



WELCOME

Dear all,

Welcome to March's newsletter.



Jeremy Hunt's Budget was announced on 6th March.

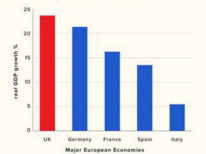
He cut National Insurance and reduced tax on Child Benefit, going some way towards reversing a dreadful policy introduced by George Osborne – against which I lobbied at the time. Without my efforts the tax would have been even worse. I am delighted that this is being addressed. He said:

"The last few years have not been easy for the British economy. We have faced the legacy of Covid, war in Ukraine and the Middle East. These challenges have made life tough for people in Britain. Since the beginning of 2023, we have been working on five priorities. Three of them are economic. To halve inflation, grow the economy and reduce debt. • We have made good progress. Inflation has fallen from 11.1 per cent to 4.0 per cent, the economy has performed better than forecast, wages are rising, mortgage rates are starting to come down, the economy has outperformed European neighbours and debt is on track to fall as a share of the economy. The job is not done. But because of the progress we have made, the economy is turning a corner and we have been able to afford tax cuts as part of our plan to reward work and grow the economy. TODAY'S BUDGET SHOWS WE ARE STICKING TO THE PLAN. We are cutting NICs again for 29 million working people, the next step towards OUR LONG-TERM AMBITION TO END THE UNFAIRNESS that means if you get your income for having a job you pay two types of tax – NICs and Income Tax – but if you get it from others sources you only pay one. When it is responsible and when it can be achieved without compromising high quality public services, we will continue to cut NICs, making work pay. • The Autumn Statement and Budget together have delivered NICs cuts totalling £20 BILLION – BENEFITTING THE AVERAGE WORKER BY OVER £900. The Budget will: Cut taxes for 27 million working people from April, by again cutting the main rate of employee National Insurance Contributions (NICs) from ten per cent to eight per cent. Combined with the cut at the Autumn Statement, that is a tax cut of over £900 for the average worker earning £35,400 – giving the average earner the lowest effective personal tax rate since 1975. Cut taxes for two million of the self-employed, by cutting the main rate of Class 4 NICs from nine per cent to six per cent. Combined with the tax cuts for the self-employed at the Autumn Statement, this is a tax cut of around £650 for an average self-employed person earning £28,000 a year. • Support half a million families through changes to the High-Income Child Benefit Charge by raising the threshold and halving the rate at which Child Benefit is withdrawn, benefitting some parents by an average of £1,260."

Hunt also announces a six-month extension to the Household Support Fund, a freeze in alcohol duty (for which he was kind enough to credit me) and an extension to the 5p cut in fuel duty. He also increases the VAT threshold for small businesses to £90,000 and announces new taxes on vapes and higher taxes for business class flights.

Amidst all the media gloom about Britain, we should remind ourselves of the good news. From HM Treasury:

The UK has grown faster than any other major European economy since 2010

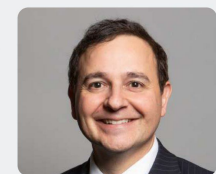


8th March Miriam Cates MP came to speak to us in Bowdon; she made a wide-ranging, thoughtful speech about demographic challenges and the importance of supporting families.



11th March Victoria and I went to a dinner at the Guildhall to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Centre for Policy Studies. I was lucky enough to work there briefly after university and returned a few years ago as Deputy Chairman. The CPS was formed by Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph and was responsible for many of the hugely successful policies of the Thatcher years.

15th March I went to speak at a dinner in South Leicestershire for Alberto Costa MP.



Good news for local schools – Lucy Frazer, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, wrote to me to confirm details of new investment in sports facilities for local schools; it should make a real difference:

As of January 2024, this includes a total of £26,527 in Altrincham and Sale West, allocated to the following projects:

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme
Totalling £26,527, including partner funding from the English Football Association and Premier League

Facility name	Grant award	Facility type
HEYES LANE JUNIOR SCHOOL	£1,573.00	Goalposts
BEECH FIELDS	£1,281.00	Goalposts
ST HUGH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL	£832.00	Maintenance Equipment
ALTRINCHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS (SIXTH FORM CENTRE)	£14,105.00	Grass Pitch Upgrades, Storage
NORTH CESTRIAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS	£8,736.00	Goalposts & New Floodlights

Oliver Carroll and I have been pressing for the Loreto Prep site to be used for school places. As I wrote in the Messenger:

'After campaigns from parents and local Conservatives, Trafford Council has finally accepted that there is a problem and has agreed to pursue the Loreto site using central government money for new school places.'

After denying that there was a problem for so long Trafford Council has now agreed to use the Loreto Prep site.

I visited the excellent Northwest Dental Training Hub in the Health and Wellbeing Hub in the heart of Altrincham Town Centre.

At a time when dentists often seem to be in short supply, we have a wonderful state of the art training facility on Market Street, they are training new dentists as well as bringing existing ones up to speed with new techniques and the most modern equipment.

For too long, much of this new building was a 'white elephant' but now the whole third floor is being put to good use by this fantastic NHS funded facility.

Pictured below you can see me honing my drilling skills on a wonderfully quiet and compliant (because he's made of plastic) constituent!



You know you've been around a long time when you are given 'Lifetime Achievement' awards! Victoria and I went to Buckingham University where I gave a lecture at the Margaret Thatcher Freedom Festival being run by the Margaret Thatcher Centre.



I am pictured above receiving the Margaret Thatcher Centre Lifetime Achievement Award with Donal Blainey and Rt Hon Sir Conor Burns MP

In the Parliamentary office building in Portcullis House a 'Men's Shed' has appeared, courtesy of the Men's Sheds Association and the Royal British Legion, raising awareness about men's mental health.

By providing a place to do a bit of woodwork or other practical jobs, they find that they can get men talking and sharing their worries in a way they often won't. I dropped in to give them my support.



Finally, elephants in Stamford New Rd - taken in the 1960s:



From Hale and Altrincham Life - elephants on Stamford New Road from a travelling circus.

The House rose on 26th March, returning on 15th April. I wish you and your family a very happy Easter.

That's all for now, I'll be back with more news next month.

