

View from Westminster

At the local level, the Aberdeen raver has been extremely busy this month with a veritable flurry of policy announcements. It's been revealed that the ban on ground rent charges for leases will come into effect in June, whilst long overdue reforms to the outdated Vagrancy Act have been sketched out. Of most interest though is the multibillion agreement with large developers that will see them fund building safety repairs. Busy month then at DLUHC....and the same can be said for DfT.

Most pleasing here is the news that the self-drive revolution will allow us all to watch Netflix whilst cruising down the M4. All very science fiction to me and believable only at the point it is seen. The Great British Rail Sale also occurred this month, helping to reduce the price of travelling on our outdated network from unacceptably extortionate to merely eye-wateringly expensive. And the much-venerated truckies are set to get £20m invested into their facilities to hopefully ensure they no longer moan about Dover...

It's at the national level though where, again, the most noteworthy developments have occurred. There is no doubt whatsoever that the biggest story in Westminster this month is the fact that the serving Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have been issued with fixed penalty notices for breaches of coronavirus regulations. It is, however the mustard is cut, quite the moment. It's also manna from heaven for Starmer, who gets to be all Law and Order and effectively turn the Commons chamber into a courtroom as he delivers his closing statement-style appeals to morality.

For Boris, the seriousness of matters doesn't play to his strengths and his answers often veer into babbling. Amongst the blue team there is an understandable desire to move on from all this and refocus on the cost-of-living crisis and geopolitical uncertainties as Russia starts mentioning words like nuclear again and cuts gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland. But, for equally legitimate reasons, such hopes are forlorn. All these investigations will need to conclude and report and that alone will drag this on...and on...and on.

Elsewhere in Whitehall, civil servants everywhere should watch out...because Jacob Rees Mogg is about and armed with his passive aggressive post-it notes berating Sir Humphrey for not being at his desk. Perhaps some were WFH. Maybe others were in meetings. All we do know for sure is (a) there isn't enough desk space if all returned to the office, (b) nothing says levelling up like forcing everyone to work in one London postcode, and (c) clearly Jacob wasn't behind his own desk as he was playing postman. Still, where central government leads, local government might be compelled to follow so keep a look out for Jacob turning up to your offices very soon....

Politics of course has never been a place of virtue and morality. Such preoccupations are matters for philosophers and priests. Even by the extremely low bar we set in SW1 however, the "Basic Instinct" story run by the Mail on Sunday represented a new and dispiriting low. In a nutshell, the suggestion is Angela Rayner has to flash Boris Johnson to put him off his stride as she cannot otherwise match his Oxbridge debating skills. It is, and one chooses one's words carefully, absolute cobblers. Boris Johnson has his flaws, but the suggestion Angela Rayner sees him as

just a walking bag of uncontrollable sexual hormones is as insulting to him as it is to her. Deserved anger all round, with Rayner herself rightly being championed from across the House. It really is about time this kind of sexist, classist nonsense left our politics forevermore.