

## The national debt need never be paid off

Published: March 8, 2026, 3:10 pm

---

We published this short video on YouTube and many other channels last night. If you like it, please share it far and wide - because that helps get the message out.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/q7nl5ynaRZQ?si=7uluTd4KdfG0xGPv>

This is the transcript:

---

We're constantly told that the national debt must one day be paid off.

Politicians repeat this claim endlessly. They warn that our children and grandchildren will somehow have to repay this debt, but there is a simple problem with this story. It has never happened.

In modern British history, the national debt has never been paid off, and when I say modern, I mean since 1694, and there is a very good reason why.

Britain has carried its national debt for centuries. Large debts emerged after the Napoleonic Wars, the First World War and the Second World War, unsurprisingly perhaps. At the time, the national debt was far larger in proportion to our national income than it is today.

After the Second World War, for example, it exceeded 250% of our national income, and yet Britain did not collapse. Instead, the economy grew, the welfare state was created, and public services were expanded. The debt was not paid off. It was simply managed over time.

And let's be clear how that happens. Government debt is not like household debt. Governments do not clear their debt and make it disappear. Instead, they normally do something very simple. When old government bonds mature, and government bonds are what makes up most of government debt, the government simply repays them and

then issues new bonds to replace them. This is called 'rolling over the debt', and it has been standard practice in the UK for centuries.

So the national debt is not something that must be eliminated. It is simply part of how the financial system works.

So when politicians say the national debt must be paid off, two possibilities arise. Either they do not understand how public finances work, or they are using the claim to justify austerity and cuts to public services, because the real issue is not eliminating the debt. The real issue is whether the government is spending enough to support the economy, to maintain public services and invest in the future.

The national debt does not need to be paid off; what matters is whether the economy and society are working well together, and the government's job is to facilitate that.