

**BBC RADIO ULSTER
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
20th March 2009**

Time now for a bit of blue sky thinking.

As a baseline of stakeholder capacity first we need some holistic benchmarking and then we can get some added value from out of the box thinking.

Irritated yet?

That's the problem with jargon. It's just not 'fit for purpose'.

This week the Local Government Association in England compiled a banned list of the 200 worst uses of jargon.

Blood boiling gobbledegook such as 'predictors of beaconicity' are banned. It's a real 'paradigm shift'.

They said "During the recession, it is vital that we explain to people in plain English how to get access to the services that local government provides with taxpayers' money.

Why have 'coterminous stakeholder engagement' when you could just talk to people."

Of course, if you do some 'horizon scanning' you will realise that in some ways jargon is unavoidable.

Jargon is often a shared language of people who work in the same field. But when jargon is used with people outside that field it cuts us off from understanding.

At worst it can be used deliberately to exclude rather than 'to create a level playing field'.

The underlying message can be 'me clever, you not'. It's about arrogance not understanding.

Have you ever heard anybody complain about 'dumbing down' who didn't think they were cleverer than you?

The writer C.S. Lewis argued that good communication is about using simple language to convey complex ideas.

Of course we can go to the other extreme.

This week one of Northern Ireland's third level education intelligentsia being interviewed about the annual St Patrick's Day student riot in the Holylands said:

"Well there is a lot of mess like but what can ye do it's only one night of the year and that there ye enjoy yerself"

Of course the one thing this has in common with unrepentant jargonese is the underlying arrogance.

St Paul wrote 'Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement'.

Or as my late father often put it ' You're better than no one and no one is better than you'. No jargon there.

Of course you may disagree with me.

If so I celebrate the diversity of this contestability and accept that you will neither synergise nor mainstream these improvement levers.

Tony Macaulay