

We have done localism ... now we need some strategy

IS everywhere divided? Election result after election result seems to suggest so by exposing and exacerbating splits. North and South, young and old, town and country, somewhere and anywhere.

It is hardly a surprise given the understandable political choice and force of devolution and localism that empower and ultimately fuel drift away from the body corporate. One can appreciate the comfort and security the local and smaller picture can provide, but what about the bigger picture?

Our 'United' Kingdom is straining. Our Government and our Opposition are both split. Our Houses of Commons and Lords are in conflict, and our constitution could potentially soon be tested. Perhaps this is a good thing as it might excite the voting public to engage more with politics. Sadly, I think the reverse may be true as Facebook makes way for fake truth, and the power of a distorting and distorted traditional media wanes while social media grows deeper and widens divisions.

Where once there was deference for 'the establishment', there is now scepticism and challenge. Politicians may be beginning to realise this and maybe their power is weakening as we 'take back control'.

The challenges to the country need practical solutions from more politicians who have proven commercial and industrial track records and who have 'done stuff'. We need

people with diverse experience of real life and its problems and the ability to conceive and deliver solutions that are in everyone's best interests.

As I have indicated above, there is comfort and security in the smaller picture. This is where too much wind is blowing. Where is the bigger picture for the UK? 'Global Britain' is already the fifth largest economy in the world, albeit slipping. Surely the aim is to stay fifth or climb above Germany into fourth?

Most of the major challenges that face us, from resource use to cybercrime, atmospheric degradation, bio-threats and migration, require strategic solutions to protect our ability to thrive. We need to be advancing educationally and professionally, and aim to be more productive to secure the best return from our human and natural resources.

A growing and prosperous economy is absolutely fundamental to capitalising on our other assets. If we are to address the need for better public services we need a better private sector. Enterprise therefore needs to be advocated and supported strongly in the political arena and properly recognised as a force for wider good.



By MPA chief executive
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Our essential industry – which underpins construction and much of manufacturing – is vital not just for the economy but to enable the country to operate on a daily basis. We need clarity of vision and economic stability to encourage commercial ideas and convert them into investment. Government must avoid mixed messaging and agendas that only unsettle and confuse. We need less talk and more action. We need a clear strategic vision.

Addressing a broken housing market needs proper solutions, not more reviews. Infrastructure pipelines need to flow, runways need approving, power stations need replacing and roads need mending. We need planned action backed by cash to boost confidence and investment; strategy that unites diverging communities and builds better relationships in an increasingly uncertain world; strategies that recognise local needs, but are in balance and connected with regional, (yes Regional!) and national needs.

Industry can help (and wants to) but there needs to be better engagement if we are to be able to help broker solutions and play a full part in maintaining the UK as a 'top five' economy in the world.



A nation pulled in different directions

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