

Buzzwords are damaging real progress, let's stop talking and start doing

The lack of funding and innovation in the North compared to the South is no secret to us by now, especially with it being considered a top priority on the government's agenda. Question is, are they really making it at a priority, or is it just noise?

Temps de lecture : minute

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I'm sure we're all familiar with the buzzwords adopted to address the issue. From 'levelling up' to the 'North/South Divide' itself, you're likely to see these phrases splashed in the headlines daily - cleverly making it appear that real action is being taken. I get it. People need to see action - and by seeing these words we're more likely to feel like something is actually being done. But is the use of these words only placating the masses?

I'd say so. The meaning of 'levelling up' is quickly losing its value when comparing the usage of the word versus the action being done under it. These phrases should be empowering us in the North to realise our worth and know that we are going to get the investment and infrastructure we are in dire need of.

Levelling up; new to us, but not to them...

The term 'levelling up' isn't a new phrase. The government has been using it for decades in some capacity. The 1940 office spoke of 'levelling up' the benefits for wartime spouses, and from then on, the term has

been used to loosely address issues around spending and funding inequality.

In the present office, 'Level up' generally refers to regional inequality that needs to be addressed. And whilst that isn't limited to the North, it's definitely most frequently used in addressing the North/South divide.

Not only are these phrases being used to blindly refer to the issues at hand, but other news stories are also jumping on the bandwagon for clicks (Click baiting is no new phenomenon). But what it's doing is hijacking news and causing an oversaturation which leads to a distinct lack of value.

Looking at the search results of Google, the spike in results over the last 10 years is staggering. And though the Google algorithm doesn't give accurate search result numbers, the increase is still there for all to see.

All Talk, no action?

The thing is the government's spewing out plans to 'level up' helps us to know that they understand change needs to happen. It makes it very easy for them to look like they are trying to help the regions which are being left behind.

There's more talk than action, which needs to change. And it's not just the people in government that can bring about real change. Sure, there's no denying that large scale investment is needed for infrastructure in the North, but there are changes we can be making from within to bring about real change.

Schemes ARE being pushed left, right and centre - but few cater to the common SME. Whilst schemes and funding are vital to ensuring the growth and survival of SMEs in the North, many neglect the businesses

that have fewer than 2, or 3 employees. Are these not the businesses we should be ensuring get the backing they deserve?

We don't need empty words; we need recognition of difference and nuance. Not all businesses fit into a box, and the same can be said for Northern cities and towns. They all face different challenges which struggle to be addressed when Boris Johnson refers to 'levelling up' without giving detail of what or where he is talking about.

Business owners in the North need to be able to compete with companies in London, especially in terms of employee benefits. You only have to glance at Manchester and Leeds to know there are world-leading companies dotted all over the North - but why are our graduates fleeing the first chance they get?

The power of SME's

Workers need a reason to stay. Yes, infrastructure plays a big part in this but so does company structure and culture. COVID-19 has meant the ways of working have changed, people aren't as enthralled by shiny offices anymore, they want the freedom to work within their role. The great thing about SME's is that they have the fluidity to offer more range in a role than grad schemes at huge corporations - and much more contact time with the higher-ups. Not only that but SMEs are much more collaborative by nature.

It's these kinds of steps that are going to help the North thrive. Collaboration between people and other businesses enables not only the businesses themselves but the people within them to continually be exposed to new working practices, putting them at the forefront of innovation. Collaboration is a key factor to enable the North to combat the masses leaving for London, and what does a pool of talent bring? It brings growth and strength.

Stop talking, start doing

Talk is cheap. Let's ditch these words of false empowerment once and for all. To bring about real change we must power together and make the North a honey pot for businesses - and to do that it's time to stop talking and start doing.

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