

Freedom now

The BBC's wish to avoid singing "Britons never never never shall be slaves" speaks volumes about how hostile to freedom many in the establishment have become.

There is nothing colonial nor racist in this iconic chorus. It is a paean to the liberty of the British, a reminder that we sided against continental tyrannies and opted for the course of freedom.

It records the success of the British against Spanish invasion and planned conquest, and against French expansions. Later we were to offer the same resistance to German attempts at the unification of Europe by military force.

Today our liberties are under pressure. Government in the name of tackling the pandemic has made unprecedented inroads into our personal freedoms for peace time. Now the threat is much reduced and medical understanding of the virus increased, it is time to relax the controls further and restore more dignity and judgement to us all.

Schools should make more of their own decisions about how to keep their staff and pupils safe, and not expect a detailed government blueprint about how and where they hold classes. Businesses need to set out their own approach to hygiene and safety, explaining it to customers who can decide whether to go there or not.

Local and national government places more and more restrictions on people getting about in cars in ways which sometimes make town and city centres more dangerous for all involved as well as more frustrating for pedestrians as well as drivers.

Government is in danger of taking too much to itself. Leaving more to a free people and their private and public sector institutions beyond central government is the right way forward. It will produce better answers, a more prosperous society and see off the threat of a new slavery.