Some good news from Whitehall: the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has retaken the lead in Identity. Not control nor command, just the lead.

Once upon a time, about 2008, when the Government gateway was quietly chugging along, DWP was actively engaged in a UK Business Identity management system (BIdMs) and establishing European standards in STORK (Secure idenTity acrOss euRope, linKed (sic)). An already out-of-date single technological solution to vaguely defined problems was coming from the Identity and Passport Service in the shape of the ID card and associated overburdened and insecurable database. A budget cut by Gordon Brown resulted in a strict application of Thatcher-style subsidiarity; Europe is not part of DWP's priorities.

The first action of the coalition government was, as promised, to ditch the ID card. DWP, for all its faults, does have experience with interaction with the public but also a wide range of messy real-life cases, and it works with payments at scale (currently £200Billion or an average of about £10,000 per year for 20 Million people, so better if not offering nursery slopes for fraudsters). It put out a tender for £250M for an online system for ID for claimants so as to be ready for Universal Credit in 2013. The Cabinet Office, with zero experience of dealing with the public (at scale or otherwise), decreed that it (in collaboration with industry) would provide a common agile solution for central and local government as well as the private sector, for a mere £25M+VAT. DWP could see that this wasn't going to work for most of their 'customers' and most of their 'services', so had to play along with a fragile exemplar (f***ing rotten agile) whilst secretly trying to get something to work, not least with people using low-tech ordinary telephones. Gateway chugged along doing the heavy lifting for HMRC and others. But the devolved services of the devolved government could safely go on its own way. The faceless and monolithic gov.uk suppressed 'apps' but rolled out ToysRUs fonts with consistently over-simplified information, sometimes accused of focussing website design, but even then failing to adopt standard approaches to multi-lingual presentation from last century.
Verify was widely seen as the only game in town, and valiant efforts made both to get it to work and to side-line doubters as trolls rather than as people with understanding of the fundamental detail. All the genuinely independent providers pulled out; it was no gravy train, indeed no return on investment as no working commercial model was ever found. After 20 or so adverse reviews and reports it was put into zombie mode for an extended time to give time for one.login to be catapulted from a really useful consistent personalisation initiative (with nothing to do with ID) into a rescue package for (only) central government applications, yet that was not ready in time.

But now DWP has a Dynamic Trust Hub; it will help with transition and with 'multi-channel interaction'. Presumably it will somehow not become a national single point of repeated failure (like passport e-gates). Using the (so-called) one.login is included, and the separate NHS.login not excluded. The scale of the data problems are being acknowledged (125M accounts for 70M population, which is not at all the same as Estonia's 5M for 5M.)
Fresh faces at the Cabinet Office still use exclusive terminology like 'citizen' and reassure us that one.login offers re-usable ID for the first time. Government Gateway (already working well when the CO deputy directors were in primary school) trundles on; the contracts to close it down were premature.
HMLR will have a big bill when the qualified certificates they enthuse about are found by the (common law) courts not to have the properties widely claimed for them. A thousand flowers are blooming around DSIT's attribute framework, almost all helping the service provider with compliance not the individual (even if it's generally presented as such, obscuring the costs).

The tale of the failed collaboration between banks and HMG on ID going back to the 90s is even sadder, but surely it is time for the payments industry in the UK (and the US) to come together to offer something that works for them, for local government, and for their (literal, i.e. paying) customers?