

Funding the Future

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I have often been baffled by the claim that the so-called 'Red Wall seats' in the north of England are so very different from the rest of the UK when it comes to social attitudes. It's been a feeling that matters. Labour, in particular, has tacked hard right to follow the rightward trend in the Brexit / Conservative Party as if this prevailing narrative is the dominant one in large parts of the country. The cost has been significant.

[YouGov](#) has now done a survey on social trends in the Red Wall. It makes interesting reading.

In summary what it finds is that on most issues the Red Wall is a little more conservative (small c) than the rest of the UK, but nor materially so, Brexit and migration apart. Across the UK as a whole only 41% believe the UK was right to leave the EU. In the Red Wall it remains 50%. But move on from that and things are different.

So, for example, on the supposedly ultra woke question that asked if 'It is important to teach school children about Britain's colonial history and its role in the slave trade' 78% in the UK as a whole agreed and 73% did in the Red Wall. Disagreement was just 4% and 6% respectively.

Again, on the question as to whether 'Having a wide variety of different ethnic backgrounds and cultures is part of British culture' 54% agreed across the UK and 50% did in the Red Wall. Disagreement was 27% and 31% respectively.

Follow the link and you will find the trend follows, including on issues such as transgender rights, where almost equal numbers support them (and oppose them, come to that).

Immigration does reveal differences, but less than I expected.

So what is happening? I am not pretending there aren't differences on display: there are. But they are not, overall, that significant. Majorities are usually consistent (even notably consistent) with the UK as a whole, Brexit and maybe migration apart. In particular, there are felt to be greater tensions arising from migration in Red Wall seats than elsewhere even when other areas often have larger populations from minority

ethnic groups.

I am not claiming superior insight here. I am just, like anyone else, making informed guesses. But that informed guess is that the divide being seen is quite definitely not about woke / non or anti-woke issues. The government has it wrong to play that card. As ever the real divide is economic. The Red Wall did lose under Labour. It has lost as much, and maybe more under many Tory governments, but the Red Wall now think that the Tory plan for recovery is better.

Not that there is one. Levelling up is just meaningless jargon without any plan for delivery right now.

So what is needed? It is not a tack to the right. Nor is it to be anti-woke. What is required is a decent plan for jobs. Right now the only one there is happens to be the Green New Deal. But until Labour gets on and commits to it then it will remain in the wilderness. It is one that increasingly looks to be of its own making.