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The monthly summary of consultation matters by Consultation Guru –

Rhion Jones

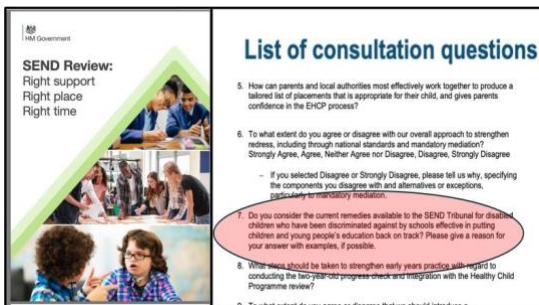
Consultation Catch-up



In April, I visited Wales and found the extent to which local communities object to well-intentioned but controversial policies. The **20 mph speed limit** had enough popular support, but its uneven implementation has led to huge opposition. After half a million people signed a petition, the new First Minister astutely backtracked. Will the new English Guidelines work better? (see overleaf). The other big issue is the threat of a **parade of pylons** set to disfigure the tranquil beauty of the Towy Valley etc, with public consultation in full spate. Great examples of how climate change and net zero requires more and much better public engagement than we are used to ...

Best of the Blogs

The retreat from Gunning? The riddle of the 'Question 7' case



(Blog 67) I'm not sure I'm yet mounting a 'Save the Gunning Principles' campaign, but I am getting a little worried about some recent judicial decisions. The latest is where a single consultation question faced a challenge, but the Judge found that the Gunning Principles did not apply. Maybe it is a one-off, but the shadow of a 2023 Appeal Court judgment looms large over this latest case. The uncertainty is not helpful!

Will football fans really be consulted? (Blog 65)



Ministers may think they've got the football authorities and big club bosses onside (sorry!) for their **Football Governance Bill** ... but I wonder? Everybody likes the idea of listening to football supporters, but I detect real confusion between 'fan engagement' and 'fan consultation'. As Parliament kicks off (sorry again!) its debates on this Bill, I think it may need redrafting, or we may have some unintended consequences. Will football fans be 'over the moon' or 'sick as a parrot' ?

Football's new era of consultation kicks off with an Own Goal!



(Blog 66) You couldn't make it up! On the eve of the Football Governance Bill's Second Reading, the Premier League and the Football Association make changes to everyone's favourite tournament – the FA Cup – WITHOUT CONSULTATION! I have already explained that the Bill, as drafted, might impose a higher standard of engagement on the clubs than they might expect. Any sympathy for them, however, evaporates as this new decision reinforces the views of fans that they want a stronger voice in how the beautiful game is run.

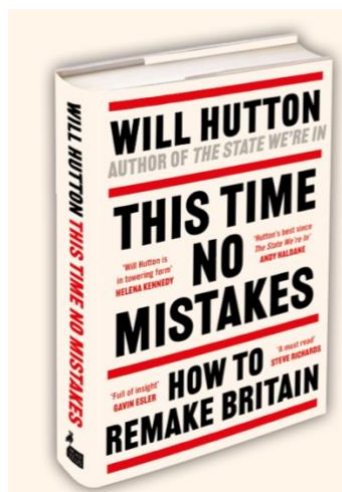
On Page 2, there are insights on Low Traffic neighbourhoods, the Community energy 'call for evidence', the NSIP review, welfare benefit challenges and the Book Review is Will Hutton's 'This Time No Mistakes'

Instant insights

- Before Sadiq Khan's latest electoral triumph, Downing Street advisers thought they'd stumbled upon a vote-winning strategy by becoming the 'motorist's friend'. They garnered headlines at party conference by suggesting that **Low Traffic Networks** and lower speed limits were all a Socialist plot. Now we have the long-awaited new Guidance for England and I've asked **Paul Murray** to look at them in detail. Read his commentary [here](#)
- If you're keen to see the acceleration of local energy projects, you might have been delighted the Government was persuaded to hold a consultation on the [barriers faced by the community energy movement](#). It's now out – except it has emerged as a [call for evidence](#), and not a public consultation. What's the difference? And does it matter? Of course it does! **ConsultationGuRU** will publish a blog very shortly. In the meantime, [Community Energy England](#) is doing what key stakeholders should always do when these situations arise – ignore the procedural screw-up and rally its supporters to respond professionally and in numbers.
- There is speculation as to what will emerge from the imminent [review of NSIP legal challenges](#). Led by Charles Banner KC, the exam questions is: *Are NSIP*s unduly held up by inappropriate legal challenges? If so, what are the main reasons for this and how can the problem be effectively resolved?* Now [MY QUESTIONS](#) are: *What's the danger that current Ministers think that unlawful consultations should not be allowed to frustrate favoured schemes? And would in-coming Labour Ministers be the first to agree?*
* NSIP = National Significant Infrastructure Projects
- There are clear signs that Welfare benefits seem set to be a major political battle-ground before an Election. But also, in the Courts. Permission has been granted for a legal challenge to forthcoming changes to **Work Capability Assessments** – based upon allegations that the [consultation](#) did not provide enough information about the likely consequences of various policy options. The case is being supported by Disability Rights UK and other campaigners who are already wary about the current [consultation on Personal Independence Payments](#) (PIPs) Even a cursory look at the [39 questions](#) of this document would provide enough evidence to alarm the 3.4m current recipients of this benefit. It's obviously a 'wicked issue' and needs a thorough and honest dialogue.

Straws in the wind

The Reading List



Almost 30 years ago, Hutton wrote *The State we're In* and is credited with much influence on the Blair/Brown Governments. [His new book](#) seeks to repeat the exercise and will give Labour leaders and strategists much to think about. In covering the iniquities of recent right-wing mistakes (of which Austerity and Brexit vie for the most damning analysis), he treads familiar ground and paints a depressingly credible picture of a broken Britain. Whether he needs to devote a full third of the book to review centuries of evolving political philosophies, I'm unsure, but it is probably his way of demonstrating that, in the end, the only viable left-leaning approach to modern society is the marriage of 'collective solidarity' and 'progressive liberalism'. He calls them the 'We' and the 'I'. Only by embracing these to justify a mind-boggling agenda for an incoming

Starmer administration can we save Britain from '*dropping out of the front rank of nations*' in terms of personal and social wellbeing, economic performance, social cohesion and international influence. As part of his prescription is his call for major reform of our democratic institutions. Ditch the First-past-the-post system, make the Lords electable and encourage better '*rules of engagement*' for improved dialogue. Of course, **ConsultationGuRU** agrees with that one!!

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