



PROJECT ROME

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Editorial

Yorkshire has its first directly elected Metro Mayor. Barnsley Labour MP, Dan Jarvis, was elected as Mayor of the Sheffield City Region on 3rd May, winning 67% of the vote in the second-round run-off against his Conservative opponent.

Labour strategists had been expecting a first round win for Jarvis, but he narrowly failed to get the necessary 50% of the vote on the first round. The Conservatives were so convinced that Jarvis would win on the first round that they allowed their candidate to go to Japan on a business trip rather than attending the count.

Had Jarvis won on the first ballot he would have had time to hot-foot it to Ilkley in West Yorkshire where he had been invited to present the prizes to the winners of the second stage of the Tour de Yorkshire cycling race. He had been invited by Sir Gary Verity, Chief Executive of Welcome to Yorkshire, and someone long-rumoured to harbour his

own ambitions of becoming the first Mayor of Yorkshire. Senior Conservatives in the county still haven't given up the hope of persuading Sir Gary to be their candidate in any future Yorkshire-wide election, but an independent run has not been ruled out. A friend of Sir Gary told Northern Agenda, "Gary likes to keep his options open, but in the meantime he's a big fan of Dan Jarvis."

Two days after his official inauguration the new Mayor was due to address the annual dinner of the South Yorkshire CBI. It was seen as a chance to set out his vision for South Yorkshire, and the longer-term economic rationale for a One Yorkshire deal, to an often sceptical South Yorkshire business community fearful of a Leeds dominated Yorkshire.

In the end Jarvis failed to turn up, instead sending his press officer to tell the incredulous organisers that he was, "delayed in Westminster." One former Labour MP, who was a guest at the dinner told Northern



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- Former Labour MP



Dan Jarvis MP



Sir Gary Verity

Agenda, "It was a spectacular own goal. Two days in and a captive business audience waiting to hear about his vision for Yorkshire, and he sends his press guy to give his apologies. People were not impressed." Jarvis has, controversially, decided not to give up his Parliamentary seat (unlike fellow Metro Mayors Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram) but has argued that he can do both jobs and use his platform in Westminster to argue the case for a wider Yorkshire deal.





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- Labour Veteran

But before he can start thinking about 2020 and beyond he needs to get the four warring local authority leaders in South Yorkshire to come together to agree a devolution deal with government. As it currently stands Jarvis is a Mayor with few powers and no budget. It will take all of his powers of persuasion and diplomacy to get that agreement in place.

Across the Pennines his old friend Andy Burnham could probably give him a few lessons on the difficulty of delivering election pledges in the newly devolved administrations. One year on from his sweeping election victory Burnham has admitted to being frustrated about the slow pace of delivery on his key pledges on transport, homelessness and housing.

His lack of local government experience, identified by some of his more experienced supporters as a potential Achilles heel, is proving to be just that. He has found dealing with the myriad public-sector bureaucracies and administrations difficult to navigate and has publicly admitted that his key election pledges may be more difficult to deliver than he imagined. A former parliamentary colleague of Burnham's isn't surprised at his

public admission of frustration. "Andy was a Secretary of State, but local government is a whole new ball game. As a cabinet minister you have a whole civil service ready to do your bidding - in theory at least - but as Mayor he has a small core team of advisers up against dozens of public sector bodies, each with their own agendas, and each led by experienced grey beards with their own priorities."

Transport, which he announced at the end of 2017 would be his new Number One priority, has proved to be particularly frustrating for the new Mayor. Major problems with Metrolink tram network and the mainline train network make up much of his postbag and Twitter feed, but it is his plans for the region's bus network that appear to be causing him most frustration.

Originally Burnham said he would publish his detailed plans for franchising the bus network by the end of 2018, but he has admitted that that target may not be possible; citing problems accessing data from one of the bus operators, potential legal action, and a dispute with colleges over his plans for free bus passes for 16-18 year olds.

"You have to understand how the bureaucracies overlap, how the whole tangled web works, and who the real key players are. You can't just issue edicts and expect everyone to fall in line," the Labour veteran told Northern Agenda.

Meanwhile, former Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Prescott, claimed that a lack of devolution in Yorkshire has meant that the Northern Powerhouse has made Manchester, "the London of the North." With Mayor Burnham fond of saying of London that it is not "institutionally set up to deliver for the North", the two of them may be on to something.