electric/pedal) to be coded & fully insured with licence proving safety & practical knowledge of Highway Code. Overseas registered vehicles to buy an eVignette (European schemes). Adjust fuel prices to reflect the GST change & standardise costs. Electric vehicle users should pay a realistic top-up charge.
- Property/Land Tax [PLT]. Simplify & stop "leasehold" by a creating a progressive tax. Create an affordable/periodically verified assessment, taking account of a property's square metrage, applied to/by the Regions -

reviewed by a cross party committee. Land to be taxed, with a reasonable cost levied to retain farming/forestry/environmental needs to suit the UK: large gardens to be assessed for a supplementary cost.

- Business Tax. Reduce to 15%: create an online business component, with a marginal rate for others who have partial online trading.
- National Savings Scheme (NSS). The idea would be to move to a national pension scheme, providing a minimum fund over a longer period of working life of 50 years i.e. 20-70 years. An immensely complex area but, with the intent to generate a potential pension of £30K for 25 years retirement, via a pension/sovereign fund. Employer contributions to be  $\leq 10\%$  p.a. with each individual able to pay-in £15K p.a. with an annual government guaranteed interest of 20%; maximum fund holding of £750K. Everyone to have the equivalent of a Passbook to monitor the growth of their own fund. The transition from today's rotten scheme would require careful consideration, especially for the worst-off in society. There is the obvious ability to move current pension pots into a new system & any shortfall (to attain the maximum fund holding) may require a waiver for individuals to pay-in more to achieve the fund entitlement. Those who are in the top percentile of earners could join the NSS & then use their wealth to create a separate taxable portfolio. This suggestion should be designed as a minimum pension, allowing the better off to generate other savings to improve their retirement funds, or accept a higher maximum NSS fund holding.
- State Pension (current). Those who have a pension  $\geq \text{£}60\text{K}$  should not need a state pension. Where funding allows, the least well-off pensioners should receive a pension uplift, rather than credits/benefits - perhaps tied to providing some light work to the local authority: a policy of - not-something-for-nothing.
- Government employees & pensions. Public employees generally receive the most generous of pension (full-time service) compared to private business/self-employed/industry. The tax-free gratuity remains a generous allowance & should be reduced to one year's pension, taxed at 10%.
- Current pensioner benefits. The triple lock is unaffordable for all & should be modified for the least well off; bus passes/TV licences would require comparable adjustment.
- Benefits. Benefits should be earned by all who are physically able: required to support their local authority.
- Homelessness. Consider the provision of an ISO-container-pod (UK-built with facilities), thus being easy to relocate to suit a local authority. Food & key necessities could be provided, as a mutual benefit.
- Disability. Redefine - too many are treated as disabled: revert to a physical inability to walk a short distance - entitlement process to be transferred to a local authority medical officer. A psychological/visual/audio impairment should be distinct & separate to being medically categorised as disabled.
- Premium Bond/any other windfall. Consider, by statute, to pay 25% (adjusted upwards on request/advice by the winner) to the individual's NSS/pension pot to progress to the maximum fund holding.
- Charities. The overwhelming number of charities have developed into businesses with well-paid CEOs/staff & associated perks. There are many with substantial investment portfolios; a moral betrayal to the donor, of e.g. £1, anticipates that most of their donation reaches the beneficiary. A Royal Commission (or something comparable, to undertake expeditious reform) to review the point/need/value of all charities, disentangling the business culture. Those with extensive portfolios, beyond a rainy-day reserve, should be taxed at the extant Business Rate. Charities should be better regulated & monitored.
- Prescription charges. Scrap them by charging for all medical appointments (a non-reimbursable online payment of £20 for a GP: more for a specialist). A statute-agreed medical insurance scheme could be introduced to cover medical costs/overseas travel. A 'necessary' prescription should be issued for each medical visit. Expensive prescription medicines/treatments may need to be covered by medical insurance. Remove all non-essential/prescribed treatments from surgeries to pharmacies.
- Dental treatment. Reintroduce dental treatment into the NHS, to improve overall health.
- Medical Treatment. The NHS is a Black Hole for the tax base & needs systemic reform & should return to its core criteria & provide for an individual's needs; other preferences should be paid for via an insurance scheme, if approved by a GP or specialist.
- IHT. A simplified system should be developed. Those with property portfolios & other investments could be taxed at a threshold tax level, with the actual family home/property being gifted.
- Dividends & transfer fees. Tax them in line with the tax threshold.
- Other taxes. Others may be better to dissolve or incorporate elsewhere, to simplify the current complexity of taxes. Fly Tipping & causing environmental damage is a scourge & needs to be heavily penalised (legal reform). Access to local recycling centres should be authorised by local authorities & managed by issuing an annual adhesive windscreen certificate; businesses to pay a reasonable amount - verified by a weigh bridge.

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- Alcohol/Cigarette Duty. Simplify - increase GST to  $\geq 20\%$  as a fixed increase.
- Non-British Property holders. Taxes should be greater.
- Tax Avoidance. Any opportunity to avoid tax payment to be shut down, proscribed & heavily penalised.
- Refuse Collection & Waste. Develop an effective national strategy. People should be 'encouraged' to deposit designated recyclable waste at designated locations that are walkable collection points from properties (remove the scourge & cost of wheelie bins). Direct all shops to stop providing plastic bags & provide paper equivalents. Waste/recycling needs to be much more rigorously employed to generate energy. Improve recycling of glass (milk/soft drinks). Landfill sites should be reduced/minimised.

Use of Aid & EU money. About £30 Bn p.a. should be used to boost infrastructure & key requirements.

- FCO £10B  $\pm$ £8B for overseas assistance (law change). Additional FCO money to increase embassy staff, generate specialist staffs to oversee global regions; monitor & effectively use expats; embed Department specialists to increase/diversify international trade/sales/commerce effort.
- HO £6B: CPO £3B; Policing £1B; Border Force £1.5B (territorial force with mobile support teams to manage all aviation & maritime sites); Emergency Services £0.5B (4x4 vehicles to limit need for Armed Forces assistance).
- MoD £4B: Hospital vessels & aero-medical aircraft with staff, £2B, for humanitarian aid support & military operations [MoD/NHS]; Coastal Force £2B - generate suitable UK-built vessels (corvettes, OPVs, fast patrol boats) with export sales' opportunities; provision of support to BOT.
- Education £1B. Sports facilities - focus on health & 'fight' obesity.
- BoT £7B: Agrivironment  $\pm$ £5B; Apprenticeships  $\pm$ £1B; Infrastructure  $\pm$ £1B - e.g. improve ports/harbours & encourage greater investment in fisheries & associated packaging.
- Health £1B: generate a national CoE for trauma, diseases & poisons - with regional sites.
- Justice £1B: technology to deal with on-call judiciary, thereby improving court capacity.

Summary. There is a clear requirement to refocus, review & reform a great deal, starting simultaneously at Government & Departments. No-one likes to pay tax, but it is the only method for Government to manage & pay for national resources & critical needs, which should not be undermined by the threat of annual reviews affecting policing, Intelligence Services & the Armed Forces.

Radical reform, incorporating a fusion of Government & parliamentary effort should be the pre-eminent requirement to undertake necessary changes. There are issues that will affect everyone & the parliamentarians need to accept that necessary change will challenge their own comforts & the rest of the nation's today & tomorrow. There is a sense of unease & worrying reality that political deterioration is a growing issue, enmeshed with disruptive politics; the law of unintended consequences needs to be consciously kept in mind, rather than making quick & easy choices without effective scrutiny.

This submission covers a broad variety of ideas & thoughts that will require further technical evaluation, but many refer to aspects of significant waste, the need to tackle complexity & levels of disparity. There are many opportunities for improvement in an increasingly contradictory world where falsehoods, deceits & determination to break with supranational ideals are all too clear. Parliament needs to seize the opportunity & reform much, making clear improvements.

*September 2020*