

JUNE INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

Much is happening in the BID community as we run up to the general election on 4 July. Some of these activities are tied in with the political changes being mooted; others are merely part of the busy flow of economic life. As part of the election, of course, much will fall away from the current government legislation; Levelling up, High Street rental auctions, and Martyn's Law, are victims of the election date.

The Retail Gazette has produced a very useful **analytical breakdown of the various offerings of the political parties** in the run up to the election and the link is [here](#).

Commenting on Labour's policies, British Retail Consortium (BRC) CEO Helen Dickinson said: "The Labour manifesto includes many of the right policies to help retail invest for the future, upskill its workforce, and play its part in growing the UK economy. From replacing the broken business rates system, to reforming the rigid Apprenticeship Levy, Labour are promising to make changes that will have a meaningful impact to retailers and their customers." Equally Dickinson welcomed the Lib Dems addressing business rates and the Apprenticeship Levy, However, despite applauding the Conservatives' initiatives to tackle retail crime, the retail trade body boss said its manifesto "fails to take the bull by the horns" on these issues. Dickinson said: "The Conservative manifesto highlights the need for a tax system that incentivises business to invest yet does little to bring this about for the retail industry. With business rates now at a record high of 54.6p in the pound, the Conservative promise to 'continue to ease the burden of business rates' for businesses on the high street will ring hollow to many retailers. Despite previous promises to reform the broken business rates system, we continue to see empty shops around the country that have fallen prey to sky high rates. And while the full details of the proposals to offset high street business rates by raising rates for warehousing would need to be seen, it is hard to see it as a viable solution given the wide range of retailers that sell goods online as well as from stores."

Elsewhere, **New West End Company** CEO Dee Corsi welcomed Conservative plans to reform the rigid planning system, grant extra police powers to deal with anti-social behaviour and, importantly, introduce tougher sentencing for those who assault retail workers. However, she termed the manifesto “a missed opportunity to show a serious commitment to business growth”. She said: “The idea of increasing business rate multipliers on distribution warehouses ignores the fact that modern retailers sell both online and in-store. This, compounded with the decision to not reintroduce tax-free shopping, would further squeeze UK business.”

And, of course, **British BIDs** is working on a statement of how it will work with the new government and the relationship between BIDs and policy matters.

The **Resolution Foundation**, along with other key research colleagues, have produced very interesting analysis on where the UK economy is, and it is worth looking at the long-term projections - the report is available [here](#). This looks at what it calls ‘life in the slow lane’ as it examines the UK's economic performance since 2010.

On a very different but equally important note; University College London (UCL) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) have joined forces to conduct a comprehensive survey aimed at understanding the experiences and challenges faced by the 1.32 million Londoners who **work at night**. The survey will encompass various aspects of night work such as working conditions, health and wellbeing, commuting and overall quality of life, and will be of value to all BIDs across the country. By hearing from night workers themselves, the initiative seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform targeted policies. Professor James Cheshire, Director of the UCL Social Data Institute, commented, "Night workers are an essential part of the economy, and we depend upon them to keep workplaces clean and secure, our hospitals open and to get us safely home at the end of a night out. However, compared to those who work during daylight hours, we have much less data about their needs and experiences. We hope this study will shed more light on how London can work better for them." Night workers across London are encouraged to take part and share their perspectives to help shape future

policies and initiatives. For more information about the survey or to participate, please visit <https://dataafterdark.commonplace.is/>.

Looking at examples of placemaking and business activity across the world is always valuable and a great story from Paris **emerged earlier this month**. Thousands of people gathered on the **Champs-Élysées for a giant free picnic** organised by a committee of local traders and businesses fighting to halt the slow decline of the boulevard long known as “the most beautiful avenue in the world” Once a favourite promenade for Parisians, the Champs-Élysées has in recent years been steadily abandoned by local people as popular stores and cinemas have given way to luxury boutiques and the avenue has become the preserve of wealthy tourists. “It’s a way of telling Parisians: ‘Come back to the Champs-Élysées, to show them that the avenue isn’t just for high-end shopping,” said Marc-Antoine Jamet, head of the 180-member Champs-Élysées committee that organised the event.

A similarly exciting story is emerging in the northeast, **Sunderland’s** skyline is changing rapidly as the city’s leaders try to reverse decades of hollowing out of the city centre. It is an experiment in local government intervention and in a form of industrial strategy that looks to cities and the UK’s dominant services economy as well as eye-catching factories as a way of reviving the sluggish economy. **Sunderland’s leaders** are hoping that the intervention can serve as an example for other parts of the country. They believe it could also be watched with interest by a Labour government working out its approach to industrial and economic strategy.

With the interest across the country in new types of BIDs and particularly **Accommodation BIDs**, the various parts of the tourist industry are starting to respond. An interesting piece written by and for the **luxury coach industry** is available [here](#) and is clearly of the view that Accommodation BIDs are with us into the future. Tourist taxes are something with which coach operators travelling abroad are familiar, given that they are common in some parts of Europe. However, now the idea is gathering steam in the UK, one stakeholder believes it could become standard over the next four years. He suggests “Will this push people away? No, look at Venice, Rome, Paris or Berlin — they

pay the fees, it's part of the global post-pandemic tourism boom. Yes, it will push the costs up, but I feel it will not send groups away. But with the fees, it should bring proper infrastructure for our industry". If some of the money were put into improving facilities for drivers or visitors, operators may greet the prospect more warmly.

Former Debenhams stores across the UK are being reinvented, with a dizzying array of new uses – but only a third of the sites are now occupied by retailers; they have been taken over by science labs, parks, health centres, community hubs, lecture halls, bowling alleys and even a submarine training centre. The Debenhams name continues online under new owners but – three years after the department store chain left the high street – more than half of the former stores remain empty or are in the process of being redeveloped, according to research by Local Data Company for the Guardian. Perhaps most unlikely, aerospace and defence group BAE Systems has bought the Debenhams in Barrow with a plan to build a training centre for submarine engineers.

As ever, British BIDs have a range of **training and development solutions** for BIDs and BID staff. We look forward to next weeks **Business Crime Summit** in Cheltenham and the **National BIDs Conference** which will soon come around too.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Professor Christopher Turner, Head of Research, British BIDs