

THE FABRICATOR

Comment

Editor John Roper
Tel: 07967 666794
Email: john.roper@profinder.eu
Production assistant:
Jocasta Roper

Associate editor Brian Shillibeer

Advertisement sales

Steve Anthony
Tel: 07967 585475
Email: steve.anthony@profinder.eu
Mehreen Haroon-Ali
Tel: 07932 243008
Email: mehreen.haroon@profinder.eu

Advertisement production

Email: john.roper@profinder.eu

Admin:

The Studio, Hillside Avenue,
Elstree & Borehamwood, WD6 1HQ
Tel: 07807 374932
cathryn.ellis@profinder.eu

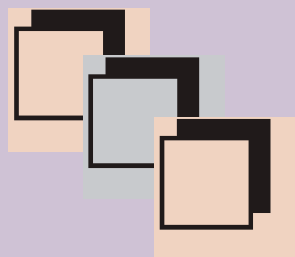
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Before I start to write these comments I always look to see what I wrote for the same month the previous year. Sometimes there is a relevance, most often there is not. Well this time last year Risky's crowd were still in charge and the speculation was all about a coming recession and whether or when the Bank of England would reduce interest rates.

Then there was the Future Homes Standard. All's quiet on that front at the moment but it is still there with the requirement that, in 2025, new built homes will produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than homes built under current building regulations, becoming mandatory. Triple glazing gets a mention as do heat pumps (in the same sentence) with the implication that previous standards are inefficient. A nice bit of Orwellian phraseology, given that triple glazing is more efficient than double, but heat pumps don't come near gas boilers for efficiency.

We are still left with the contradiction of Documents F and L. F: let the fresh air in. L: keep the air out!

There is an acknowledgement that FHS could see additional costs feeding through to house prices. However it also expects homeowners to benefit from energy efficiency reducing the cost of bills. This while OFGEM keeps on raising the price cap, so pushing bills up. Now there is a roundabout you might like to jump off.

And also on the subject of net-zero, consumers seem to be losing interest in electric cars. Again it is a price thing. They are expensive. They are also getting more expensive to run while, although growing, the recharge network is still inadequate.

Now, hydrogen. It could easily replace natural gas in boilers which are much more efficient at heating buildings than heat pumps, which require electricity to operate. It could also, easily, replace petrol in cars. (As with electricity there is a re-supply network problem.) Hydrogen ticks all of the boxes. It is cheap, it is clean, (its by-product is water). But, I guess, for the government there is no money in it and there is heavy investment in electricity.

Another thing last January was the forthcoming general election. It had to happen, it was just a question of when. Risky eventually sprung it on us – well on everyone actually, even his own supporters were surprised by the July date. The outcome was pretty much what we expected. I had suggested in January that whoever took over would need a magic wand or a magic money tree to get us out of the economic mess. It turned out that the new government decided to use a magic sledgehammer instead. The first budget pleased absolutely no one, not even, and perhaps especially, the newly-elected labour MPs.

Don't get me wrong, I still think it was necessary. The economy was, and still is, in a state. Never mind the technical definition of a recession, it has been operating nil or just slightly over, nil growth for years. I believe we haven't yet recovered from the damages of lockdown. It killed a lot of small, micro businesses. Things we don't think about much unless we are involved: exercise classes, for example, the kind of thing you find in church halls all over the country were killed overnight and many still struggle. What has this to do with you? It isn't what they do, it is who they are. One man (person) band operations, the bottom of the commercial food chain. If their income was affected, it would affect the bigger small businesses, and on up until someone is postponing a window refurb. And that affects all of us.

John Roper