

The BRISTOLIAN

"Smiter of the High and Mighty"

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'THREATS' OVER DOCKS DEATH

Rush to silence whistleblowers over 'accidental death of a cyclist' that could have been avoided

Bristol City Council's new legal boss Liam 'Malfoy' Nevin is trying to wave his magic wand and put an invisibility cloak of secrecy over events leading up to the death of cyclist Sean Phillips, who plunged into the city docks outside the M Shed museum in early March.

Last year the council's Docks Office suggested putting railings up at this very site - only to be **VOCIFEROUSLY OVERRULED** by a gaggle of the city's great and good. Among objectors to improved safety were (of course) His Royal Gorgeousness St George of Bristol; the director of the ss Great Britain Trust, Matthew Tanner; skipper of the Matthew, Rob Salvidge; and the local Tories' terminal buffoon, Richard 'Bunter' Eddy, calling the proposal "excessive nannying".

Alas, they were all wrong - and it took the unfortunate death of Mr Phillips to prove it. Now

council bosses and their chief solicitor Malfoy are working overtime to cover arse. Malfoy has already **ROUNDLY REJECTED** a Freedom of Information request asking for the documents that informed the decision to not put up railings on the site, claiming the release of this information might prejudice the forthcoming Coroner's Inquest into the death. A claim described by one



Nevin: trying to magic away inconvenient truths

health and safety lawyer we spoke to as "bollocks".

Meanwhile, just a few weeks back a senior council manager appeared at a staff meeting at the Docks Office and **THREATENED STAFF**. They were told to shut up and say absolutely nothing to anybody about the case or they may be dismissed. Because the best way to ensure the safety of the public is to gag and sack honest, competent public service workers, isn't it?

Docks staff should be very wary, and should perhaps brush up on whistleblowing law. Malfoy and his management gang are clearly dabbling in the dark arts and creating a cover-up. The intention of which will be to push the blame as far down the line as they can and well away from this city's illustrious 'leaders'.

And who's furthest down the line? Why, the gagged staff at the council's Docks Office of course!

SELF-POLICING ACADEMY IN RACISM ROW

'No institutional racism here' says institution - case closed...

Over in Redfield is City Academy, a secondary school for 1,100 youngsters and one of the largest employers in East Bristol. Like the ward in which it sits, Easton - where up to 40% of residents are from Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds - it's a diverse environment, both across the student body and in its staff.

So you would think that when a black worker complained of **INSTITUTIONAL RACISM**, a full and proper investigation would ensue - to weed out any racists, to ensure a better environment for pupils and adults alike, and to reassure local people that such prejudice would not be tolerated in the community's school.

Well, think again. A staff member directly affected by what they considered racism wrote to colleagues asking them to come forward if they had any similar experience at the Academy. Within minutes an email came down from the office of Gill Kelly, the Executive Principal. The message was clear: 'there is no institutional racism at City Academy', **END OF DISCUSSION**. So concluded the fastest investigation in living

memory - the (white) headteacher had spoken, and so no further action was needed.

Meanwhile, Kelly was also undertaking a major restructuring, **MAKING MANY STAFF REDUNDANT** thanks to budget cuts so deep the school's ability to teach is threatened. Some affected had served the school for twenty years, going back to when it was state funded in the days before the One World Learning Trust was given responsibility to run it in 2003.

So staff decided to have a send-off for their 'downsized' colleagues, with nibbles in the school canteen after students had departed for the day. 'Not on your nelly,' said Kelly, who cancelled the party, just in case anyone mentioned the topics of racism or speedy investigations. And then she phoned in sick. She may well have been sick, but not as sick as the staff are with her.

The employees being made redundant were then individually 'helped' off the premises in an attempt to segregate them from other staff members. What a way to treat people after years of service! Needless to say, they all met down the



Definitely no whitewash here - the Head said so...

boozer anyway for a good chinwag...

Of course, the way senior management at City treats staff is no surprise to many workers, not least to those from nearby Bannerman Road primary, which 'federated' with the Academy last year in what was meant to be a partnership of equals. However, once the signatures were dry, the original agreement was **IGNORED**, and Kelly installed herself as line manager of Bannerman Road's Ofsted-commended headteacher Paula Shore. And guess what? Shore is, yes, black.

Just because you are an academy, and answerable to nobody but your own board of directors, does not mean you can ignore the issue of institutional racism, or concerns of BME workers in our school.

So conduct a proper investigation, you bastards!

Visit **TheBRISTOLIAN.net** for the latest news!

BRISTOLIANBITES

TOTAL GAG & BALLS-UP

A political row has broken out after the last *Bristolian* exposed Bristol City Council for signing off gagging orders to staff at the rate of **TWO A MONTH**.

Within just days of the *Bristolian* hitting the streets, Bristol North West's Tory MP 'Sugar Ray' Charlotte Leslie was calling for Bristol City Council to implement an immediate ban on these orders due to their **CORROSIVE EFFECT** on open and honest government.

Sugar Ray Charlotte's efforts eventually elicited a bizarre response from the Shitty Hall's West Wing-obsessed public schoolboy twit of a PR boss Peter 'Claudia Jean' Holt, who claimed Bristol City Council "has used 54 compromise agreements in the last five years," adding that they "are only ever used in exceptional circumstances".

Going by Claudia Jean's figures that's a rate of just one month... So that's okay, then. Except it's not - because it's **BULLSHIT**. According to information provided by Bristol City Council in 2011, they signed off 46 of these orders in 2008/09 alone, and a further 54 in 2009/10 - that's one hundred gagging orders in just two of the last five years! No figures are yet available for the years 2010 - 2013 but on present evidence it looks like Claudia Jean's misreported the numbers of these orders by a factor of about four...

It's also interesting to note that there was a **MASSIVE SPIKE** in the use of these gagging orders in 2008 when Bradford Sun Queen Jan Ormondroyd arrived in Bristol as Chief Executive. In the year immediately before she arrived - 2006/07 - Bristol City Council signed off none. Within two years of her arrival, staff were being legally gagged at the rate of one a week.

So not only did she introduce a bloated, underperforming management structure and enormous pay hikes for the chosen few, but she proactively gagged any staff who attempted to criticise her mess. And remember: this is the management that gave us the hated BRT, the loathed green spaces strategy, and attempted to destroy the Bristol and Bath Railway Path - all whilst promoting utter nonsense like promising to spend £50m on hosting the 2018 World Cup - a kamikaze pledge that cost Bristol £363,000 with nil return.

So just how many people tried to sound the alarm and got gagged?

Get in touch if you were one of the ones silenced...

RUBBISH CONTRACTS

Word reaches us that the ongoing problems with May Gurney, the waste management company in 2011 awarded a massive seven year **£94 MILLION CONTRACT** for kerbside recycling collections across the city, will not be sorted out any time soon.

Company bosses have told senior council officers that if they exercise their right to place financial penalties on May Gurney for its continued failure to meet agreed collection targets, then it could go bankrupt.

So even as the waste builds up on our streets because MG won't employ enough people to get the job done properly, the Council does nothing, because no one wants to risk calling the bluff of a bunch of trash barons - who are about to be quids in thanks to a buy-out.

So that's what the smell is - a bunch of cowards pissing their pants because of stinking profiteers!

NO REFUNDS!

Council holds onto cash thanks to major problems with new 'cost cutting' system



When is a theft not a theft? As many people across the city are discovering, in Bristol it's when the council takes more money than it should from overstretching families, and doesn't give it back.

The Bristolian has uncovered a massive ongoing - and possibly unlawful - scandal in which Bristol City Council **REFUSES TO REFUND** overpayments of any kind in spite of its legal obligations, thanks to chaos caused by a new computer finance system. Attempts to obtain a refund for overcharged Council Tax, allotment fees, nursery charges or other services have been routinely rebuffed, leaving many unable to settle other essential bills, pay rent or even buy food.

Blaming a software changeover - for which most workers have received **NO PROPER TRAINING** and have only just been issued manuals - the council refuses to say how long people will have to wait until they get their wrongfully-withheld money back.

It is understood that the council is currently holding onto refunds owed to dozens, if not hundreds, of Bristolians.

Sources suggest that staff have been ordered to stonewall demands for immediate refunds, to refuse to give out names, telephone numbers or email addresses for supervisors or managers, and to offer misleading and contradictory information - anything to buy time and avoid the inevitable shitstorm of complaints and rolling heads.

With a **CLOAK OF SECRECY** descending over the council's now seriously understaffed phonebanks, and a culture of contempt for ordinary Bristolians trickling down from the upper reaches of Shitty Hall, it is not entirely clear why this is happening.

However, insiders have pointed *The Bristolian* towards a contract awarded by BCC to bring together its Finance, Human Resources and Asset Management into a single 'integrated Back Office System'. The five year project was won by outsourcing specialists Agilisys ("one of the UK's most innovative IT and business services providers"), who provided the lowest tender - a snip at a mere £40 million.

And the magical, problem-solving, cost-cutting, budget-saving gizmo in question that's costing every man, woman and child in the city around £95 each? That would be the bells-and-whistles Agresso Business World

Local Government Platform from Unit4. The impressive-sounding new toy - being rolled out by the council's veteran Finance & Procurement Manager **RUSSELL 'OH MY' DARLING** under the supervision of Corporate Finance supremo **GRAHAM 'THANK FUCK IT'S' FRIDAY** - is meant to bring everything together into one easy-to-use package.

Unfortunately, it seems to be a somewhat sticky-fingered piece of software, if the experiences of the out-of-pocket Bristolians we have spoken to are anything to go by.

What lengths Shitty Hall will go to to silence whistleblowers amongst its hard-pressed frontline staff or unhappy members of the public remains to be seen.

What does seem certain is that no one upstream of a junior council manager will be held to account - and definitely nothing will stand in the way of a juicy £40 million gravy train.

++ STOP PRESS ++
"BRISTOLIAN GOT MY MONEY BACK!"

A young mum in Easton has **THANKED** your super, soaraway *Bristolian* for its help in getting a £500 nursery fee overpayment refunded by the council - after more than a month of being fobbed off with excuses.

"I spent weeks chasing this up on my own, being told there was nothing that could be done," she said. "Yet having asked *The Bristolian* who in the council to contact, it took only hours to sort out."

After getting in touch with the city's premier scandal sheet for advice, the mother-of-one then emailed senior managers across Bristol City Council as well as her local councillors, using the magic words "misfeasance in public office" and threatening to go to the papers.

She quickly received the personal assurance of Finance Director Peter Robinson that the money she was owed would be returned to her straight away - and **MIRACULOUSLY** it was.

"It really made life difficult as I have to stick to a tight budget just to make ends meet," the Eastonian told us. "I just wonder how many other people out there are in the same boat as I was, and why this mess happened in the first place."

B.R.T: AN OMNIBUS SHAMBLES

Bridge row as transport scheme fiasco trundles on - George's Stalingrad?

Another week, another embarrassing public row about BRT, the crappy 'super bus' system nobody wants but nobody seems able to stop.

In March Gorgeous George found himself engaged in a **WAR OF WORDS** with North Somerset councillors Elfan Ap Rees and Nigel Ashton over their glorified FirstBus service. They both criticised the mayor for being in Cannes (see *The Bristolian* #4.2) rather than at a meeting with them explaining his new policy of rerouting this supposed transit system. Unimpressed, the two carrot-crunching councillors issued a press release stating the BRT plan was going ahead in its original form: through Bristol Docks, over Prince Street Bridge, and into the Centre.

George responded by publicly calling Rees and Ashton "silly" and firmly stating BRT would not be going over Prince Street Bridge.

Then everything went very quiet for a few

weeks. But now George's own underling, Head of Special Projects and consummate time-serving Bristol City Council underachiever, Alun Owen, has piped up to councillors and the press saying - wait for it - that buses will be routed over



Architect, mayor, bus boss - renaissance man George

George's beloved Prince Street Bridge!

"Oh no they won't," replies Dame George in true pantomime style. But what on earth is going on here? Who's in charge - unelected bureaucrat Owen or elected mayor George? And why is a local government officer openly contradicting his elected boss and **NONCHALANTLY CHANGING** agreed policy via the press?

This is turning into a huge debacle for George. He was elected on a platform of scrapping the BRT plans - yet U-turned on this within days of being elected, announcing instead he would reroute the system to avoid the Docks and Prince Street Bridge (and so not upset his Redcliffe heritage mafia chums and Harbourside business associates). Now even that plan is being publicly undermined by his own employees.

It's as though the mayor can't even manage his own staff - let alone a whole bloody city!

HORSEWORLD BOSS RIDES CHARITY INTO THE GROUND

Rehoming centre heading for knacker's yard?

Trouble is brewing at the upper paddock of the Whitchurch-based animal rescue charity HorseWorld, where Managing Director Mark 'Not That One' Owen has been making some **CURIOUS FINANCIAL DECISIONS**.

In recent months Owen has been galloping around pleading with politicians and planners for the green light to build a new visitor attraction in the Green Belt, flying in the face of local people in Stockwood and Whitchurch unhappy at this enormous intrusion into protected land.

Pleading the charity's poverty has been Owen's strongest card. He's using the massive losses built up since he took over in 2008 (half a million pounds lost each year, with rumours the latest financial figures will show HorseWorld is nearly **ONE MILLION QUID** in the red) as the main reason why he needs to sell charity land to build houses and a new aircraft hangar-sized horse performance attraction. The way he sells it is that income from this will be the only way to overcome the enormous deficit - which, of course, was built up whilst he's been in charge.

And it's not just half-witted councillors or second-string planning officers he's busy chatting up: Owen is also noted for his habit of hiring expensive consultants - splashing out **£525 A DAY** on one to advise the charity on, err, fundraising.

Another consultant's weekly fee of £750 seems cheap by comparison - till you consider they were brought in to run a fundraising auction that **LOST THOUSANDS**.

Meanwhile, as Owen schmoozes his way round the city's decision-makers wearing his best long face and begging for special consideration, he somehow forgets to mention that his allegedly hard-pressed charity has just given him the keys to a brand-new, **£28,000 SHINY BLACK AUDI**.

Cars are a recurring theme for Owen. When first appointed to the job he made a curious decision to promote himself in *The Independent On Sunday's* finance pages - trumpeting how he'd downgraded from a Porsche (to a mere Land Rover Discovery).

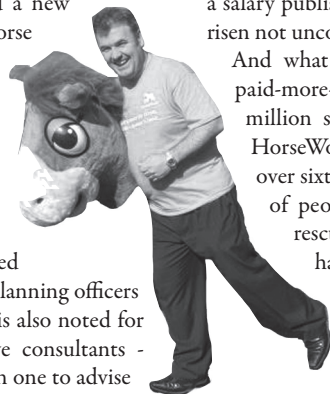
He thought this would make him some sort of people's champion, but predictably the stunt spectacularly backfired, hacking off dozens of the charity's staff, many of whom were (and are) surviving on minimum wage.

Owen started at HorseWorld five years ago on a salary published as £60k - a figure that's since risen not uncomfortably.

And what do charity donors get for their paid-more-than-an-MP MD? Well over £2.5 million shipped, which has haemorrhaged HorseWorld's reserves, carefully built up over sixty years from legacies and donations of people who love the idea of a horse rescue charity - and now shrunk by over half in just five years.

Meanwhile, while his new car's engine purrs, HorseWorld staff complain they are forbidden by Owen - for financial reasons, of course - from doing the very work they're employed to do: rescuing animals in need. That costs money, of course. Something that HorseWorld pleads it has none of.

Vroom, vroom.



BRISTOLIAN BITES

NOT A PENNY FOR GUY

While Mayor Redpants costs our cuts-stricken city a fortune with his endless European jaunts, one of his Cabinet colleagues has been selflessly saving us a few quid in travel expenses. Step forward low-key, low-impact Lib Dem 'Housing Miniature' Councillor Guy Poultney.

Poultney was recently invited to Brussels to make some sort of speech at a conference - something he gleefully agreed to. However, when Shitty Hall officials carefully explained he couldn't claim for his girlfriend's costs on expenses, Poultney withdrew his acceptance sharpish and decided instead to stay at home eating bowls of Shreddies and watching reruns of *Come Dine With Me* in his pyjamas.

Who says our councillors use all-expenses paid trips as cheap holidays?

REDPANTS PEGS POUND

Much pant-wetting and excitement at the offices of our new local currency, the Bristol Pound, recently.

A breathless press release explained they now had £100,000 on deposit from people wanting to use the currency - that's equivalent to about 0.001 per cent of the city's economy.

However, what they failed to point out was that over 20 per cent of these deposits came from a single person. Step forward Mayor Gorgeous, who has his mayoral salary - which after all is little more than pocket money to the independently wealthy toff - deposited in Bristol Pounds every month.

Sterling work, George!

The BRISTOLIAN

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TROUGH OVERSEAS AGAIN!

Mayor's expensive Euro jaunt habit exposed

Following last issue's story on His Royal Redness' conference-hopping jaunts around Europe, it has emerged that Mayor George Ferguson cost local people a whopping £126,000 on one trip alone!

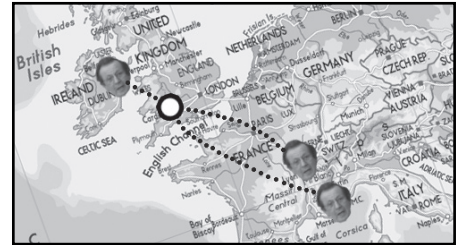
Information obtained by *The Bristolian* details how independently wealthy Fergo took a **TWENTY-STRONG ENTOURAGE** with him on his recent junket to Cannes, further fuelled by nearly £35,000-worth of 'business sponsorship' taking the total cost up to an astounding £161,000.

With £20k contributed directly by Bristol City and South Gloucestershire councils, the balance - just shy of £107,000 - was funnelled through various BCC front organisations. These include 'Invest in Bristol' and 'Bath and the Local Enterprise Partnership', both of which - entirely by coincidence - have Bristol City Council addresses. So, fellow Bristolian, you footed the bill! Mayor Gorgeous has already rebuffed any

criticism of this fatuous trip and its cost as "trivial" - because obviously one hundred low income households' yearly council tax payments are mere "trivia" to George and his wealthy eurotrash business pals. And if you're wondering why the *Evening*, sorry, *Bristol Post* has been so quiet about this executive troughing farce, you might be interested to hear that its editor Mike Norton also went along for the ride!

Your favourite super sleuthing scandal sheet can also reveal that Mayor George gallivanted off on another Euro-trip last month. With at least one person from Bristol Green Capital, he popped to Switzerland for three days where they **POLISHED THEIR BACKSIDES** on plush conference seats for €540 a throw at Geneva's Conference on Sustainable Towns and Cities.

The conference also included an invite-only trip to the opera - Puccini's three hour bore-fest, *Madama Butterfly*, performed by the Houston



Less a compulsion, more a fast-travelling epidemic!

Grand Opera - though it's not clear whether George attended this or just settled for the Fondue Gala Dinner, which provided the opportunity "to mingle in an informal setting and discuss the issues of the day." Like, er, Europe-wide austerity measures!

George wails that he was there "creating jobs", which tells us how just far departed from reality he now is, seeing as he's not created any jobs at all - but actually cut 300 jobs in his last budget.

We think the jetlag from all this travelling abroad at our expense might finally be taking its toll - can you get deep vein thrombosis of the brain?



MONDAY: Finally saw George for our 10 o'clock at 11.30am when he finally arrived for work, apologising as he'd been up late with Zoe list-ticking again. They seem to have so many lists and so much to tick!

But at last I finally got to lay out to George the Bristol Green Party's ideas for the new arena. He appeared very excited by our proposals for an all-wooden structure with a thatched roof powered by wind. Although he did have some reservations, such as what would happen when there's no wind to power the amplifiers.

The solution is simple but brilliant. Top bands from around the world would simply have to do acoustic sets. What better way to put Bristol on the map than as the international home of the impromptu acoustic gig? "Imagine," I said to George, "Take That with just Gary on piano, Robbie playing a bit of acoustic guitar and Jason, Mark and Howard doing the harmonies. That's not something you see every day."

"I guess not," said George, who then went very quiet, overwhelmed by the groundbreaking consequences. He brightened up considerably

when I pointed out that there were also some interesting sustainable employment spin-offs from our plan such as the potential for the reintroduction of the artisan craft of thatching to Britain with Bristol as its epicentre.

Before I left I also put in a special request from the younger members of the Green Party who really want to see the exciting folk-rock act Mumford And Sons do the honours at the grand opening of the arena. George, who is a big fan, was thrilled at the suggestion.

I know this is going to come as a big upset to some of our older Bristol Green Party members who had been holding out for a reformed Lindisfarne to appear, but hey fellas! You got to move with the times.

It's forward not back at George's City Hall!!

TUESDAY: A fantastic day. Green Party leader Natalie Bennett visited Bristol today to support our local election campaign. She was superb. OK, as a former Guardian journalist she might be prone to making embarrassing spelling errors (but who isn't?) and utterly clueless about foreign policy, but she'll happily sympathise for hours with whingeing school teachers and moaning social workers.

Natalie was especially keen to get our "total opposition to the cuts" message across and she dealt with any challenges supremely well. When asked why if we were totally opposed to cuts did we vote for them in Bristol she gave the questioner a funny little smile and then rushed off to find a school teacher to moan at her. What a professional.

We all know how to say one thing at election time and do another at George's City Hall!

WEDNESDAY: Attended a 'Keep Sundays Special' Project Meeting at City Hall.

Exciting times seeing George's plan to create a traffic-free environment on Sundays come to fruition thanks to a crack council officer team. We're now at the detail and delivery phase and it's great to see a proper 'one council' approach in action. Mr Mann the traffic boss has agreed to shut three roads at a cost of just £190,000, which is a great deal. Mr Holt, Head of Press and Marketing, knows a face painter and someone who knows someone who knows a unicyclist. George's friend in Southville will make 100 yards of cloth bunting for us, and Mr Morris, the Markets Manager, says he's got eight artisan cake stalls lined up already - and even promised to personally come in every Sunday to collect the stall fees (cash only please!) himself. What commitment.

We're still on the lookout for jugglers and Morris Dancers so give us a shout if you can help.

We love dancing with bells on our toes at George's City Hall!

FRIDAY: Back at work after yesterday's special social media course (George's idea) after that minor thing the other day when I was accidentally racist. And it worked! No major diplomatic incidents, plus Mr Holt taught me how to write 'BOOBLESS' on a calculator.

It's a digital wonderland, George's City Hall!