

Funding the Future

Article URL

Published: January 12, 2026, 7:02 pm

Grenfell Tower is not going away. It featured in the Queen's Speech. The tragedy is very obviously about something more than the personal disaster it represents for so many.

It is about indifference to those who need social housing.

It is about a contempt for standards.

It is about a failure to accept all people are equal.

It is about a society that has over emphasised the value of money.

It is about a society which once talked about the importance of homes, and tried for several decades to make sure that all enjoyed the security that having a place to call your own provided for just about every other aspect of life, but which has for nearly thirty years dispensed with this most basic of provision for well-being for far too many.

It is then about a society that has gone wrong. That has forgotten to value its members. That is indifferent to the needs we all have. That has inappropriately put its faith in money. And where enough people (but not all, as comments in this blog and elsewhere prove) have suddenly been shocked into realising that this is a mistake. After the similar realisation that Brexit is very obviously an error that is still careering towards the creation of a real crisis that will impact vastly more people than Grenfell Tower, albeit very differently, it is as if a new political awareness has been awakened that, for once, cannot be ignored. The fact that we have a government that is obviously unable to govern only highlights the incapacity that many now feel in the face of something so clearly wrong.

So what can be done? The first thing to say would seem to be that looking to the current government for answers will nit help. Yesterday's Queen's Speech was lamentable, precisely because it showed no inclination to tackle any of the issues involved.

Second, then, political change is necessary. I have no idea if that will happen. What I do know is that there is an astonishing interest in political issues at present. This month will see the biggest ever traffic in this blog's eleven year history. I am aware that others

are experiencing the same thing: there is a hunger for debate, and the number of new people commenting is also indicating a willingness of some to partake where they previously observed. I welcome this.

Third, this has to translate into action. Ultimately democracy depends on political parties and whilst I choose not to join one, there is a need for more people to do so. 100,000 people joining the Tory party to turn it back into a one nation party that has concern for making the lives of all better would utterly transform British politics in a way that almost nothing else could do at present.

Fourth, some shibboleths need to be faced. Grenfell Tower is already symbolic, but it also represents a reality in UK housing policy. This now subsidises private landlords and not tenants. It is biased towards home owners and not those who aspire to a secure home for their families. It promotes the myth of property as wealth, and not as homes. It does, therefore, divide society. The best indication of change will, then, be the willingness of people to not only become involved but to also demand that these divisions be removed. So the question is whether or not politics can move from being about reinforcing the power of particular interest groups to an alternative based upon the promotion of broader communal values.

There will be very obvious indicators that will suggest if this is happening. So, for example, will funding for social housing be made available?

Will subsidies for landlords be reduced?

Will capital gains be charged on home ownership?

Are changes to tenancy arrangements that deliver longer term security possible?

Can private developer land banks that are designed to fuel house price increases be tackled with a policy of 'use it or lose it'?

Is there a willingness to substantially increase the council tax on empty property to encourage its use?

Might council tax be reformed to better reflect value, to reduce the penal rates on lower value property and to properly reflect the enormous change in house prices since it was introduced by levying many more bands at higher rates?

Will local authorities be allowed to build again?

Might they be allowed to borrow to do so?

Will they be allowed to have their own work forces to prevent the risks from loss of accountability that it seems outsourcing creates?

Might the public sector be allowed to pay appropriately once more?

Will we, in other words, accept the price for caring? Because that's the key question. Caring has a cost, and across the board the mood has been created that we cannot afford to care. Will Grenfell Tower change that? Or will we remain indifferent?

And will we continue to be politically adrift, as is so obviously the case at present, or will a fundamental change across the political spectrum to create a new political consensus where people matter be the new direction for UK politics?

Time alone will tell. I live in hope.