

# The language of the left

People complain to me that they can no longer say what they wish. They feel they are losing their right to free speech or to independent thoughts. They have to follow the fashionable mantra of the left who dominate language and attitudes on law and order, immigration, transport and energy amongst other topics. They were hoping for some change of tone or lead from the top with a change to a Conservative majority government at the last election.

Some people try it on with this site, wanting to cast generalised allegations against religions, nations, large groups of people or named members of a global elite. I do not allow it, as I do not like unpleasant or dangerous language casting possibly false allegations and adding to divisions. Nor do I have time or legal resource to check out allegations against named individuals. There are campaigning media with better resources and more appetite to root out individual cases of law breaking, excessive influence or whatever you should go to for that.

I do, however, agree that we need to be able to talk sensibly about matters that worry people, and need to analyse problems like the cost and availability of energy or how we police our borders, free from attempts to prevent us by making false allegations against us over our motives and attitudes. We need to keep open the right to talk of these things and to disagree with the authoritarian left who wish us all to say the same things and to come to the same conclusions, when often their priorities and remedies are damaging to both our freedoms and to people's prosperity.

If we are to recover our economy, enhance our freedoms, level up around the UK and promote individual prosperity, we do need to challenge some of the left wing assumptions which make all that more difficult. I encourage people to write in with a better vision of the future. That is why, for example, I have been working on energy policies to keep the lights on and provide more affordable energy for consumers and business, and why I have been urging the government to direct its powers to stamp out people trafficking and illegal migration risking lives to get people into the UK. We do need new approaches to a variety of problems that challenge the tired soundbites of political correctness.

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## GDP figures reveal big decline in public service output and rise in

## public sector inflation

Two of the biggest sector falls in the economy in the sharp recession last quarter were health and education, owing to the impact of the virus on their ability to work. The ONS decided they delivered 34.4% less education and 27.2% less healthcare. These are bigger falls than the economy as a whole. Because public spending rose sharply the ONS also decided there was a very fast inflation in the public sector. They calculated public sector inflation or the rising cost of government at 32.7% “because the volume of government activity fell whilst at the same time government expenditure increased in nominal terms”. The overall deflator “the broadest measure of inflation in the domestic economy” as a result shot upwards.

Restoring health and education output is a very important part of the recovery policies the government is now following. Of course the government needs to ensure safe working for all employees as the schools and surgeries get back to full working and the non Covid work of the hospitals builds up again.

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## Ministers intervene in exam grade appeals

Overnight we have news that Ministers have reviewed the actions of teachers, Examining Boards and the independent regulator. They have decided that a good ground for appeal can be the mock exam results where these were achieved in properly controlled conditions. This means an individual will have a way of upping their grade where a combination of teacher assessment and Examining Board moderation has delivered a lower grade than the mock exam result.

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## Taxing development

The government wants to speed more housebuilding, but it also wants to tax development. It proposes a new infrastructure tax to replace the existing system.

It is true the gap between land values with permission to build homes and land values for land without any building permission is huge. It is also true the wider community incurs large costs from more housebuilding. There

needs to be more schools , surgeries, roads, power lines, broadband cables and the rest. All parties have accepted the idea that there should be some infrastructure levy or contribution to public sector infrastructure costs, just as securing private sector services may entail direct payments to the service providers. The government does not mention the need for compensation payments to existing homeowners, though there are clear cases where the amenity and value of their property is hit by more traffic and noise, worse views etc. Developers who want speedy progress sometimes offer compensation to reduce opposition to a scheme.

The Section 106 payments system has been a negotiation between Councils and developers. Many Councils have wanted to take the money to build more homes for rent instead of using the money to build the roads, schools and surgeries needed. The sums have expanded to try to accommodate both needs. The government has also introduced an additional Infrastructure levy.

The new levy proposed is only set out in outline. It is national with maybe a single national rate or rates. It might also have regional or local variations. It seeks to flex according to land and home prices, allowing developers to make a given margin before the levy kicks in. In falling markets the levy would fall and in rising markets it would rise. That is a sensible feature.

I would urge simplicity and suggest a per house levy to cover the obvious public sector infrastructure costs. The government wishes to increase this tax, which will make achieving more home building more difficult.

Given that many people want fewer new homes with reduced migration, what do you think would be sensible by way of a tax on new developments?

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## [On line meeting with Schools Minister](#)

I dialled in to Nick Gibb's briefing yesterday about the forthcoming exam results. He set out the position as I did on my blog yesterday. He agreed it would have been better for all pupils to be able sit the exams, and for these to be marked by independent teachers who do not know the pupils as before. Instead we have a second best system where compromises have been made by the Examining Boards to try to award meaningful qualifications to pupils who have done the work but not taken the exam.

The Exam Boards and their Regulator have decided they do need to adjust the results proposed by teachers. They stressed to teachers they want them to concentrate on getting the right order in their list of student results, so the Board knows who they think would have done best and who would have done worst in the exam. The general adjustments to the teacher scores will not affect the rankings of pupils school by school. The Examining Boards are going to adjust some school results downwards, keeping the proposed order,

as in aggregate teacher's assessments can produce considerably better results than past years.

This of course can produce injustices for pupils and schools that are improving on previous years. In some cases it may favour the school or pupil and will go unchallenged. The appeals and exam options allow individuals and their schools to bring evidence that the adjusted grades are not fair because they are too low. Any constituent who is worried about their grade or their children's grades should talk to their school about the possibility of an appeal or the exam option.

The truth in each case is we can never be sure how well that student would have performed in exam conditions on the day. There will remain a degree of approximation in some cases. The important thing is for pupils to get a sufficient grade to go on to the next stage. Those who move from GCSE can prove they are better in their A levels if they feel their grade was wrong, and those who move to university can prove themselves better in University exams when they get there.