

Is the UK really living beyond its means?

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We're told the UK is living beyond its means. But who exactly is living beyond them? It's not schools, libraries, or the NHS. It's not people in poverty. It's the private monopolies and unchecked corporate profits. In this video, I explain why this narrative is not just wrong—it's dangerous.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5H3so8WUR4&si=AyurgLZ8HySx5zfq>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=hr92s-1906f31-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Is the UK living beyond its means?

I read an article in the Financial Times recently that boldly declared that we were living way beyond our means, and I profoundly disagree with it, because what it was saying was that the thing that we had to cut was the size of the UK government.

It's always schools, the NHS, support for the disabled, social care and those profligate librarians who are the cause of our national distress, according to those who claim that we are living beyond our means.

They always say it's the state that's inefficient and which must be cut, but when doing so, they ignore some absolutely fundamental truths.

The private sector is fundamentally unproductive in the UK, compared to the rest of the world; that's the truth that we have to face.

We face massive underemployment in this country as a consequence, and that's the truth that we have to face.

And there are whole communities starved of investment in the UK as a consequence of the private sector withdrawing from them, in effect, and that's the truth that we have to face.

But it isn't the state that is causing our problems.

Nor are states pushing people into situations where they can't afford to live. The private sector is doing that.

It's pushing up rents.

It's pushing up property costs.

It's pushing up interest charges on mortgages and car loans, and everything else.

It's pushing up the price on things like mobile phone contracts, electricity, gas prices, and water, too; all of those things are pushed up because they are supplied by private monopolies.

If we are living beyond our means, it's because we are fueling the excess profits of these businesses and not because we're over-consuming the NHS and schools.

What we are actually seeing is a world of unchecked excess, which those who argue that we must cut the state want to continue. You never see those who argue that we must cut the size of the NHS say that we must cut the number of weight loss drugs that are being prescribed to deal with the problems created by addictive food, sold by the private sector.

You never hear those who claim that we can't afford to support those with disabilities say we also can't afford SUVs and giant cars, which are bigger every year, because that's just not their own priority.

And you never hear those who say that we can't afford to tackle climate change, saying that we must cut the number of cheap flights we take for holidays in the sun, which are 92% of all the flights taken out of the UK each year, which are helping to burn our planet.

There is an excess in this country. We do consume too much for the planetary constraints that now exist.

We are getting excess heat as a result. We are getting droughts. And we're also getting more rain as a consequence. It's clear that something is wrong, but those who claim we are living beyond our means, say, and I've said it before, "It's those profligate librarians who are putting too many books on the shelves in Wolverhampton who are bringing the state down."

Not once do they say it is banks and big business that are contributing to this.

We must change the way we live, is the point.

We have to look at how we manage the climate crisis.

We have to look at how we change our food supply so that people are not made ill by it in the future, as they very clearly are now.

We have to change the way in which we manage our overseas relations and the way we support countries to also manage the climate crisis, or migration is going to get worse.

We have to manage our shortsightedness, which ignores these issues.

We have to manage the self-interest that says the state is too big, but private profits must always come first.

We must challenge the poor judgment that lets people get away with claiming we can't afford to support children with special needs, but we can afford private excess.

Let's just look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs for a moment.

We're under-consuming clean water, nutritious food, and decent housing; we are under-consuming education, social care, and secure communities, those are levels one and two on that hierarchy of need. That's why we are so stressed.

But we are over-consuming things that try to reinforce our status and tell the world that they must respect us. Those are levels three and four in that hierarchy.

We've got everything the wrong way round. We are consuming to excess where we don't have need, but only have want, and we're consuming too little where we have need and people are left in poverty.

We must now change our direction.

We do need investment in basic needs.

We need stronger public services, and we must regulate those industries that fuel

over-consumption and climate harm.

The UK is living beyond its means, but the means it's living beyond are its environmental means, and you can put your head in the sand and you can say, I'm talking nonsense, and this doesn't matter, but it does if you're going to be alive after 2050, and most people who are watching this video will want to be in that situation because, by then, the reality of the climate crisis will become all too clear.

Our current excess will then become our current crisis.

We have to build a state that guarantees security, dignity, and sustainability for the long term.

And we're failing to do.. And the consequence is we are going to need to change our excess consumption. But it isn't the state that's going to have to give way. It's the excess consumption of the wealthy that is going to need to give.

Taking further action

If you want to write a letter to your MP on the issues raised in this blog post, there is a ChatGPT prompt to assist you in doing so, with full instructions, [**here**](#).

One word of warning, though: please do make sure you have got the correct MP. ChatGPT can get it wrong.