

Picture of the day



An idyllic scene on Camus Daraich beach on Skye, taken with an iPhone by reader John McMahon

We welcome submissions for Picture of the Day. Email picoftheday@theherald.co.uk

# The voice of the people must be heard to tackle inequality

ON 29th June next year it will be 10 years since the Report on the Future Delivery of Public Services from the Commission chaired by my late brother, the former STUC general secretary Dr Campbell Christie, was published.

Ten whole years: if a week is a long time in politics what does that make 10 years?



**ANALYSIS**  
The pandemic has shown what can be achieved when local government and communities come together, writes **Leslie Christie**

The four main themes of the Christie Commission were:

- Reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use;
- Public service providers must be required to work much more closely in partnership, to integrate service provision and thus improve the outcomes they achieve;
- We must prioritise expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes from arising;
- And our whole system of public services – public, third and private sectors – must become more efficient by reducing duplication and sharing services wherever possible.

In terms of implementation of the recommendations from Campbell's report, if I were writing it up as a school report card it would undoubtedly be a fair start, must try harder, definite room for improvement.

So why have the Recommendations from Campbell's Report not been implemented in the way he had hoped for – why has the vision he had for

public service delivery in Scotland, to make it a better place for its citizens, not yet come to fruition in the way he envisaged?

Some might say it is the cost and that may be an issue, but in truth I feel it is that central governments in general do not readily relinquish control. Their rhetoric on empowering the local does not match the reality.

Apart from individuals and communities, the main player in Campbell's vision would be democratically elected and representative local government which the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosla) President describes as the sphere of Government closest to the people.

Therefore, it is no great coincidence that some of the recent work of Cosla on behalf of Scottish Local Government chimes very closely with the Commission recommendations and indeed could restart the journey to their fulfilment.

Two things in particular that I have been aware of Cosla doing spring to mind.

Firstly, their recently launched

“Words in documents cannot deliver the change, only actions from them can”

Cosla Blueprint – which they describe as “a menu for change” that they hope to see.

Even if it is a decade on from the final report of the Christie Commission, the Cosla Blueprint is a good addition to the whole public service reform debate – but just like Campbell's report – it is more about the actions that come from the document rather than the document itself. Words in documents cannot deliver the change, only actions from them can.

Within the Cosla Blueprint, the section on Strengthening Local Democracy really chimes with much of Campbell's thinking.

It states: “Decisions about our future should be made by the people most affected by them. Scotland is a diverse country: what works in our cities may not suit remote rural communities, just as the priorities in our towns may not be the same as those on our islands. Countries with truly empowered councils and communities have been shown to produce better outcomes and to be more effective at protecting and improving wellbeing.

“To put it simply – decisions should be made from the community up, not from the top down. In making the voice of local people heard and acted upon across all public services, we can address the huge health, social and financial costs of persistent inequality in this country.

“We have seen throughout the pandemic what can be achieved when local government and communities

come together – now is the time to maintain and build on this. Communities hold the answers to the issues they face, and local government stands as the enabling force empowering communities to drive forward a transformative collaborative programme of social, economic and environmental renewal.”

In addition to their blueprint the second area where Cosla have been dogged and determined in their aspiration to deliver better outcomes for communities is in relation to Green MSP Andy Wightman's European Charter for Local Self Government Bill.

The aim of the Bill is to strengthen the status and standing of local government in Scotland and thereby increase the involvement of local people in shaping the communities in which they live.

Both these things, the blueprint and the Bill provide the opportunity to transform outcomes and empower citizens in all our local communities is one that should be seized with both hands – it is what Campbell would have wanted and it is what Scotland's communities deserve. Maybe a decade on there does remain some hope for his vision, which was ahead of its time, coming to life.

*Leslie Christie is a retired Kent County Councillor who served for 20 years. Is is also a former General Secretary of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants and former member of General Council of TUC.*

## Opinion Matrix: Gloom over US presidential debate

TUESDAY'S US presidential debate has left column writers in the UK despondent.

**Daily Mail**  
“These are gloomy times,” wrote Stephen Glover.

“Our country is painfully divided. Some people love Boris Johnson, others hate him... But, my goodness, having watched the fractious 90-minute debate between Trump and Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden, I rejoiced in our country's more seemly politics.”

Describing Mr Trump as a “malign twister and a cunning braggart”, Mr Glover said Labour's Sir Keir Starmer was like Cicero compared to Mr Biden who “appeared intellectually plodding and bereft of interesting ideas”.

Mr Glover remarked that he could not think of any president or challenger in recent times who “behaved as disgracefully as these two brawlers”.

“Even the liar Richard Nixon – ‘tricky Dicky’ – who left office in disgrace in 1974, was a gentleman by their side,” he wrote.

The “fascinating question”, continued Mr Glover, is “how a great country like America could

have produced two such low-grade candidates for the highest office in the land”.

Mr Glover wondered whether Mr Trump and Mr Biden were representative of modern America.

“It is a dreadful thought, which is hard for any admirer of the United States to accept,” he wrote.

Mr Glover said he felt relief that British leaders “have not yet descended into the gutter occupied by Trump and Biden”.

But he observed that the US “is still supposed to be head of the western alliance, which with the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia and numerous other problems is threatened more than ever”.

He continued: “In the end, America's tragedy is our own, or at any rate we can't be divorced from it. Whether Trump or Biden emerges as victor, America will remain an unhappy and divided country, and a very inadequate leader of the free world.”

**The Guardian**  
David Renton argued that Mr Trump's reference to far-right group the Proud Boys during this week's debate carried uncomfortable echoes of 1930s Germany. “He was asked: ‘Are



Donald Trump and Joe Biden clash at the presidential debate

you willing tonight to condemn white supremacist and militia groups and to say that they need to stand down and not add to the violence?”

“He answered: ‘I would say almost everything I see is from the left wing, not from the right wing.’ He continued: ‘Proud Boys, stand back and stand by.’ Then came the justification: ‘But I'll tell you what, somebody's got to do something about antifa and the left. Because this is not a right-wing problem, this is a left-wing problem.’”

Mr Renton wrote that Hitler's followers in the years before the Second World War were

“responding to the electoral success of the left”, adding: “They knew that in areas of Berlin the Communist vote was as high as 40 per cent. And, in order to break the opposition to Hitler, they went into those districts and beat and killed antifascists... The main purpose of the Proud Boys, in summer 2020, is the same. That's why they were in Portland last weekend, carrying posters denouncing anti-fascists and supporters of Black Lives Matters, and promising to drive the left out of the city.”

He concluded: “In many ways Trump is a weak authoritarian.

After four years in power, Trump has not gone to war. His opponents are at large and not in jail. But when Trump defends armed gangs, he echoes the worst moments in modern history.”

**The Daily Record**  
The paper was also scathing in its assessment of the debate.

“In the US, the message from the White House is anything but muddled,” its leader comment said.

“It is cold, calculated and directly targeting the worst fringes of society.

“Donald Trump effectively sent a direct signal to a group of far-right, heavily armed knuckleheads to ‘stand by’.

“Trump had been challenged to condemn white supremacists during the woeful presidential ‘debate’ with challenger Joe Biden.

“He took the opportunity to reach a new low. If he's looking to stir up trouble, it's working.”

The comment concluded: “Trump has already implied he won't leave the White House quietly and now he's telling a mob to be on hand to keep him there. It's pure poison.”

**JOHN-PAUL HOLDEN**

## Your views online

### Union action

Yesterday, we exclusively revealed that more than one thousand women are preparing to launch legal action against their trade unions over equal pay “negligence”.

“I would ask Jackie Baillie, that wonderful Labour MSP, exactly what her role was in keeping women's wages lower than men's. “Don't forget people, your Unison fees also pay for the Labour Party.”

John Davidson, heraldscotland.com

“Good luck to these women. The negligence is widespread throughout some unions but then they do tend to go hand in hand with the Labour Party and many top union members sit in cosy offices in council buildings.”

David Brown, heraldscotland.com

“As one of those ladies who was badly let down by their union it comes as no surprise that Unison have failed to answer. GMB comments are laughable. What was it you done for your members? Did you think this firm was going to do it for nothing?”

“At the end of the day DM legal were the only people to listen to us and to realise the gross unfairness of it all.

“Whether we win our case or not it brings to the forefront that we were very badly let down by those who had the power and whose job it is to help their members who pay your wages.”

Margaret Duffy, heraldscotland.com

“I think the unions have a cheek to say DM legal have taken £100 and 20 per cent, when they have taken thousands of pounds off low paid women every month for years and done nothing for them.”

Anna McCallum, heraldscotland.com

“A sad reflection on these unions' duty of care to their members.”

Derek Riddick, heraldscotland.com

“It's not only women that have been let down by their unions there are men involved in this equal pay dispute who were told by their unions that the equality was ‘only for women’. I know of office workers who were told it didn't concern them.”

Anne Watson, heraldscotland.com

“I received a small payment against the council a few years ago, the payment was a drop in the ocean compared to what I am owed.

“I was completely misled by the unions at the time and I now want the money that should have been mine in the first place! This has been a very long very stressful and very unnecessary process for myself and my family.”

Michael McAuley, heraldscotland.com

“The unions should hang their heads in shame, they were trusted by so many people and totally disregarded them.”

Margaret Maxwell, heraldscotland.com

“For years women have been told that we are underpaid and then the union runs the claims like a lottery if you're not fast you're last. Well not this time. Thanks to the legal team that believed in us and the women who spoke up on behalf of all of us. Great article.”

Mary O'Boyle, heraldscotland.com

“Shame on you GMB. “DM Legal have only taken £100 from us.

“At least they're going to help us fight for money that we're owed instead of brushing it all a carpet like the unions have done”

Mags Keegans, heraldscotland.com

“As one of the women I received five years of 12 years I was entitled to. I employed and paid my union monthly to represent and protect my rights, who decided to keep us in the dark regarding who was entitled to this payment.. end result seven missing years!”

Janice Graham, heraldscotland.com

“Feel very let down by advice I was continually told that I had no hope in getting any equal pay settlement and to forget about it resulting in me having to seek out a private lawyer to fight my case and still have yet to receive any settlement. I need to thank DM for the continued support regarding this.”

Rose Hamilton, heraldscotland.com

“It's not about equality, it's about capability.”

Natasha PH, Facebook