

An opportunity missed?

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Your Tig Editor doesn't object to a little bit of fun of course, but there are a couple of issues we should bear in mind. The most obvious one is that this is a huge amount of money, especially in times of economic hardship like these. We can only hope that we will at least see some returns, rather than just the whole sum being frittered away in a huge party. After all, if you think that the UK population is approximately 58 million this represents nearly £500 per person, which is practically double if you consider that only 28 million are in employment.

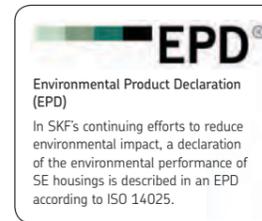
But will there be returns for this great 'investment'? I can take bets that politicians of all parties will begin by saying that returns will be noticeable only in the long term. The hope is that by the time costs had been fully

assessed ordinary people would have long forgotten, with only historians and other academics showing any interest in the subject. But the omens aren't brilliant. For example, Prof. Poynter of the University of East London has already exposed some pretty worrying social costs, as well as highlighting the lack of real economic benefits associated with previous events of this kind.

From a Tig's reader perspective, however, perhaps one of the greatest concerns focuses around Brand UK. If you were the famous alien who had just landed in England in mid-summer you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Industrial Revolution was just a nasty bubo in the life of the nation, preceded by a period of bucolic idyll and followed by a current era of nothing but pop music and vacuous celebrities. No cutting edge discoveries, no high level manufacturing and technology (does anyone remember the Concorde?); just a country where entertainment of a dubious quality reigned supreme. ”

So we are back to where we started. What was it all that about, aside from a temporary feel-good factor? Are we going to be proud of our manufacturing sector and especially one firmly rooted in the 21st century? Why always only 19th century achievements? Maybe the next move for those currently engaged in engineering and manufacturing would be to don a Victorian outfit. Get out there quickly and if you are an engineering manager buy your own stovepipe hat – the taller the better – as this is perhaps how politicians would like to see you.

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