

## The Sheffield event is off and we're rethinking what we...

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After much agonising, extensive research, a great deal of work, and help from friends in Sheffield, we have decided to abandon plans to hold our proposed event there or anywhere else in the next couple of months.

I [wrote recently](#) about my concerns regarding staging such an event, and those concerns have only intensified. See my post about the oil price this morning. My fear is that by the time the event might take place, we could be facing further rising fuel prices, actual fuel shortages, and the very obvious of another cost-of-living crisis. In those circumstances, committing around £3,000 upfront to venue costs looked increasingly risky. The real concern was simple: would people be willing, or able, to travel and spend money on attending an event if household finances were coming under renewed pressure?

We explored alternatives to our original venue when it offered no cancellation options that would mitigate our risk. That search ended up pushing the event into July, but even then, the alternative venues could not meet our needs in terms of timing and room size, or financial risk. We could not justify proceeding as a result.

So we have decided to cut our losses, for now.

Instead, we are exploring the possibility of shorter online events that would be cheaper to run, easier to access, and far less risky for everyone involved. If, by some miracle, the economic outlook improves over the summer and the risks attached to staging an in-person event diminish, we may revisit the idea of holding something in September or October.

James put a huge amount of effort into this process, for which I am very grateful. He also conducted some informal, ad hoc market research that broadly confirmed our suspicions: people are understandably reluctant to take on discretionary spending commitments right now.

That matters. It tells us something important about the economy as it really is, not as

politicians insist it must be. When people are hesitant to commit relatively modest sums for events they would like to attend, it is a sign of widespread insecurity. That insecurity is itself a political issue.

We need to respond to that reality, not ignore it. That may mean rethinking how events are delivered so that they are more affordable, more accessible, and less dependent on people having spare cash they increasingly do not possess. For now, online may be the better option. We are looking at that.