

Leon co-founder Henry Dimbleby quits as Government's food tsar

The co-founder of Leon has quit as the Government's food tsar after five years in the role.

Henry Dimbleby resigned his post at the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs last week.

Speaking to the Sunday Times, the businessman said the Conservatives were refusing to impose restrictions on the junk food industry due to an obsession with "ultra-free-market ideology".

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He added: "There is a concern that dealing with these issues could be seen to be 'nanny state' and plays badly in the 'red wall' constituencies.

"That isn't the case, actually, but there is concern that we need to be celebrating the great British diets of fish and chips and curry and beer and that junk food is somehow patriotic."

Mr Dimbleby sold his Leon chain to the billionaire Issa brothers in a £100m deal in [April 2021](#).

He has since gone on [to join a group](#) that runs upmarket service stations.

His resignation comes after he published the National Food Strategy in 2021 which called for free school meals for all Universal Credit households and recommended a 'snack tax' on foods high in sugar and salt to encourage manufacturers to

make foods more healthy.

But Boris Johnson ditched most of the recommendations when his Government published a white paper on food the following year.

Plans to outlaw buy one get one free deals on unhealthy snacks have been delayed to October amid cost of living pressures.

A ban on junk food ads pre-9pm was due to come into force in January but this has also been kicked down the road.

Mr Dimbleby said: "This Government is going backwards. After Boris Johnson's hospitalisation [with Covid-19 in 2020], they were going to restrict advertising of junk food to children. They're not going to do that. They're just not tackling it."

He warned that the country was storing up huge problems for the NHS if it fails to confront obesity, which is left grappling with the impact of conditions caused by bad diet.

Mr Dimbleby said: "Winston Churchill talked about the greatest asset a nation can have is the health of its people. He understood that.

"Andy Haldane, the former chief economist of the Bank of England, recently said the biggest problem we have in terms of productivity in this country is illness, and that our workforce is not fit.

"Yet, somehow, this new version of the Tory party thinks that those aren't things it should be getting involved in, and it's just insane. It doesn't make any sense."

A spokesman for the Department of Health and Social Care said: "We take tackling obesity seriously and we will continue to work closely with industry to make it easier for people to make healthier choices."

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