

Terrorism Act used to 'harass'

Bedfordshire Police has denied it is using the Terrorism Act 2000 to gather information about activists who challenge state interests or the behaviour of corporations.

Corporate Watch (CW) is a not-for-profit collective of journalists founded to research the social and environmental impact of corporate power. It was formed in 1996.

CW researchers Therezia Cooper and Tom Anderson* have been stopped and questioned under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 on five occasions at UK airports while travelling to Egypt and returning from research trips to Palestine.

The organisation states that it is "documenting companies profiting from the Israeli occupation as part of aiding the global boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israeli apartheid, occupation and militarism".

Released without charge

On 5 February, Cooper was held for two hours of questioning at Luton Airport by Bedfordshire Police, which later undertook the same exercise with Anderson. Both were released without charge. Other locations where CW researchers have been stopped include Gatwick Airport and the port of Dover.

Schedule 7 allows travellers to be questioned to find out if they might be terrorists. Interviewees have no right to remain silent, cannot access legal advice and can be detained for up to nine hours. In 2012/13, 61,145 people were examined under Schedule 7 and 2,277 were stopped for over an hour.

In August, David Miranda, the partner of Glenn Greenwald, the former Guardian journalist who first revealed America and Britain's mass surveillance programmes, was held for five minutes short of nine hours.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill currently being discussed in Parliament will reduce the time a person can be



David Miranda, leaving Heathrow after his detention. Photo: Joao Laet/PA

detained without charge under Schedule 7 to six hours.

Anderson was stopped for around an hour at Luton Airport. He claims he was questioned about a wide range of anti-capitalist activities he is involved in, including the International Solidarity Movement, which supports Palestinian non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation. Police were particularly keen to know why the groups he is involved with do not inform the authorities in advance of their protest activities.

"Unrelated to terrorism"

On the conclusion of the interview, Anderson was informed that he had been stopped under Section 7 because the police wanted to find out if he was involved in violence or terrorism. Anderson replied: "Your questions are unrelated to terrorism and I don't believe that is your real interest."

Anderson said: "Schedule 7 helps the police to build up profiles on activists so they can undermine political movements. The questions were unrelated to rooting out terrorism and the movements they were interested in have never been involved in such activities. They do, however, pose a threat to state interests and the profits of

private companies. The police's role is to protect the powerful against public discontent.

Grassroots campaigns

"CW is not surprised at the harassment, especially following the success of some of our grassroots campaigns such as the one against G4S, which has challenged the world's largest security company's ability to gain further contracts."

Anderson has contacted his MP, Caroline Lucas of the Green Party. She has provided him with a letter to be given to the police if he is again stopped under Schedule 7 when visiting Palestine. The letter outlines the purpose of Anderson's visit and requests that the police do not stop him or confiscate his research equipment.

A spokesperson for Bedfordshire Police said it couldn't discuss individual cases but officers had always used it in a "lawful and proportionate manner".

"If someone believes they have been detained improperly they have the right to contact our Professional Standards Department or the Independent Police Complaints Commission to raise their concerns," the spokesperson said.

* names have been changed

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

PARK APPROVED

Plans have been approved by the transport secretary for the building of a renewable energy park on the Humber estuary. The Able Marine Energy Park will cost £450 million to build, and Able UK says it will generate up to 4,000 jobs. The decision comes after organisations such as the RSBP had protested about the destruction of mudflats in a special protection area. The transport secretary Patrick McCloughlin said the impact on the environment could be moderated.



LUNG CANCER TEST

Scientists at Huddersfield University are working on creating a breathalyser that can detect lung cancer before the major symptoms appear, giving the patient a better chance of recovery. The research will be led by Dr Rachel Airley, pictured, right, with cancer pharmacist and PhD researcher Emer Sheridan. Over three years, the scientists will research the "biomarker signature" of the cancer in the breath. Once developed, the device will be used by pharmacists.

PAPERS ONLINE

Libraries in Calderdale have digitised editions of the Halifax Weekly Courier between 1914 and 1918 on their Weaver to Web site, ahead of the 100-year anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. The libraries were "keen to bring the resource to a wider audience", with the Courier exemplifying the huge social and political upheaval of this period. Stories include a letter from Private H Newton to an unknown little girl named Cissie. See <http://bit.ly/19fxWAQ>.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

for West Leeds elderly people after years of fundraising

days,
be encouraged

providing a bigger platform for
male violence against women,
and the issue was thrown into

New regional political party selects first candidate for general election

A former Kirklees Labour councillor has become the first candidate at the 2015 general election for Yorkshire First, a new party that campaigns for devolution to the region.

Paul Salveson represented the Colcar ward in the Colne Valley constituency until stepping down last year, and recently left the Labour Party.

He will now try to unseat Colne Valley's Conservative MP Jason McCartney in next year's general election.

Yorkshire First says that with a population bigger than Scotland the time is ripe for a Yorkshire parliament similar to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh National Assembly and the London Assembly.

"social
justice and
equality."

Salveson



Yorkshire First was launched ahead of the 2014 European election, when it gained 1.5 per cent of total votes. It intends standing in half of the Yorkshire and Humber seats in 2015.

It believes that if Yorkshire has greater control over its own resources this will lead to better decision making on economic affairs and generate additional finance for social spending.

Salveson, a visiting professor

in transport at Huddersfield University, left Labour because it is "too centralised and has failed to address the regional devolution question".

Salveson hopes to build on Colne Valley's history of radicalism, in which it elected independent socialist Victor Grayson and radical Liberal Richard Wainwright as MPs.

Yorkshire First candidates include former Labour, Conservative and Lib Dem members. They must abide by the Bell Principles formulated by the former independent MP Martin Bell. These demand that politicians behave to the highest

of standards and are guided by "considered evidence, our real world experience and expertise, our constituencies and consciences".

Might a lack of a clear set of policies lead to some its candidates putting forward reactionary ideas?

Not according to Salveson, who said: "Yorkshire First is a socially progressive alternative as we reject bigotry and have a strong commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity alongside the need for a more balanced UK."

MARK METCALF

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGI

NOV 2014

Unconscious ad targets fashion chain

A spoof campaign aims to highlight the contradiction of a high street fashion chain failing to pay workers who manufacture its "sustainable" clothing range a living wage.

Activists say the garment workers who produce the Conscious range sold by H&M do not earn enough to feed and clothe their own families.

The Swedish clothing giant markets the range – which features cocktail dresses, evening gowns and tailored

suits costing up to £200 each – as ecologically sustainable as it uses materials such as organic cotton. French actress Vanessa Paradis is fronting a high-profile advertising campaign aimed at boosting sales.

Moral stand

But the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) says the firm – whose manufacturing is outsourced to more than 800 factories in Europe and Asia – is failing to live up to its hype.



Campaigners say H&M should pay its garment workers fairly

It claims thousands of the garment workers employed by H&M suppliers are suffering from malnutrition, and wants the company to take a moral stand by committing to pay a living wage. The Swedish multinational is the second-largest global clothing retailer, with annual sales exceeding £11 billion and profits of £750 million.

Collective power

To make its point, CCC – an alliance of trade unions and non-governmental organisations in 15 European countries – has launched a spoof ad campaign, in which Paradis is shown surrounded by garment workers, with the text: "H&M Unconscious Collapses, start paying a living wage."

A CCC spokesman said: "H&M and a small number of big well-known brands are the main buyers in Asian garment companies. Their collective buying power could be used to bring about real change for workers."

"Wages are one to three per cent of the cost of garments. A worker gets just 24-72 pence when someone buys a garment costing £24 in the shops. Doubling a worker's wage would help raise people out of poverty whilst adding very little to the shop price."

H&M says it does not own any factories but expects suppliers to meet strict criteria – including the payment of at

least the national minimum wage.

Excessive hours

But CCC claims the minimum wage in some countries is below established poverty benchmarks.

Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, claims many factory owners are hostile to unions.

She added: "Working conditions in many factories are appalling, with workers facing excessive hours, poverty wages and poor nutrition. In 2011 we received reports that 2,000 mainly women workers had fainted on production lines in just 12 garment factories."

Last week, hundreds of Bangladeshi garment workers died and thousands were hurt when an eight-storey factory complex which housed firms supplying Primark and other western clothing brands collapsed.

In a statement, H&M said: "We have a basic code of conduct that factory workers must be paid at least the minimum wage guaranteed by law... and the salary must enable workers to support their families."

"We [also] work to influence developments. In September 2012, the H&M managing director met the Bangladesh government to advance demands for higher wages."

MARK METCALF

Tenancy training for ex-offenders

Prison-leavers are being trained in how to maintain a tenancy, to help them transition to permanent housing.

Greater Manchester Probation Trust helped develop a new qualification in tenancy management, designed to enable ex-offenders and other vulnerable people cope better if offered a property.

Moving into a new home should be an exciting time but for those leaving prison, it can be daunting. When suddenly faced with the costs involved in running a home, forms to fill in and the normal everyday tasks,

some people struggle.

Skills development

Because of this, housing providers sometimes have concerns about placing someone with an offending history in one of their properties.

It is hoped people who take part in this pre-tenancy training – called Trusted Tenants – will avoid problems like falling into debt or causing anti-social behaviour, as they will have developed the skills to avoid difficult situations.

The trust worked with the Chartered Institute of Housing

and NOCN, an awarding body, to design the qualification, which launched last week, and has started delivering sessions to its service users. The training could also be offered in prisons and by landlords.

Moving on

Other social housing tenants could also benefit, including young people with children, people with addictions and those leaving supported living, long-term hospital care or the armed forces.

Probation Trust spokesman, Robbie Williams, said: "Getting

offenders released from prison or moving on from a hostel to a tenancy can be difficult. When we heard about the qualification we realised it could help us to work with residents trying to rehabilitate themselves.

"It's a way for them to demonstrate they are genuinely trying to move forward and are worth offering a tenancy to as they've learned the skills needed to keep their home, treat their neighbours with respect and look after the property they are renting."

CIARA LEEMING

Calls to tackle killer fibre

Britain's largest teaching union has added its voice to the campaign for more monitoring of asbestos use in school buildings.

The National Union of Teachers wants the government to survey the UK's school stock to determine how much contains the fibre, now known to cause fatal tumours years down the line in some people who were exposed to it.

Asbestos is found in many buildings constructed before 1985, when it was banned in this country. Strong and fire-resistant, it was frequently used to insulate pipes and electrical appliances, and in floor coverings.

4,000 deaths

But inhalation of its dust and fibres is blamed for many deaths, in particular from a rare and incurable form of cancer, mesothelioma. Up to 4,000 people die from this every year, with the epidemic not expected to peak until 2020. About three-quarters of Britain's schools are thought to contain asbestos.

The government was first made aware of the problem for schools in 1967, but some experts say it is safest to leave the material in place if it is in good condition.

The NUT estimates at least 253 teachers have died since 1980 from mesothelioma, but since the illness takes between 25 and 50 years to develop, the number of former school pupils who may have died as a result of asbestos in their classrooms is more difficult to gauge.

However, a 1980 risk assessment conducted in the US concluded that as many as 90 per cent of deaths resulting from asbestos exposure in American schools would occur amongst people exposed as pupils.

The NUT now wants the presence of asbestos in schools to be properly monitored, but an ongoing government survey of the UK's school stock specifically ignores this issue.



Gina Lees died of mesothelioma following a 30-year teaching career

A union spokesman said: "[This would uncover] the overall scale of the problem, identify those with the worst problems and allow the government to make sound long-term financial forecasts and ensure resources are appropriately allocated for maintenance, refurbishment or replacement."

Meaningless data

The widower of a teacher who died from mesothelioma following a 30-year career has welcomed the union's stance on the issue. Michael Lees has been pushing for change since his wife, Gina, died in 2000 – just three months after being diagnosed. She had taught in infant schools in Cornwall, Devon and Norfolk.

Lees, an artist, went on to form the campaign group Asbestos in Schools, which seeks to improve its management within the education sector. The group's supporters include MPs, the asbestos consultants' association ATAC, six teaching trade unions and three support staff unions.

Lees is seeking to overturn

the Department for Education's omission of asbestos from the schools property data survey, which will be used to decide future funding allocations to schools.

The government maintains that responsibility for asbestos remains with local authorities – despite the fact many academy schools no longer fall under their authority.

Lees said: "[The government is] acting irresponsibly and collecting data which will be meaningless. Are they saying they will fund school improvements that don't include any costs for removing asbestos when works on buildings subsequently take place?"

"Burying your head in the sand won't wash these problems away. I am heartened by the NUT resolution and would like the UK government to follow the lead of the Australian government, which has committed to removing asbestos from their schools by 2030 in order to prevent more deaths of teachers and pupils."

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

BENEFIT FEARS

The withdrawal of benefits led a man to suicide, an inquest in Scarborough heard. Former labourer Nicholas Barker, of Helmsley, was found dead in December. The 51-year-old, left partially paralysed following a brain haemorrhage, shot himself after learning he had been deemed fit to work. Recording a suicide verdict, coroner Michael Oakley said the main factor worrying him was that his benefits had been stopped.

HOMELESS OPERA

An opera group made up of homeless people has released a track. Streetwise Opera, based at Manchester's Booth Centre, have released their recording of *Lascia Ch'io Pianga* from Handel's *Rinaldo* as a single, and money raised will support its work. Last week the group graced the stage at the British Film Institute in London, in the premiere of *The Answer To Everything*, an interactive film and opera extravaganza.

YOUNG LEADERS

Teenagers from York have taken part in worthy challenges as they work towards a leadership award. Students at Manor Academy have run charity exhibitions, mentored younger pupils and worked in hospices in Romania over the past two years as part of the award developed by the Archbishop of York Youth Trust. The latest stage was a public speaking event in which they advocated on behalf of charities including Mind UK, Cancer Research and the NSPCC.

PLAN OPPOSED

Proposed pay cuts have been rejected by Greater Manchester police commissioner Tony Lloyd. Government plans would slash the starting salary for new constables by £4,000 but Lloyd warns of harm to police morale. He promises it will not happen for police officers in Greater Manchester.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

Call to reopen train lines

Fifty years after the Beeching Report closed a third of the country's railway network, campaigners are calling for 10 lines to be reopened, including four in the north.

Recruited by the government to make the railways profitable again, businessman Richard Beeching produced a plan that led to the closure of 2,128 stations, the loss of 67,700 jobs and passengers and freight abandoning rail for roads.

Although passenger numbers revived with the introduction of high-speed inter-city trains in the 1970s, and have further increased in the last decade, the number of railway stations is just over 2,500 - around a third of what it was in 1963.

Now, with the government committing £33 billion for a new high speed rail link - set to reach Leeds and Manchester in 2032 - the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) believes reopening lines would reconnect places currently not on the rail network, support regeneration, increase freight

opportunities and improve journeys between major settlements.

Two of the 10 lines it has prioritised are Skipton to Colne and Fleetwood to Preston. Both were closed to passenger traffic in 1970. The former is 11 miles long and was first operational in 1848. In 2003 a study on behalf of Lancashire and North Yorkshire county councils concluded much of the trackbed remained intact.

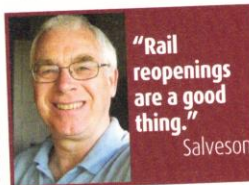
Regeneration

In 2008 the railway infrastructure operator Network Rail refused to provide £43 million for a single track or £81 million for a double-track line on the Skipton to Colne route. A local group, the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, believes reopening the line would create an extra trans-Pennine rail route linking the West and East Coast Main Lines. CBT believes the line also has the potential to help with the regeneration of currently depressed parts of

north east Lancashire such as Nelson, Burnley and Colne.

The Fleetwood to Preston branch line that starts on the Fylde coast would serve around 60,000 people via two new stations. With much of the track still in place the cost of reopening was estimated by *Rail* magazine in 2010 at £5.5 million.

The Poulton and Wyre



"Rail reopenings are a good thing." Salveson

Railway Society (PWRS) has long campaigned for the line to be re-opened. The society has been given a licence to clear the existing track and bring parts of it back into operation.

PWRS chairman Eddie Fisher welcomed the CBT support. "We have completed a

business plan and delivered it to all stakeholders, including Network Rail," he said. "We will be re-opening part of the line from Poulton-le-Fylde - with a cross-platform interchange for ongoing trains into Blackpool North and Preston - to a new station, Fleetwood South, around one mile from Fleetwood town centre.

New station

"We are also exploring the costs of extending the line into a new station in the centre of Fleetwood. We will operate a commuter service and act as a heritage line to boost tourism. Initially it will be a standalone private railway and not part of the national network."

Fisher said that although it would be "desirable in the future" to see a direct link from Fleetwood to Preston he was unable to say if the PWRS would be involved in the project's management.

Rail policy expert Paul Salveson believes a reopened line has the potential to benefit freight transport because of Fleetwood's thriving port.

Salveson, visiting professor in transport and logistics at Huddersfield University, believes the example of the Nottingham to Worksop line, which reopened in the 1990s, should be followed.

Economic case

He said: "That helped people in the former mining town access the job market in Nottingham."

He added that Skelmersdale is another location that would benefit from the reopening of its former station, where all services ceased in 1963. Following a feasibility study, Merseytravel has recently asked Network Rail to examine the costs of providing a rail link into the West Lancashire town.

"I think we have cross-party consensus that rail reopenings are a good thing," said Salveson. "There has to be a sound economic case for any proposal. As long as the research involves speaking face to face with people about their actual travel plans, rather than just basing predictions on population size, then I am confident that in most cases this can be fulfilled."

MARK METCALF



"Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated." Quince to Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the eighth image in a series of 20 composed filmic tableaux by OCA photography student Jeremy Pelzer examining the themes of Shakespeare's play. All 20 images are on display in a free exhibition at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre until 1 June.

The Open College for the Arts (OCA) is a thriving online community of more than 3,000 people studying creative arts subjects at higher level. An education charity, OCA offers BA honours degrees in photography, painting, creative writing, visual communications and textiles. Students can also study fine art, music, drawing and sculpture. OCA has no minimum entry requirements and students can enrol when it suits them. From September 2012, fees to reach degree level are less than £8,000 in total.

Police have questioned a car driver who left a Manchester building worker seriously injured. George Tapp, a 64-year old electrician, seems unlikely to work again after both his kneecaps were broken during a protest to raise awareness that building workers have been the victims of blacklisting by construction company BAM Nuttall.

The incident occurred when around 50 protesters distributed leaflets outside the Manchester City Football Club (MCFC) Academy construction project being built by BAM Nuttall at a cost of £100 million.

Between 1996 and 2009, BAM Nuttall paid £38,371.85 for checks to be run on workers by the Consulting Association (CA), an organisation that held a blacklist of 3,213 workers variously described as "extreme troublemaker", "politically motivated" and "active in dispute". Listed workers, including many elected union safety representatives, were "not recommended for employment". The list included 507 workers from the North West.

Victimising

CA was closed four years ago and its owner, the late Ian Kerr, was convicted of breaching the Data Protection Act.

The union Unite, of which Tapp is a member, has accused BAM of being involved in the blacklisting and victimising of trade unionists working on Crossrail, the biggest construction project in Europe.

Blacklisted workers want firms involved in the practice banned from securing council contracts. Salford, where Tapp was formerly a Labour councillor, is one of a handful of local authorities that has adopted such restrictions.

Workers also want private sector businesses to refuse to award contracts to proven blacklists. Amongst the blacklisted workers outside the MCFC project were a number of Manchester City season-ticket holders. They included Graham Bowker who, along with electricians Steve Acheson and Tony Jones, won an Industrial Tribunal case in 2006 when



Tapp in hospital after accident. Photo: MEN Media

Blacklist campaigner knocked down

it was ruled they had been unfairly dismissed from jobs as subcontractors on the Carillion-organised Royal Manchester Infirmary site.

Speaking from his hospital bed there, Tapp claimed he was "driven directly at, resulting in me being knocked on to the bonnet. The tyres were burning rubber and I travelled quite a distance and the driver appeared to be laughing at me."

Unconscious

When Tapp fell from the front of the Ford Ka its driver left the scene. Unconscious, he was taken by ambulance to hospital. CCTV coverage of the incident on Ashton New Road was later recovered by Greater Manchester Police (GMP).

GMP has since interviewed the driver of the vehicle and released him without charge.

It disputes Tapp's version of events, with a press officer stating: "CCTV confirms that people climbed on the bonnet of the car.

"Ongoing investigations mean we cannot say whether there will be charges brought against the driver or the demonstrators."

Acheson was with Tapp when he was injured and describes as "disgusting and fantasy any claims that people climbed on the car bonnet".

He added: "The police should release the CCTV so people can make up their own minds."

Compensation call

GMP has said it would not be doing this "as this is potential evidence should there be any court proceedings".

Doctors estimate Tapp will be in hospital for at least two months and will need reconstructive surgery with steel rods. He hopes eventually to be able to rejoin protests against the blacklist.

"It's wrong that trade unionist representatives can be victimised for standing up for safety at work and the rights of workers," he said.

The Scottish Affairs Select Committee is currently taking evidence on blacklisting in employment. Last month it criticised construction companies for being "in complete denial over blacklisting".

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

GAS SHORTAGE

The UK almost ran out of natural gas on a day in March, an energy official has revealed. Rob Hastings of the Crown Estate - which owns UK gas storage sites - told the *Financial Times* that winter's high demand for gas and a pipeline fault meant there was only six hours of gas left, and any less would have meant "interruptions to the supply".

LEARNING BY PLAYING

Video games classes could be the key to keeping more disengaged youngsters in education and off the streets, a study by Lancaster University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences has revealed. The findings, which are being analysed by the Department for Education, suggest basing educational projects on video games can get hard-to-reach youngsters interested in learning. A spin-off would be a pool of new recruits to Britain's burgeoning video gaming industry.

G4S CONTROVERSY

Controversial firm G4S has been appointed to run two rape victim support centres in the West Midlands, even though complaints of assault and racism against its staff in its other operations have been upheld. G4S says trained crisis workers will staff the centres in Birmingham and Walsall, where victims can report attacks. The services were run by the police. G4S chief executive Nick Buckles is stepping down with a £1.2m payoff.

MIGRATION FALLS

Net migration to the UK has fallen to its lowest level for a decade, according to the Office of National Statistics. Net migration - the difference between people leaving the country and arriving here - shrunk to 153,000 in the 12 months to September 2012. The ONS said the reduction in net migration was caused by an 81,000 fall in the number of migrants coming to Britain in the year.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

Canal trust's tunnel vision

Canal boat owners believe the government's decision in 2012 to transfer public ownership of England and Wales's canals to a charitable national trust is working out a success.

Two years ago, the website Narrowboatworld.com expressed fears that the Canal & River Trust (CRT) would fail to find alternative funds to replace the annual government grant to British Waterways (BW), the public body that spearheaded the revival in the inland waterway system after it fell into disarray following the arrival of railways and the automobile.

The new body has had its annual government funding cut until 2027, by which time it's intended for CRT to be self-financing. Without guaranteed funds Narrowboatworld.com believed CRT would be unable to properly maintain the 2,000-mile canal and river system. But CRT is now able to raise money itself, through rents on properties, and is free from any further government cuts.

'Unique opportunity'

Canal users believe the new arrangement is bearing fruit. Les Etheridge, chair of the Inland Waterways Association, which has 16,000 members, said: "The canal system is over 200 years old and inevitably has unpredictable problems. But when I first started boating in the early 1980s there were much more regular tunnel closures."

Nigel Stevens, owner of Sowerby Bridge narrow boat holiday company Shire Cruisers and CRT executive council member, said: "There is a unique opportunity to plan for the long term future. That would not have been the case if the canals remained under government control."

"The change is concentrating minds and I am certain that in the end the waterways will become sustainable."

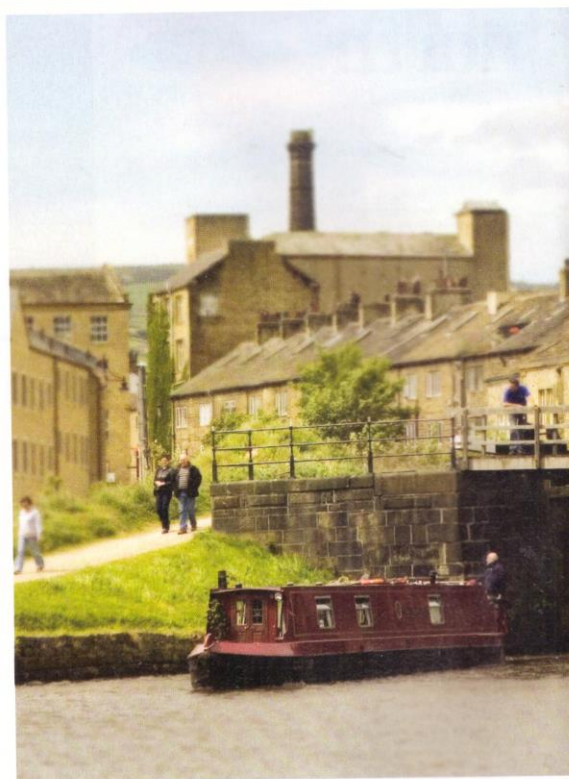
Seventy-year old Ken Hall, a narrowboat owner in Hebden Bridge, said: "The outlook for canals is good."

"Generally when tunnels collapse they don't take too long to repair."

Maintenance

However Narrowboat.com continues to express concerns about "crumbling waterways" and said CRT should spend more on maintenance.

A spokesperson for CART said: "Not everything is perfect. But the canal structures in the worst condition have halved to 15 per cent in the last decade. The future of the canal network is the best for generations, especially as we have recruited many volunteers, including 250 lock keepers, without impacting on the numbers of staff, who have retained their terms and conditions."



MARK METCALF

The country's canals are now run by a charitable trust with a reduced but predict

Workload drives social work

Social workers are rejecting lucrative rates of pay to quit the profession because of an exhaustive workload of serious cases.

This is the view of Hull's Ian Newton, who a decade ago used the funds from *Dustbin Gate*, his best-selling comedy book featuring John Prescott, to quit his factory job and train as a social worker.

Higher pay

Newton was employed mainly in mental health, learning disability and with older people and adults. As a contract social worker, 18 local authorities hired him, usually at higher rates of pay than permanent staff because of urgent vacancies

to fill. But he has seen the profession radically change in eight years and has now left.

'Bureaucratic nightmare'

"I quit because social work has become a bureaucratic nightmare in which clients' needs have been lost," said Newton.

"When I started it was about 25 per cent paperwork and 75 per cent working with the client. Now it is 85 per cent paperwork."

Much of the rise in paperwork stems from the 2003 Laming inquiry following the death of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié, which led to reforms of the social care system. The introduction of personal budgets

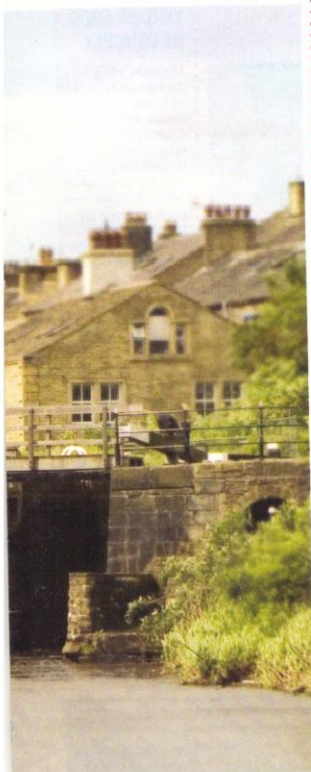
for clients and new government guidelines have also increased paperwork.

"You are still expected to find time to help clients by dealing with their often complex needs," said Newton, two of whose former colleagues, more experienced than him, have recently quit to fill shelves at Asda.

"Work overload means you are terrified about losing sight of the client and they harm themselves and you land up in a coroner's court or before a professional body."

'Difficult relationships'

"Every social worker has at least two clients they fear will end up dead because they don't



ble budget. Photo: Rebecca Johnson

MP accused of careless language joins Roma panel

Former home secretary David Blunkett will take part in a public debate on Romani migration this week.

The Sheffield MP – whose concerns about cohesion problems in his inner-city constituency hit the headlines late in 2013 – will share the panel with academics and professionals who work with these communities, as well as Romani outreach workers.

In November, Blunkett created controversy by saying that tensions between existing residents and the mainly Slovakian Roma who have settled in his area risked boiling over into riots unless something was done to improve the situation.

Careless language

He later claimed his comments had been taken out of context but the damage was done. The Page Hall neighbourhood of Sheffield became the focus of frenzied tabloid reporting for weeks and some critics accused the MP of feeding anti-Roma prejudice with careless language.

Significant numbers of Roma from across central and Eastern Europe have moved to UK cities over the past decade to escape poverty and institutional racism and to give their families a better life.

Thursday's debate at Manchester University is the result of a dialogue its Romani Studies department has been having with the MP, who wanted to hear more about the work they and others – including *The Big Issue in the North* – have done over recent years to integrate Roma families in Manchester.

This work has included the mentoring of promising young

Roma adults who have since found work as interpreters and classroom assistants – becoming positive role models within a community that has historically lacked access to good education.

The university is now running Migrom, a pan-European research project into Romanian Roma migration.

Sharing knowledge

Viktor Leggio, of the Romani Project, said: "David Blunkett wanted to discuss the possibility of us sharing our knowledge with Sheffield or maybe even doing some work there. Through these discussions we also agreed to hold an open debate about the challenges and opportunities posed by Roma migration featuring him as well as academics who specialise in Romani issues and ethnicity and migration more generally."

As well as Romani Project head Professor Yaron Matras and other academics, the panel will include Carol Powell, principal of Gorton Mount Primary Academy – a school with a high number of Roma pupils – and Fay Selvan, chief executive of The Big Life Group, owner of *The Big Issue in the North*. Romani people will feature on the panel and in the audience.

The session, entitled Roma Migrants: A challenge or Opportunity for our Cities? is free to attend and open to the public – there is no need to book. It takes place from 4pm-6pm on 13 February in the main lecture theatre of the Samuel Alexander Building at Manchester University.

CIARA LEEMING

Anti-Roma discrimination in their Czech and Slovak



NEWS IN BRIEF

STOP POLITICAL RACISM

Speakers at a public meeting in South Yorkshire will demand an end to politicians creating a climate of racism and xenophobia to win votes in elections. South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group and academics will discuss how racism could affect the European and Westminster elections. Politicians, Racism and the Media: A Case to Answer' is on 18 February in the Workstation in Sheffield (www.symaag.org.uk).

CCTV FOR CUMBRIA

Cumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has approved plans for 54 CCTV cameras to be set up across the county. The network, which will be monitored and maintained by Cumbria Police from Penrith, is expected to cost £1 million. The cost will be covered by the PCC and the county's six district councils, which previously monitored the cameras until forced to stop due to cuts.

MARKET VICTORY

Ashton Market, Manchester, has been named the country's best in a competition run by the National Association of British Market Authorities. A record-breaking 104,000 people placed it top in a public vote. Built in 1881, the hall benefited from a £16 million refurbishment after it was almost destroyed by fire in 2004.

DRINK AND DRUGS

Greater Manchester has one of the worst alcohol tolls in the country, with alcohol-related incidents and illness costing the city £1.2 billion a year. In a public debate, Greater Manchester's director for public health will argue that cheap supermarket prices and lack of regulation make it a greater problem than outlawed drugs. The Discuss Manchester debate is at 6.30pm on 19 February at Albert Square Chop House, Manchester (discuss.org.uk).

ers to quit

have the time to fully attend to them."

Recently Newton also became dispirited at having to tell his clients that cuts were being made to their care packages. He said: "I found myself constantly telling parents or the clients there will be less financial support."

"Instantly you are no longer a social worker but the enemy, an accountant. Relationships become difficult and in order to keep social workers safe there are restrictions imposed on client visits to our offices."

MARK METCALF

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

Inquiry into national park ex

Plans to expand two national parks in the north will go before a public inquiry this summer.

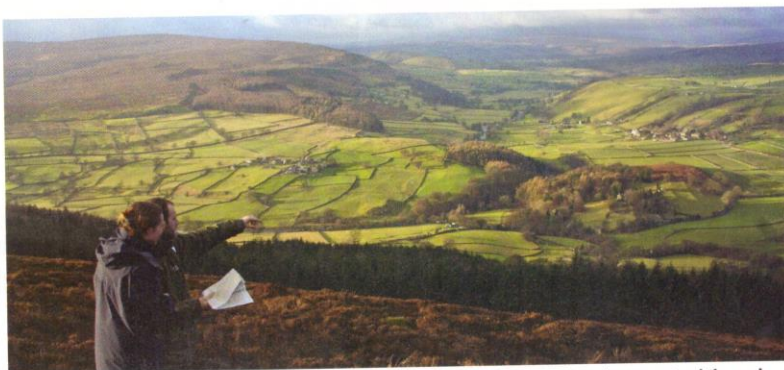
Natural England has proposed extending by 500 sq km the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales, which were designated as national parks in the 1950s.

New parts of the Lake District would include Sizergh Fell and the Lyth Valley, whilst an expanded Yorkshire Dales would include the northern Howgill Fells, Orton Fells, Wild Boar Fell and parts of the Lune Valley in Lancashire.

Beautiful countryside

England's 10 national parks, which cover 9.3 per cent of the land, enjoy special protection because of their beautiful countryside, wildlife and cultural heritage. Responsibility for management rests with a national park authority of between 10 and 30 members, none of whom are directly elected.

There is a statutory requirement that a public inquiry is held if at least one local authority with land in a proposed extension objects. Cumbria County Council, Eden



Barden Moor in the Yorkshire Dales. A number of local authorities have objected to plans to extend the park

District Council, Richmondshire District Council, North Yorkshire and Lancashire County Councils have all done so in this case and there have been more than 3,000 objections, representations or expressions of support.

Supporters of the extension include Sir Chris Bonnington, the National Trust, Friends of the Lake District and the British Mountaineering Council.

Cumbria County Council has cited the "potential negative

impact on plans for a high speed rail link in the M6 corridor through the Lune Gorge" among its objections. Last month the government approved the second phase of the £33 billion HS2 high-speed rail project that will link Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds. If all goes to plan then the extensions should be completed by 2033, leaving the way open for the existing Manchester to Glasgow line, which passes through Cumbria, to be upgraded.

Cumbria County Council also claims Natural England's plans would lead to problems with building affordable housing and create a democratic deficit in which unelected members are responsible for managing a larger area of the county.

'Bureaucracy'

A council spokesperson said: "We have a positive working relationship with the Lake District National Park Authority but Cumbria is not just a nice

SOCIAL IMPACT AWARDS 2013: FIRST JUDGES ANNOUNCED

The first judges have been confirmed for the Social Impact Awards 2013, which will celebrate and reward excellence in charities, not for profit and social enterprise organisations, as well as public and private sector organisations that have made a big difference in their communities.

The Big Issue in the North is the media partner for the Social Impact Awards 2013, which will be presented at an evening theatre-style ceremony in Manchester on 1 May, following a half-day conference that will provide information, advice and case studies for third sector organisations and their partners in the public and private sectors.

The awards feature 26 categories, plus a grand prix award, and will be judged by a high-level independent panel. Categories have been designed to recognise initiatives and campaigns, individuals and teams as well as businesses that have helped communities through their corporate social responsibility programmes.

The Big Issue in the North is pleased to



be media partner to the awards and will be publishing more information about them over coming weeks.

The awards are free to enter and organisers are looking to receive entries from charities, not for profit organisations, social enterprises and those who have partnered with the third sector.

The deadline for entries is 1 March. Full details of the categories and how to enter can be found at the Social Impact Awards website - www.socialimpactawards.co.uk - and we'll be tweeting news about the awards using the hashtag #socimpawards.

THE PANEL SO FAR

Dr Mohammed Ali OBE, founder and chief executive, QED Foundation

Allan Beswick, presenter, BBC Radio Manchester

Ed Cox, director, Institute for Public Policy Research North

Hazel Blears, MP for Salford & Eccles

Kevin Gopal, editor, *The Big Issue in the North*

Dave Neilson, chief executive, Fusion21

Raksha Pattni, area director, England area west, Business in the Community

Michael Ventris, project manager, Achieve Project

Sarah Whitehead, Salford community champion

Alys Young, professor of social work, education and research, Manchester University

tension

holiday place – it is somewhere to live and needs a sustainable economy.

“There are already beautiful, unspoilt areas so we don’t need to throw another ring of bureaucracy around local people. We welcome a public inquiry to ensure the issue is being looked at more closely.”

The Friends of the Lake District was formed in 1934, has 7,000 members and campaigned for the Lake District to be designated as a national park. Its policy officer Jack Ellerby backs the extension proposals.

Hill farmers

“Cumbria’s economy depends on its beautiful landscapes,” said Ellerby. “Hill farmers now get much of their income from land management payments that deliver public benefits. The main source of funding is from the Higher Level Stewardship scheme and farms within a national park receive extra points to help qualify. As a result more get HLS, which is being increased to £156 million this next year.

“Housing is important and both national park authorities have adopted plans that include sites for local/affordable housing. House prices locally are high, but that is due to the proximity to the M6.

“The vast majority of authority members are elected via county, district and parish council elections and the authorities have a good record of engaging local people in their decisions.”

Ellerby also argues that the site for a new high-speed rail link would be outside the proposed extension areas.

Following the inquiry the inspector will make recommendations to the environment secretary, who will decide whether to modify, approve or reject the plans.

MARK METCALF

FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Ex-pilot sues for lack of care

The Official Solicitor is being sued by a former airline pilot alleging a lack of care after he was deemed to be incapable of managing his affairs.

Leonard Lawrence, who believes his ill health is the result of toxic fumes being released into aircraft during flights, was placed in 2004 under the Official Solicitor's protection after a psychiatric assessment said he lacked the mental capacity to look after his property and affairs under Part VII of the Mental Health Act 1983.

During this period, which lasted until 2006, he maintains that his assets were improperly disposed of.

Earlier this year Lawrence was given permission to sue the Official Solicitor's Office by the Queen's Bench of the High Court. He is seeking damages from the Official Solicitor for his alleged "failure in his duty

of care to protect a vulnerable adult".

Lawrence, who now lives in Devon, was a pilot from 1989 to 2004. He claims that in 1991 the flight deck of the passenger aircraft he was co-piloting was filled with hot acrid fumes on take-off. An emergency landing was made and the aircraft evacuated.

Psychiatric assessment

Twelve years later he quit his job after continuing ill health and a particular incident in which he was "unable to process information being given to me by Swiss air traffic control" during a flight over the country.

He added: "I couldn't and still can't think clearly enough to fly."

When he visited his GP, Lawrence was referred for a psychiatric assessment to Buckinghamshire Mental Health

Trust and was subsequently admitted to Godden Green Clinic.

After being discharged he was certified in November 2004, without undergoing a medical, when solicitors for his ex-wife obtained a medical report from the clinic saying that Lawrence was incapable of managing his property and affairs.

Although this was disputed by Lawrence's NHS psychiatrist it was accepted in Slough County Court and the former pilot was placed under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Official Solicitor at the Ministry of Justice, which acts as a last resort when people lacking mental capacity cannot find suitable people to protect them.

Chemical poisoning

Lawrence had assembled a number of distinguished people, including Alistair Wilson, a

clinical director at the Royal London Hospital, who were prepared to act as his guardian but the county court chose to ignore them.

Lawrence remained under the jurisdiction of the Official Solicitor until early in 2006. By then a medical diagnosis at a specialist US clinic revealed he was suffering from moderate brain injury caused by chemical poisoning.

While under the care of the Official Solicitor there were three occasions on which some of Lawrence's assets, which he estimates to be worth £130,000, were disposed of.

To prevent a power of attorney – in this instance the Official Solicitor – from committing fraud any disposal of assets requires the approval of the Court of Protection.

But a Court of Protection official has admitted to Lawrence: "The Court of Protection has no record of any application being received for him. It was clearly the responsibility of the holder of the medical certificate to ensure an application was made."

'Badly let down'

Lawrence is being supported by the Aerotoxic Association, run by former airline pilots convinced they have been made ill by cabin air polluted with toxic oil fumes. Founder John Hoyte, who has known Lawrence for 23 years, said: "He has been badly let down by doctors who failed to diagnose and treat his illness. This was compounded by not being allowed to have someone he knew designated to look after his interests during the time he was certified. I think there needs to be an inquiry into Leonard Lawrence's case."

A spokesperson for the Official Solicitor said it couldn't comment on "ongoing litigation in which the Official Solicitor is defending a claim against Mr Lawrence against the previous office holder".

MARK METCALF



Cambridge graffiti artists have been given an official wall on Newmarket Road to scrawl on. Round the corner, though, is this unsanctioned wall, shot by OCA photographer David Watson. To some citizens at least, it is a bigger draw than its counterpart.

The Open College for the Arts (OCA) is a thriving online community of more than 3,000 people studying creative arts subjects at higher level. An education charity, OCA offers BA honours degrees in photography, painting, creative writing, visual communications and textiles. Students can also study fine art, music, drawing and sculpture. OCA has no minimum entry requirements and students can enrol when it suits them. From September 2012, fees to reach degree level are less than £8,000 in total.

A blacklisted building worker from Ilkley has received the support of the local council leader in his battle to have firms involved in the practice banned from securing council contracts.

Electrician Sandy McPherson is one of at least 201 construction workers who lived or worked in Yorkshire and Humberside whose names appear on the Consulting Association (CA) database of 3,213 workers used by 44 building companies to vet potential new recruits over the last four decades. The companies include Carillion, Balfour Beatty and Sir Robert McAlpine. In January the latter two admitted to MPs at a select committee hearing that they used CA services to vet workers on Olympic sites.

Unanimous

Many of the workers on the CA database were "not recommended for employment". According to the GMB trade union fewer than one in ten are aware they are listed and none have been compensated. McPherson's CA file said: "Subject joined company (Haden Young) on February 18 1980, he is a shop steward and very active undercover." He was subsequently sacked and in 1982 won £600 compensation for unfair dismissal.

McPherson's details were revealed after the Information Commissioner's Office closed down CA in 2009 and its owner, Ian Kerr, was found guilty of breaching the Data Protection Act. McPherson believes his inability in the mid-1980s to find work on London building sites could have been a consequence of his CA listing. He moved north in 1992 and still works as a self-employed electrician.

In December councillors in Hull unanimously voted to remove blacklisting firms from its list of council contractors. McPherson's union branch then asked Bradford, Wakefield, Leeds, Calderdale and Kirklees councils to follow suit. Leeds City Council has just awarded Carillion a £10 million contract to strengthen and repair the A58

Council to ban blacklisting firms?

Woodhouse Tunnel and all five councils have contracts with companies that used the CA.

'Unjustifiable'

McPherson is a resident of Bradford Council, whose leader Dave Green has written to him saying: "We are currently looking at adding to our procurement requirement protocols that would address your concerns. I find it totally unjustifiable that firms that have carried out illegal blacklisting or have broken other laws relating to employment or health and safety should be able to bid for public sector contracts with impunity."

A "delighted" McPherson hopes the other four councils written to will now respond positively. He is also pleased that Liverpool City Council

has passed a motion calling on construction firms seeking major contracts locally to affirm they would never again use blacklists. Around 150 people from Merseyside were listed on the CA files.

The Blacklist Support Group, established three years ago, has won the support of Labour for a public inquiry into blacklisting. However business secretary Vince Cable, who is opposed, said: "If it is actually going on, it is a serious matter and it needs investigation. I, of course, will want to see it properly investigated, but we want some evidence."

The BSG is pursuing a case in the High Court for compensation for blacklisted workers.

MARK METCALF



A visitor looking intently at Paul Delvaux's Leda during a study day at Tate Liverpool, captured by OCA photographer John Umney. He was drawn first to the viewer's gaze, and then noticed she was mirroring some of the main graphic components of the painting. Delvaux combines classical imagery with modern urban surroundings, in much the same way as the live human figure is juxtaposed with the surroundings of the gallery.

The Open College for the Arts (OCA) is a thriving online community of more than 3,000 people studying creative arts subjects at higher level. An education charity, OCA offers BA honours degrees in photography, painting, creative writing, visual communications and textiles. Students can also study fine art, music, drawing and sculpture. OCA has no minimum entry requirements and students can enrol when it suits them. From September 2012, fees to reach degree level are less than £8,000 in total.



NEWS IN BRIEF

ASYLUM HOUSING

The takeover of asylum housing by security company G4S has been a disaster for families and was politically motivated, says a report by South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group sent to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. It said asylum seekers and their families in Yorkshire and the North East have been given substandard accommodation and guidelines to reduce vulnerability are ignored.

TAXI PROTESTS

Sheffield taxi drivers plan to bring the city centre to a standstill by blocking busy streets in protest at a council ruling forcing them to install CCTV in their vehicles. Licensing bosses claim the cameras will improve driver and passenger safety but it will come at a cost of £500 to each driver.

HEALTHWATCH GAG

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt has come under fire from campaigners accusing him of gagging new patient watchdogs. The National Association of Links Members (NALM) says the Healthwatch organisations, designed to give patients and carers a say over how their local health service is run, are being prevented from campaigning to improve services or influence the policies of health bodies.

DALES BANKRUPTCY

Businesses in the Yorkshire Dales have warned the region's economy is on the brink of collapse due to a steep reduction in visitor numbers. Crippling fuel prices have caused a drop in passing trade and a controversial decision by the Highways Agency to get local businesses to pay for replacement tourism signs, leaving them temporarily without, has exacerbated the problem. The Dales have also suffered after the country experienced two of the wettest years on record consecutively.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

Schools: leaving is the hardest thing to do



The school leaving age is set to rise next year from 16 to 17

The government has failed to prepare for the raising of the school leaving age next year by ensuring the right colleges and courses are in place, an education expert has warned.

The school leaving age is to be raised next year from 16 to 17, and the year afterwards to 18. But Tom Wylie, former head of the National Youth Agency, said that funding for colleges and community-based organisations is "complex and problematic", and not geared towards the needs of local economies.

In 2007 Wylie, a former adviser to the Education Select Committee, warned the Labour government that too many

Last week he said: "I hope I am not saying the same thing in 2017 – that there are not enough of the right kinds of courses and appropriate vocational qualifications for the population. But I wouldn't bet against it."

Vocational courses

Around 200,000 16-18 year olds – approximately 10 per cent of the total – are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Scunthorpe County MP Nic Dakin, a former member of the Education Select Committee, echoed Wylie's concerns and said: "Without proper resources and strong leadership nationally and locally it will be difficult to engage with youngsters already NEET [not in education, employment or training] or those likely to become so."

Although the vocational courses introduced by Labour were criticised for failing to help youngsters find work or gain a university place, Dakin does not believe the coalition government's new plans are an improvement.

A Department of Education spokesperson said: "Ultimately it will be down to local authorities to make sure young people in their areas participate and have the support they need

to overcome barriers to learning."

A Leeds City Council spokesperson said: "We are fully confident that the necessary changes will be in place within the required timescales to meet the challenges. We are working in partnership with schools, colleges and training providers, including smaller, often voluntary sector providers."

Increased costs

She said the expected increased costs of raising the leaving age would not affect other services "as learning for 16 to 18 year olds is funded through the DoE's Young People's Learning Agency, and in the case of apprenticeships through the Skills Funding Agency, and not the local authorities".

MARK METCALF

Incinerators

Britain's first major study into the impact of emissions from municipal waste incinerators will finally get underway shortly.

Announced nearly a year ago, the study will be carried out by the Small Area Health Statistics Unit, Imperial College London, and the Environmental Research Group, King's College London, on behalf of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) – which first promised to carry out the study in 2003.

Emissions

Campaigners claim that emissions from waste incinerators cause above average levels of infant deaths but the HPA and local authorities that commission them argue that there is little evidence to support this.

Studies in Japan in 2004 found a "peak decline in risk with distance from the municipal solid waste incinerators for infant deaths and infant deaths with all

Hostel closures

Leeds City Council has defended its plans to close a city centre hostel for the homeless. With admissions to Ladybeck House having ended, the 42-bed hostel with 24-hour staff support will close its doors on 4 March.

This will be the third hostel in Leeds to have closed in the last six months after Richmond Court, a 20-unit hostel for homeless families, and The Hollies, a 31-bed hostel for single homeless women, shut last September. According to Peter Gruen, Leeds City Council executive board member with responsibility for neighbourhoods and housing, there will also be a "gradual reduction in hostels across Leeds in the future".

The council says the closure

is part of a "remodelling" of services agreed after consultation with homeless people and not simply a cost-cutting measure.

Consultation

"They felt dispersed temporary accommodation with visiting support would afford them more privacy and independence, and remove the stigma often associated with hostels," said a council spokesperson.

"We are endeavouring to modernise our services in line with customer preference."

According to the council 50 people attended consultation events and it carried out telephone surveys with those unable to attend.

Two vendors of *The Big Issue* in the North, John Whittaker

"It will be difficult to engage with youngsters."

Dakin



people left education without the skills to find work, and urged investment in community organisations better able to deal with the "disaffected, slightly disgruntled, under-achieving youngsters" likely to be forced to remain in education.

tor study finally starts



Kirklees' incinerator: the local authority insists the plant is safe

congenital malformations combined".

News of the UK study, which will take two years to complete, has drawn a mixed response from campaigners, who have been frustrated by its delay.

Shlomo Downen of the United Kingdom Without Incinerator Network said the organisation had not been consulted on the study's terms of reference. "I hope the study surprises me but unless it does there is not much

to get excited about," he said.

A spokesperson for Kirklees Council, whose incinerator is located in a busy residential area, said the council will be "studying the findings when they become available in 2014" but would not be drawn on what should happen if the study concluded that emissions did damage the health of children.

In 2009 Kirklees Council threatened legal action against anti-incinerator campaigners for

displaying Michael Ryan's claims that its incinerator was linked to above average infant mortality levels in some wards.

Downwind

It was after two of his children died that the former local government official determined to find out why. Using Office for National Statistics figures to assemble the largest statistical base currently available, Ryan has concluded that infant death rates are much higher in neighbourhoods downwind of incinerators.

Asked if the study would examine Ryan's work, a spokesperson for the HPA would not comment but said: "The study will be using original health data obtained from the Office for National Statistics and congenital anomaly registers. Exposures will be estimated by dispersion modelling of incinerator emissions."

MARK METCALF

nount up

and Phil Boden, benefited from staying at Ladybeck.

Whittaker said it was a "warm, welcoming place". Boden added: "It put a roof over my head while I waited for somewhere to live after leaving prison."

"Like many other homeless people I am against its closure as not everyone can live alone because of mental health problems or being unable to cope with paying bills. Living with people who share similar problems can help. There are not enough hostels as it is and I fear homelessness could rise."

A Leeds City Council spokesperson insisted the

closure would not result in fewer beds for homeless people. "There is a new contract in place for dispersed temporary accommodation which is flexible enough to change depending upon demand," said the spokesperson.

Contract cancelled

"There are no limits to the number of beds available to accommodate homeless people in Leeds and we also have a lettings scheme to facilitate access to tenancies in the private sector."

The situation at Ladybeck is mirrored by events elsewhere across the north.

Providence House, a short-stay hostel for up to 68 men and the largest in Rochdale, will close on 31 March, bringing to an end the Salvation Army's accommodation role that first started in the Lancashire town in 1967. Rochdale Borough Council has said it is "in favour of commissioning smaller units", but would be "working with the Salvation Army to ensure the transition is as smooth as it can be".

The Salvation Army's Lawley House hostel in Bradford has also had its contract cancelled with the council and will be closing in May.

A spokesperson for the Salvation Army said: "The closure is the result of local authorities having to make hard decisions because of cuts."

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

YOUTH JURY

The annual Sheffield Doc/Fest is looking for five 16-25 year olds from around the UK to select a winning documentary for its youth jury award. The jury will also get the chance to view shortlisted films, speak to industry experts and learn more about what makes a good documentary. To apply visit <https://sheffdocfest.com/view/youthjury> before 24 Feb.

TITANIC APPEAL

Curators of Merseyside Maritime Museum are appealing for information about Victor Giglio of 22 Linnet Lane near Liverpool's Sefton Park as they prepare the new exhibition *Titanic and Liverpool: the Untold Story*. Little is known about the early life of Giglio, valet to US multi-millionaire Ben Guggenheim who notoriously dressed in evening clothes as the liner sank. Contact titanic@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk or call 01514784417.

CALM MUSIC

A collection of 31 songs by Manchester artists has been compiled by DJ and writer Dave Haslam, with all profits going to men's mental health charity CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably). The album features Elbow, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, I Am Kloot and Everything Everything, amongst others. 31 is released on 12 March. Pre-order the album at www.thirtysongs.com or buy limited edition vinyl from www.townsend-records.co.uk.

WOMEN OF STEEL

Martin Jennings has been chosen to create a sculpture to commemorate the women employed in Sheffield's steelworks during the war. His work can be seen at the sculpture of poet laureate Betjeman. The project, which has been funded by the city, has been a success but a further £100,000 is to be raised.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

th

30 JULY 2012

Photographer honoured



Jenkinson's famous photo of Arthur Scargill being arrested at Orgreave

A tribute exhibition of work by Martin Jenkinson, the photographer famous for powerful images taken during the miners strike of 1984-85, has opened in Sheffield.

A former steelworker who used his redundancy pay to turn his hobby into a job, Jenkinson died of cancer last month aged 64.

Commissioned by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) during the year-long strike against pit closures, Jenkinson captured the arrest outside Orgreave coking works, near Sheffield, of NUM president Arthur Scargill.

Fifteen years later a portrait he took of Scargill was chosen for the National Portrait Gallery exhibition *Faces of the Century*.

Industrial landscape

Jenkinson's photograph of miner Geordie Brearley wearing a toy policeman's helmet as he inspected a battalion of police officers lined up against pickets was also well known.

Jenkinson went on to

document Yorkshire's changing industrial landscape – including for *The Big Issue in the North* – and leaves behind a lasting legacy of photos of the lives of ordinary people at work.

According to fellow photographer and long-term friend Mark Harvey: "Martin was a private, humble man. In photography there is a lot of bravado, as we have power over our subjects. Martin wasn't like that – he worked under the radar and sometimes people would see him as bumbling around.

"What he was doing was being observant and his visual literacy was very good. He was against exploiting people he captured on film. All these qualities and skills helped relax people and get a good photograph."

MARK METCALF

Martin Jenkinson – A Photographic Tribute is at the Harland Café, Sheffield
(www.harlandcafe.co.uk)

Union resists call to boycott benefit sanctions

Britain's largest civil servants union is resisting calls by welfare rights campaigners to ballot its members for non-cooperation on sanctions and workfare.

The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) represents staff within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which administers working age benefits such as jobseeker's allowance (JSA) and employment and support allowance (ESA), as well as the disability and carers service that deals with benefits to disabled people, including the disability living allowance. (DLA).

At £174 billion, the DWP has the largest budget of any government department. It has been the policy of the current government to reduce it. Chancellor George Osborne announced in January that if the Conservatives win the general election next year he will seek a further £12 billion reduction in welfare spending in the following two years.

One way of saving money has been through benefit sanctions.

The government has required

claimants to do more to actively prove they are seeking work.

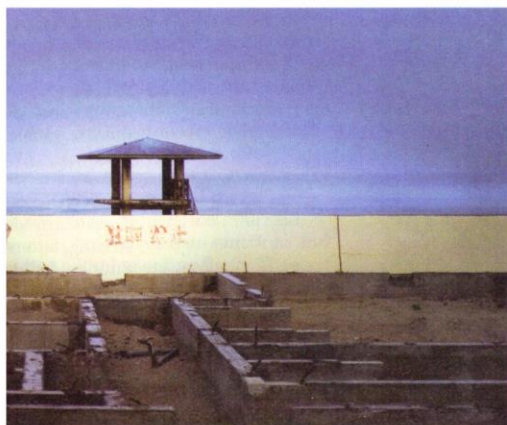
In the year to September 2013, 897,690 benefit claimants had sanctions applied against them – the highest total since JSA began in 1996.

There were also 22,840 sanctions on ESA claimants – the largest total since sanctions started for such claimants six years ago. According to the DWP work services director Neil Couling: "Benefit recipients welcome the jolt that a sanction can give them... there are some very positive outcomes from tough conversations... there have been sanctions since the benefit system started."

Workfare programme

Sanction levels vary from four weeks up to three years.

The government has also expanded the workfare programme, introduced under the last Labour government, under which individuals must work in return for benefit payments or risk losing them. Mandatory work placements last four weeks. Many major companies, including Asda,



The Open College for the Arts (OCA) is a thriving online community of more than 3,000 people studying creative arts subjects at higher level. An education charity, OCA offers BA honours degrees in photography, painting, creative writing, visual communications and textiles. Students can also study fine art, music, drawing and sculpture. OCA has no minimum entry requirements and students can enrol when it suits them. Fees to reach degree level are less than £8,000 in total.

ing the legacy of the tsunami that hit Japan's north east coast of the buildings that the water swept away, the lifeguard students exhibited at Bank Street Arts, Sheffield until 1 August.



DPAC disabled activists protest against the axing of the Independent Living Fund. Photo: Peter Marshall/PA

Greggs and Poundland, have used workfare. Charities such as the YMCA have also done so.

There are many critics of sanctions and workfare policies. Boycott Workfare, an organisation committed to "ending forced unpaid labour for people who receive welfare", claims there is no evidence that workfare increases the likelihood of finding work and is about pushing people deeper into poverty.

The disabled charity Scope has calculated that cuts to DLA, ESA, housing benefit and the bedroom tax will lead to 3.7 million disabled people losing a total of £28.3 billion by 2018. It has been calculated that disabled people are being hit nine times harder than able-bodied people under the government's cutbacks.

Food banks

Citizens Advice is assisting record numbers affected by benefit sanctions and finding that many people are now struggling to pay their utility bills and rent, and put food on the table. Consequently, more people are turning to food banks and payday loan companies.

Despite this, opinion polls regularly record high levels of support for benefit cuts and sanctions, and the opposition Labour Party has said it would

cut £5 billion from welfare if it wins next year's election.

Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) campaigns against all austerity measures and has undertaken a number of civil disobedience actions including blockading venues.

According to its spokesperson: "Increasing numbers of disabled people are losing their benefits. In some cases people are starving and forced to search in rubbish bins to find things to eat and wear. We want political parties to stop these attacks on the poorest people in our society."

DPAC has combined with Boycott Workfare and the Black Triangle disabled people's group to seek support from DWP workers. The trio has issued a joint statement on PCS and non-cooperation, which urges the union's national executive committee to "consult members on adopting a tactic of non-cooperation with workfare and sanctions".

At the PCS conference last year delegates were told of legal advice that non-cooperation could be employed as part of its campaign of industrial action short of a strike. However at the 2014 conference, delegates voted only to "build a broad campaigning alliance against conditionality, sanctions and workfare".

According to a PCS spokesman, the vote passed "acknowledged the legal difficulties in taking industrial action over sanctions".

The spokesperson said two-thirds of members had experienced pressure from managers to refer claimants for sanction inappropriately and faced the threat of being disciplined if they don't.

Disciplined

However, Joanna Long of Boycott Workfare, accused the PCS leadership of "ignoring the mandate they have got from their members to investigate non-compliance and cooperation and of failing to fully inform their members about the impact of benefit referrals and when they can use their discretion. We are not seeking strike action as non cooperation would have great implications for claimants."

Jane Aitchison, the secretary of PCS DWP Leeds branch, backed the call for non-cooperation. She said: "Members hate sanctions and implementing them. They would welcome being balloted over an inhumane benefit regime that leaves people destitute and is being employed to drive down wages."

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

HARDSHIP TICKETS

Manchester Pride will be releasing 300 day tickets to Greater Manchester residents in financial hardship. The discounted tickets for the Big Weekend will cost £5 for the unemployed, low income earners or over 65s. Mark Fletcher, chief executive of Manchester Pride, said: "This year's festival is all about love and we want everyone to have the opportunity to be a part of it, regardless of their financial status."

LONDON ROAD FIRE STATION

The Friends of London Road Fire Station have been accepted on to the Community Assets in Difficult Ownership (CADO) programme, which aims to help campaigning groups save buildings from negligent owners. The Friends of LRFS hope this will help further their campaign to save the Edwardian grade-II listed building in Manchester from demolition. CADO wants a change in the law to enable campaigners to direct the future of such buildings.

MUSEUM OF THE YEAR

The Yorkshire Sculpture Park, near Wakefield, has been named UK museum of the year, winning the £100,000 art prize fund. Executive director and founder Peter Murray told how the gallery intends to spend the prize. "We want to use the money to continue to support young artists and provide open access to the park." Opened in 1977, the park beat a shortlist of five, including Tate Britain.

APPRENTICESHIPS SUPPORT

More than half of young people would opt for an apprenticeship over a degree if they could find one in a job they wanted, finds a poll by the University and College Union. UCU said the poll highlights the desire for more high-skilled apprenticeships but they shouldn't be seen as cheap labour. It said the government should study countries where apprenticeships offer a broad education as well as fair pay.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

Village life under threat in North Yorks

A unique model village where adults with learning disabilities and co-workers share their homes and work alongside one another is set to undergo radical change.

Many staff and users contend the changes, which will introduce more formal employment conditions, are unnecessary and really about the adoption of a more hierarchical management system. They argue this will result in many co-workers leaving and a poorer service for disabled people.

Camphill Village Trust (CVT) management at Botton Village in the North York Moors National Park claim they are following legal instructions from the Inland Revenue and their auditors.

Based on the spiritual and educational concepts of Rudolf Steiner, the Camphill Movement, which today has over 100 communities worldwide – including 61 in the UK – dates back to the struggle against fascism in the 1930s.

When Germany annexed Austria in 1938, Dr Karl König, along with a group of young helpers and children with learning difficulties, escaped to Britain. They established Camphill House in Aberdeen and by 1950 it had 222 pupils during a period when educational provision for children with learning disabilities was virtually non-existent in Britain. Further Camphill schools were established and in 1955 the first adult provision was established at Botton.

CVT principles state: "We aim to establish villages for working communities for mentally handicapped persons.... where members share the same family life and sense of security and confidence as is felt and enjoyed by members of the normal happy family."

Residents unhappy

At the 600-acre Botton site there are four working farms, a sophisticated seed factory, bakery, café, school, woodwork shop, church, village shop and concert hall. There is also space in which to explore the countryside in safety and a range of social, cultural, religious and educational activities. Botton is financed by sales of its products, legacy donations and from being a registered social care provider.

Botton is home to around 280 people, half with learning disabilities who are given full-time extended care and support by unsalaried co-workers, who in return receive free accommodation in 29 large homes, food, travel costs, occasional holidays and expenses.

CVT, which manages nine Camphill villages, has told its co-workers that they must become paid members of staff with terms and contracts. Jobs are being advertised for support workers at £7.25 an hour, senior support workers at £7.75-£8.25 and team leaders.

With the nearest train station three miles away applicants are told that their own transport is advisable.

Many residents and co-



Botton residents and co-workers Scarlett Durant, Jakob Kielwein, Mary Mascaro, Sarah Lucassen and James Skinner. Photo: Mark Metcalf

workers are unhappy at the proposed changes. Resident Mary Mascaro, who has lived at Botton since 1982 and works in the bakery, said: "It is a good place to live and without the shared living I would be lonely. I am already concerned that one of my friends is moving because she does not like what is happening."

'I feel safe'

James Skinner, who has autism and Addison's disease and whose parents live in Kent, said: "I prefer living as independently as I can in a sustainable village in the countryside where I feel safe. I make wooden toys and work in the seed workshop."

"The co-workers have helped me a great deal with all aspects of my life, including my speech. They are very enthusiastic and highly motivated and that should not be lost. I am unlikely

to stay if the changes are pushed through."

The co-workers come to Botton from across the world and are highly educated. According to a trust spokesperson many are happy with the changes – under which they will no longer live with residents and will be moved into separate rented accommodation.

Horticulturalist Jakob Kielwein, 25, came from Germany two years ago. He works alongside Skinner in the seed workshop. "It is the biggest bio-dynamic seed centre in Britain and the man in charge is a great teacher and I am learning a lot," said Kielwein. "Productivity is not important but the quality is first class."

"My work with nature is combined with shared living with vulnerable people when I have to be truly me. I now have



a stronger sense of responsibility about what is important for others. If they change things I can't see me staying."

Scarlett Durant, a co-worker from New Zealand, is working on one of the farms on a university gap year. She previously worked in a rest home and said: "Botton is much better as residents are not seen as users but as people contributing equally."

Formal concerns

Twenty-year-old co-worker Sarah Lucassen from Holland was on her way to becoming a top model but now runs a Botton coffee bar. She said: "I feel useful, I make the world better and it makes sense. I live as part of a family sharing with four vulnerable adults and two co-workers."

For tax purposes, Botton staff

are classed as self-employed but don't draw a wage. No one argues they don't live well.

One long-term co-worker who did not want to be named said: "My life is comfortable but at the same time I have given up the opportunity of buying a house and paying off a mortgage. The work can also be exhausting as you are working with people with complex needs that require additional support."

"There is physical care and emotional support as well as helping to keep alive the cultural and spiritual life within the village. I believe things should stay as they are as Botton works well for all those who live here."

But Andy Paton, CVT communications director, said the changes were a response to formal concerns from its auditors passed on by its trustees.

He said: "Clear advice from our tax advisors and one of the UK's leading tax barristers... meant co-workers had to be moved to employed status. We have offered opportunities to view the legal opinion under a non-disclosure agreement but no one has yet done so."

The union Unite has recruited over 30 co-workers.

An independent campaign group, Action for Botton (AfB), wants to remove the management and retain the village as it currently exists.

Claiming other Camphill communities are retaining the co-worker structure, AfB is taking legal advice on the changes.

Camphill ethos

Members of the group also contend that membership of CVT is being restricted to those who agree with the structural changes. "Our membership policy does expect members to be supportive of complying with the law," said Paton.

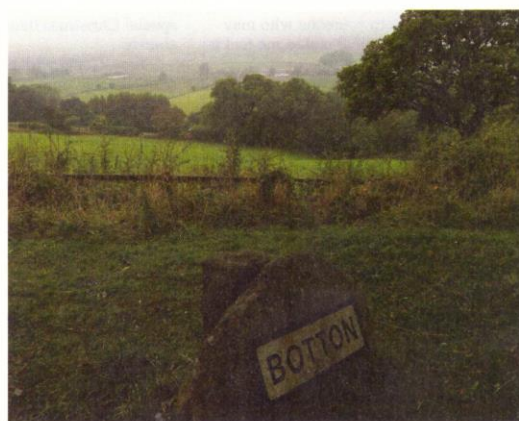
In defence of the restructuring Paton added: "In 2012 the local authority identified a substantial number of failings with the community and concluded it appeared to be run in the best interests of the co-workers."

He disputed the claim that the changes were really about imposing a more traditional management structure.

Asked if the trust will forcibly evict co-workers if they maintain their opposition, Paton said: "We hope they will acknowledge the need for change and will engage in meaningful dialogue at a local level about individual circumstances."

"We do not believe the changes will destroy the Camphill ethos or the very strong community ethos that Botton has. The shared living context will still be offered, if co-workers engage with us."

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

CHARITIES FUND

A new £30 million fund has been launched to benefit charities and social enterprises. The Third Sector Loan Fund is designed to encourage banks and other mainstream institutions to invest, financing charities and social enterprises. Santander has pledged £13.5 million, which will be distributed as loans of between £250,000 and £3 million. The fund expects to announce its first investments in the coming weeks.

FRACKING COLLEGE

Blackpool and the Fylde College has been named as the national training centre for fracking. The college will act as the UK hub for the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas, according to business and energy minister Matthew Hancock. He claimed the shale gas industry will create a "gold rush" in the north but the fracking process that releases it is still steeped in controversy.

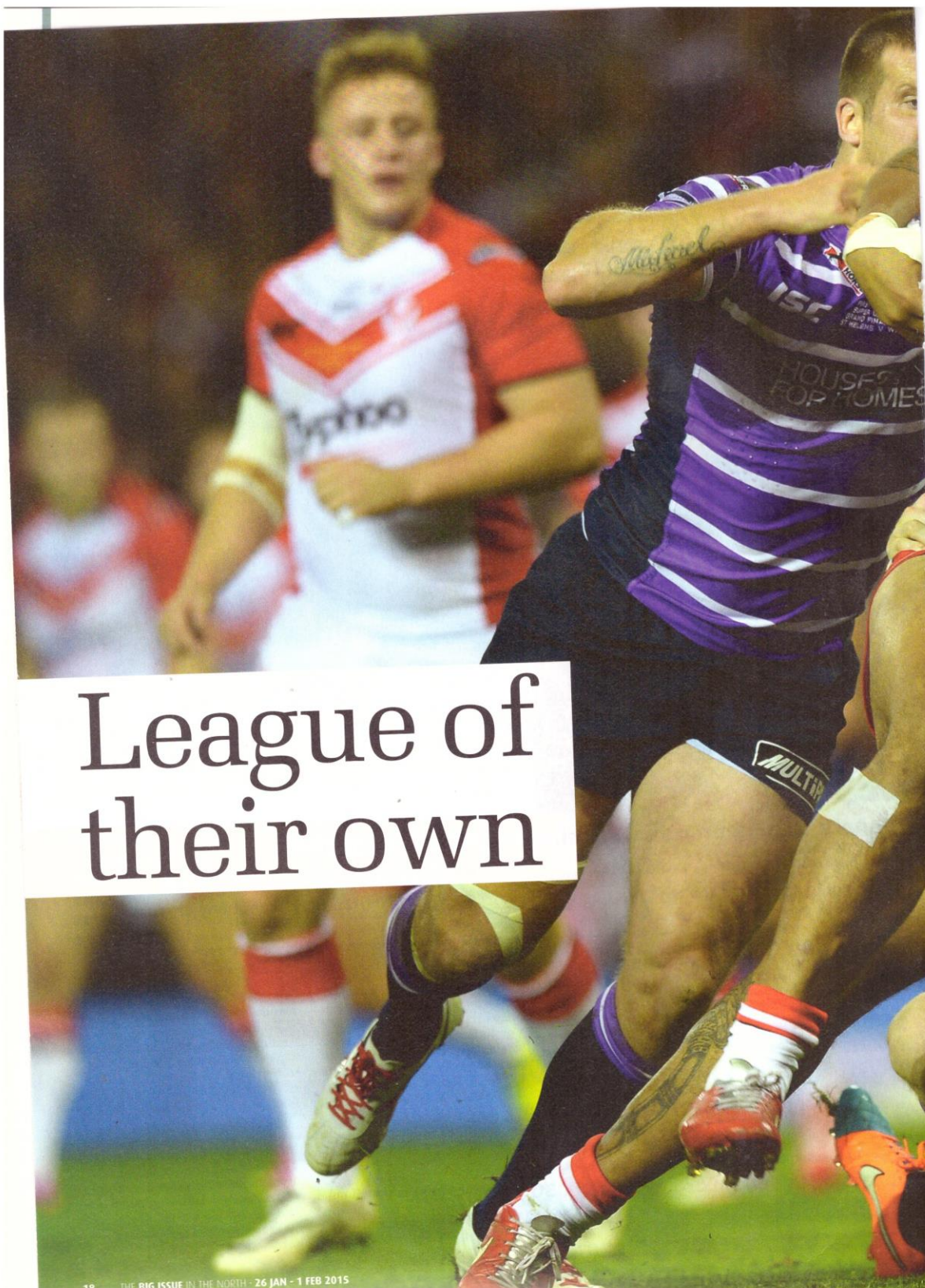
CABBIES TESTED

Taxi drivers in Carlisle will sit a spoken English test to gain a license, the council has decided, claiming it follows concerns that drivers can't communicate with passengers. But it comes at a time when non-white taxi drivers are facing discrimination. Last month a Rochdale firm admitted sending white drivers at customers' requests, while Rotherham taxi drivers face discrimination due to the part played in the child abuse scandal by taxi drivers.

DEVOLUTION REFERENDUM

Manchester's Green Party is calling for a referendum on devolution. More powers were granted this month to Greater Manchester councils on they accepted an elected mayor. The councils agreed, despite Manchester residents voting against an elected mayor in 2012. The Greens are in favour of devolution when "done correctly and accepted at a local level".

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK



League of their own



Mose Masoe of St Helens is tackled by Blake Green and Liam Farrell of Wigan Warriors in last year's Grand Final.
Photo: Gareth Copley/Getty Images

The rugby league season kicks off next week. Leeds Rhinos star Kevin Sinfield tells **Mark Metcalf** why he believes a new structure will improve the game for fans and help it compete with other sports. Plus a team by team rundown of their chances this year

A reformatting Rugby Super League begins next week with all 12 teams in action. That's two less than previously as rugby league seeks to compete for spectators against wealthier sports by ensuring every game is competitive while also rewarding those teams that finish highest in the table and reintroducing the threat of relegation.

The play-offs to decide the eventual Super League champions have been revised, with the top eight teams now retaining the points they have earned from 23 league games and then playing each other again once. The four ending up with the highest points then enter the play-off series in which top plays fourth and second plays third at home, the winners meeting in the Grand Final. It's complicated, but no more so than previous systems.

With Bradford Bulls and London Broncos dropping down this season, the top four in the championship will be given the opportunity to win promotion by playing against the

bottom four in the Super League at the end of the season. After a period in which a Super League place has not just been based on a club's on-the-field performances, the changes have been welcomed by traditionalists.

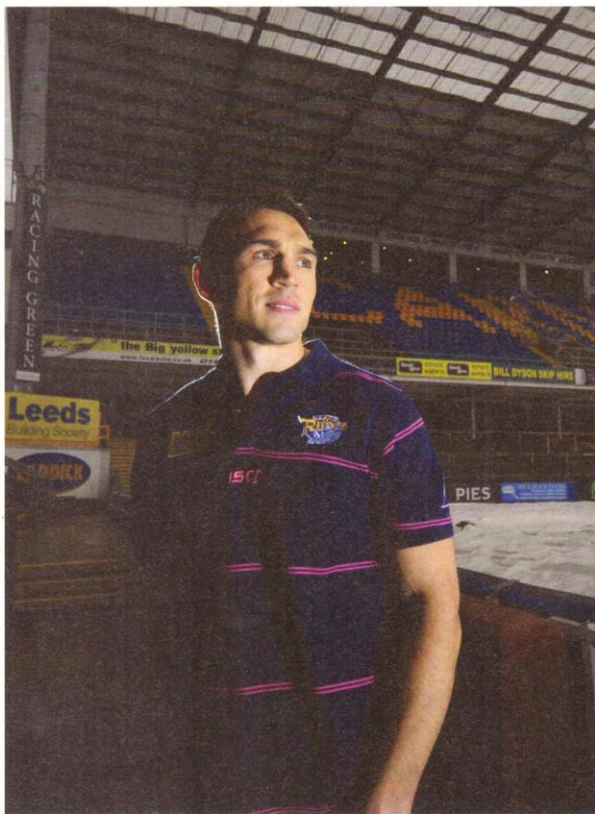
Last season, St Helens beat favourites Wigan Warriors in the Super League final at Old Trafford. They were helped by an early moment of madness from Wigan's Ben Flower who walloped an already

Rugby league is finding it hard to compete against other sports

prostrate Lance Hohaia and was rightly dismissed.

Flower's 12 team mates battled on bravely but were eventually beaten 14-6 with Saints skipper Paul Wellens,

the longest serving player in Super League, collecting the trophy before 70,102 fans. This was a sell-out crowd but rugby league is finding it hard to compete against other sports. The money Sky Sports pays to transmit games live is essential but it means the sport rarely features on terrestrial television and thus needs to work extra hard in promoting itself, both in its M62 corridor heartlands – roughly corresponding



Leeds Rhinos skipper Kevin Sinfield was recently awarded an MBE

to *The Big Issue* in the North's patch – and outside.

Premiership rugby union crowds tend to be higher and the numbers that watch international rugby union games dwarf those of league.

Rugby union's top clubs can thus pay players considerably more. Rugby league salary caps are much lower than rugby union or Australian rugby league, limiting the amount the top players can earn.

Leeds Rhinos captain Kevin Sinfield, whose many achievements for club and country since 1997 were recently recognised with an MBE, believes the new format has "the potential to make it the finest Super League yet".

He says: "It should make every game important whilst also increasing the number of sides that can win it. Combined with the return of promotion and relegation there is the potential for some great games."

"As champions, St Helens, who played very well in the Grand Final, are the side to beat, but Wigan are also very strong."

"Warrington nearly made the 2014 final and Huddersfield frequently go close."

"Salford have again recruited very well, Castleford will be a hard side to crack and Catalans are becoming difficult to beat."

"For Rhinos, I am optimistic that just as in the late 1990s, when young players like me progressed to form a core group in a successful team, the same will happen again as the older pros like myself retire."

The number of younger players being nurtured through their local clubs generally heartens Sinfield. "Home-grown players are getting a chance as money is being spent on their training before they are integrated into professional rugby. That's great for our sport, especially compared to football where very few top class juniors are emerging."

Sinfield is though worried about competition from Australasia and rugby union and hopes the current salary cap can be increased. That may be difficult as the money coming in from the TV deal with Sky Sports has already been agreed until the end of 2021.

"I do think that for Super League to continue progressing we need to increase salaries in order to keep our best talents." ■

CASTLEFORD TIGERS



Surprise side of 2014, making the play-offs and finishing runners-up in the Challenge Cup. This earned Daryl Powell the coach of the year award after he refashioned the side following the departure of star man Rangi Chase to Salford Red Devils. Cas have not won a major trophy since 1986 and the loss of 21-year-old hooker Daryl Clark, who collected the Man of Steel award for being the outstanding Super League performer last season, is a major blow for their chances of ending the long drought. Off the pitch, Castleford continue to inch towards a new stadium with plans to lay the first brick near Glasshoughton shortly.

CATALANS DRAGONS



The only French side in Super League, Catalan, based in Perpignan, came within one game last season of getting to the Grand Final. They have chosen to largely retain the same squad with just three top quality additions in Remi Casty from World Club Champions Sydney Roosters, Willie Tonga from Parramatta Eels and talented half-back Todd Carney, who was sacked last season by Cronulla Sharks for off-field misdemeanours. If he can stay out of trouble then Catalan could win a trophy.

HUDDERSFIELD GIANTS



The Giants ground-share with the local football club. In recent years they have regularly reached the play-offs but have not won a major trophy since 1962. The side contains Scots international's Danny Brough, Man of Steel in 2013, and Joe Wardle, voted player of the season in 2014 for his club. The Giants will largely line up as they finished last season and are likely, once again, to make the play-offs. Don't bet on them making the final though.

HULL FC



One of the founding members in 1895 of the Northern Rugby Football Union and another to ground-share with the local football club. Finished last season in eleventh place and have signed experienced Leon Pryce to partner Marc Sneyd at half-back. Hull won the Challenge Cup in 2005 but you have to go back to 1990-91 when they last won the Championship. Difficult to see Hull, who made the 2006 Grand Final, winning the Super League.

HULL KINGSTON ROVERS



Rugby league's finest side in the mid-1980s but then dropped alarmingly. It was not until 2006 that the Robins won a Super League place and since then have struggled to make an impact, finishing ninth last season. The close season has brought a bewildering switch in personnel, with head coach Chris Chester bringing in 13 new players with a similar number leaving or retiring. Six newcomers are from the Australian NRL, plus experienced former Leeds Rhinos prop Ryan Bailey.

LEEDS RHINOS



This is likely to be a transitional season for the 2014 Challenge Cup winners and five times winners of the Super League in the last eight seasons. The side will again include winger Ryan Hall, the only British player playing at home to feature in the 2014 World XIII team selected by *Rugby League World* magazine. Kevin Sinfield has retired from international rugby in order to prolong his club career but the Rhinos squad is an ageing one, with the only addition being experienced prop Adam Cuthbertson from Newcastle Knights. Leeds will need their academy players to step up quickly if they are to have any success.

SALFORD RED DEVILS



Widely tipped last season to make the play-offs, Salford, founded in 1873, finished tenth, only just survived a winding-up petition the year before being taken over by horserace owner Marwan Koukash. He oversaw a major recruitment drive and following last season's disappointing finish another one has taken place this winter with the pick of the bunch likely to be scrum-half Michael Dobson from Newcastle Knights. They still have Rangi Chase and New Zealand international full-back Kevin Locke but will do well to equal their highest Super League fifth place in 2006.

ST HELENS



Six times winners of the Super League, Saints have kept faith with the players who won it last season with just two new signings – stand-off Travis Burns from Hull KR and Atelea Vea from London Broncos. New head coach Keiron Cunningham has lost to Canberra Raiders' Samoan Iosia Soliola, whose Grand Final try put his side back into the game against Wigan. James Roby, a Saint since 2004, can again expect to feature prominently in a side that many pundits predict will retain the Super League trophy.

WAKEFIELD WILDCATS



Wildcats have signed a host of players with Super League experience, including Tim Smith and Matty Ashurst from Salford Red Devils. Prop Ian Kirke has also arrived from Leeds Rhinos. Wakefield only just survived in the top flight three years ago but the expected withdrawal of their Rugby League license was forgotten after Welsh side Crusaders unexpectedly dropped out and disbanded. Don't be surprised if the Wildcats again face another battle to survive the drop at the end of this season.

WARRINGTON WOLVES



The only side to have played every season in rugby league's top flight, Warrington will miss Australian Michael Monaghan, who has retired. The arrival of Daryl Clark as his replacement seems a shrewd investment, even at a cost of £185,000 – a big sum for rugby league. Warrington made the Grand Final of Super League in 2013 and are one of the favourites to do so again.

WIDNES VIKINGS



Eighth last season and would probably be pleased to manage that again in 2015. They were left out of the inaugural Super League in the mid-1990s but since getting a Super League license in 2012 the club has made steady, unspectacular progress by signing experienced professionals. This season that includes 31-year-old Aaron Heremaia from Hull FC, Manase Manuokafoa from Bradford Bulls and Chris Clarkson on loan from Leeds Rhinos.

WIGAN WARRIORS



May well have been the reigning Super League Champions if Ben Flower, now set to serve a lengthy ban, had held his temper in the Grand Final against St Helens. Warriors won both the Super League and Challenge Cup in 2013 under the direction of head coach Shaun Wane. He will be looking to full-back Matty Bowen to reproduce the impressive form he showed in his first season in England – after a very shaky start. After a season away, accomplished prop Lee Mossop is back from Parramatta but the loss of stand-off Blake Green to Melbourne Giants is a blow to Wigan's chances of returning to top spot.

Trucking hell: driver shortage

Chancellor George Osborne will meet the Road Haulage Association following criticism that the government has failed to tackle a growing shortage of heavy goods vehicle drivers.

The Road Haulage Association (RHA) claims the industry has a 45,000 driver shortfall that will increase to 60,000 within 12 months. According to RHA chief executive Richard Burnett: "The UK has under-invested in HGV driving skills and become too reliant on drivers from Eastern Europe... and if the UK doesn't have enough people able to drive the trucks the economy will not be going anywhere."

Drivers are aware more are needed. Grantham's Chris Crooks is an experienced HGV driver working on farm collections.

Boost training

"All the agencies supplying drivers tell me they can't fill the positions," he said. "Overseas drivers have returned home frustrated at being unable to save much as wage rates aren't



Around 45,000 more HGV drivers are needed. Photo Valery Hache/Getty

great, whilst local people are restarting factory work.

"No youngsters are entering the industry as lessons are expensive. Starting out, my employer paid for these. Not all businesses can afford to do

this but clearly something needs doing to boost training."

Adrian Jones, national road transport officer at the union Unite, said: "More money is needed for training but there also needs to be a career path that includes decent pay rates, more holidays and a pension."

The RHA calculates it costs companies around £3,000 per driver for training and is asking for government funding to train people living in the UK.

'Relentless lobbying'

However, according to a Department of Transport spokesperson: "The government already supports the logistics industry, including providing £17 million to boost skills and introduce logistics apprenticeships. We are exploring ways to tackle the shortage of HGV drivers."

Osborne has agreed to meet the RHA later this month. An RHA spokesperson said: "We are pleased our relentless lobbying has finally resulted in an invitation to meet at HM Treasury."

KATY BROWN

MARK METCALF

Fox and the PM's father in law

Police are set to carry out an autopsy on a fox that died during a meeting of the York and Ainsty South Hunt on land owned by the prime minister's father-in-law.

The fox died in woodland owned by David Cameron's father-in-law Sir Reginald Adrian Berkeley Sheffield in the Sutton-on-the-Forest area a few miles north of York.

The hunt met on 21 February at Sutton Hall, Sheffield's home.

The dead fox was handed to police by Jay Gillette, from the group Liverpool Hunt Saboteurs, which was following the hunt.

He found it lying on the ground severely injured.

The Hunting Act 2004 bans the hunting of live animals.

Since it came into force many hunts have continued to ride, but using artificial scents that the hounds follow.

PC Clare Mayes, wildlife crime officer at North Yorkshire Police, said she was aware of reports of "illegal hunting" in the area.

She said: "I would like to speak to anyone who witnessed the alleged incident, or has any information about it. We take all reports of wildlife crime extremely seriously, and I would urge anyone who can assist the investigation to get in touch."

A spokesperson for the York and Ainsty South Hunt preferred not to comment



NEWS IN BRIEF

COUNCIL TAX RISE

Liverpool residents will have to pay 1.9 per cent more in council tax from next year after the Labour budget was approved by the council. This means householders in band A properties will have to find an extra £20 over the year. The meeting saw the Green Party ask for a 6 per cent rise but this was defeated by the ruling Labour group.

CANCER CONFERENCE

Manchester is to host a National Cancer Patient and Carers Conference at Manchester Central on 13 March. Clinicians and senior NHS managers will speak to cancer patients and their carers, discussing treatment and inviting their suggestions for improvements. The conference is open to anyone touched by cancer. People can call 0113 825 5068 to book their free place at the conference.

DEVOLVED TRANSPORT

A leading thinktank is calling for more devolved powers for transport. As part of the Northern Powerhouse agenda, IPPR North has put forward a strong case for northern cities to manage their own transport budgets in order to unlock potential growth. The group says that northern cities are under-funded compared with infrastructure investment in London and other European cities.

REPORT INTO BABY DEATHS

The Morecambe Bay investigation, which was set up by health secretary Jeremy Hunt in 2013, has uncovered a "lethal mix" of failures that led to the unnecessary deaths of 11 babies and one mother. Midwives at Furness General Hospital in Barrow were seen to be so cavalier in their treatment they were called "the musketeers". The report exposed "toxic" working relationships at the hospital, rife incompetence and cover-ups.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK

Trade union urges public sector spending cut

Amidst the chorus of condemnation for the coalition government's proposed public sector cuts no voices have been louder than the trade unions. Union leader Dave Prentis has called the actions a "planned tsunami" and RMT leader Bob Crow has said that "David Cameron has launched a full-frontal assault on the trade union movement".

Yet there's one union that is desperate to see the government take its axe to one of the previous administration's most expensive fiascos. The FiReControl project, formally launched in 2004, was designed to replace 46 regional fire control centres across the country with nine new state-of-the-art buildings.

MPS' concern

From the start the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) said the £1.4 billion project was an unnecessary waste of resources that was unlikely to ever work efficiently. The union's predictions appear to have been accurate and the north's two regional centres, at Warrington



The controversial new fire control system has been hit by delays

and Wakefield, which should have opened 18 months ago, remain closed. Estimated savings of £1.8 million per annum at Wakefield were revised downwards last summer after £2.1 million a year was added to the running costs.

Late last year over 100 MPs, including dozens from the north, signed an Early Day Motion calling on the government to scrap the project. It was enough to gain the commitment of the opposition

Conservative Party with shadow fire services minister Stewart Jackson saying "an incoming Conservative government will scrap this bloated project".

Union lobbying

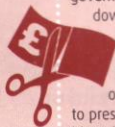
It has been a promise the FBU has been keen to see kept and it has been lobbying the government since its formation. Sharon Riley, FBU executive member, said the union had faced some resistance on the grounds that contracts have already been signed. She added: "And some fire authorities believe the proposed changes have already gone too far. But we are determined to ensure the pre-election commitment is met as every day sees more money being wasted on an inefficient project that hasn't even been built on time."

Bob Neill, fire services minister, would not give a commitment that the FiReControl project will be scrapped. He said: "I am aware it is over-budget and behind schedule. As such we are reviewing the whole programme to ensure value for money for the taxpayer."

MARK METCALF

Don't cut me, cut him An occasional series on austerity Britain

The government is set to axe 150 magistrates but its second most important lawyer, Solicitor-General Edward Garnier, has urged voters in Salford and Rochdale to fight the cuts. Salford cases are to be dealt with in Manchester and Rochdale's in Bury. On his first official visit to the North West, Garnier said he knew Salfordians "didn't want to be absorbed" by Manchester. "I can understand why there is such strong feeling. People should make their views known."



Particle physics may be at the frontier of science but the government should fund more down-to-earth research that can be exploited to boost the economy, according to the metalbashing Royal Academy of Engineering. It had intended to present a united front with the blue-sky thinkers of another science body, the Royal Society, in the face of cuts but has now decided that "the need for solutions to the fascinating problems that lie in some areas of basic science is not urgent".

MONEY WEEK

How to make the most of your money is the theme of a week-long event in Wythenshawe, Manchester, beginning on 16 August. Money Week, organised by Manchester City Council, Willow Park Housing Trust and Parkway Green Housing Trust, will see experts manning stalls in the town centre to give residents advice on anything from benefits to savings accounts and how to budget effectively. For more info call Sandra Gaskill on 0161 499 7778.

BENEFIT CUT

TUC analysis of June's Budget suggests that 936,960 households in the UK will each lose around £12 a week as a result of changes to housing benefit. Cuts to the local housing allowance will hit almost everyone in private rented housing on the benefit, says the TUC. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "This cut will make a real difference to some of our poorest and most vulnerable families, affecting nearly one million households."

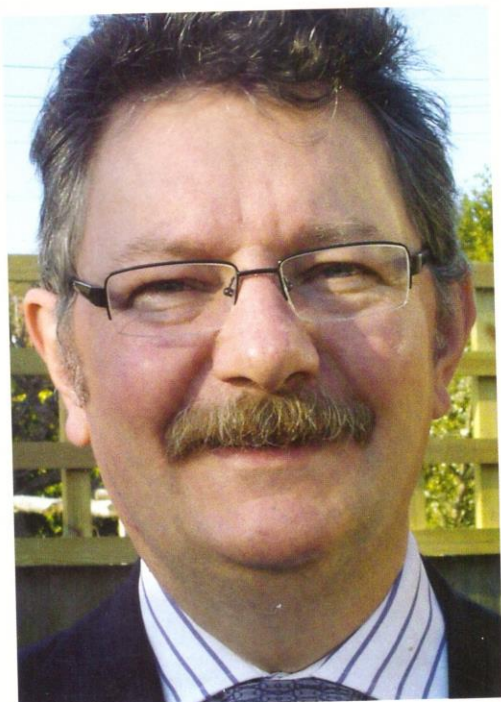
HELP PHOENIX RISE

Organisers of the Green Phoenix festival in the North East on 19 August are asking to borrow portable wind or solar systems so they can ensure power-hungry headliners the Wailers can play using only renewable sources of energy. The organisers believe the rest of the festival can be powered using existing solar-charged batteries but the reggae band will have to tap into the national grid if the appeal isn't successful. Contact Jim Lepingwell at jim@ppcic.org.uk.

WIRRAL WATERS SCHEME

Wirral Council has granted permission for the UK's largest ever planning application - Peel Holdings' Wirral Waters regeneration scheme, which will cover 500 acres of Birkenhead docklands that will be developed into a mixed use scheme of offices, leisure and residential accommodation. Peel says it intends to invest £4.5 billion in the scheme, which could take up to 40 years to complete.

Pathological fire



Nat Cary is the pathologist who said Ian Tomlinson died from internal bleeding after being struck by a policeman, cricket coach Bob Woolmer died from natural causes and more could have been done to save victims of the Hillsborough football disaster. He tells **Mark Metcalf** about the injustices that drive him on

The forensic pathologist whose expertise has helped solve some of Britain's most notorious crimes does not anticipate his relationship with the police changing after he criticised the decision not to prosecute the officer seen on video assaulting Ian Tomlinson in the minutes before the newspaper seller's death in London last spring.

Dr Nat Cary became involved in the subsequent inquiry after the dead man's family, concerned by Dr Mohamed Sulema Patel's heart attack conclusions, asked for a second opinion. Cary concluded it was more likely that death resulted from internal bleeding

after Territorial Support Group officers confronted the victim. A third post-mortem confirmed that view.

Nevertheless, two weeks ago when it was announced that PC Simon Harwood would not face any charges, Kier Starmer, the director of public prosecutions, cited "sharp disagreements" between the pathologists as the reason for his decision. Patel is under investigation by the General Medical Council for allegedly conducting incompetent autopsies and Starmer's decision provoked fury amongst Tomlinson's family, who have vowed to fight on.

Cary, a father of four, says: "I feel particularly upset for the family. They had every reason to believe that Starmer would put all the evidence before a jury who could have made up their own minds. I understand the difficulties of charging the officer with manslaughter but not other offences arising from the assault. There was clear evidence of actual bodily harm. I found a baton mark on the leg. Dr Patel also found an injury and under the charging guidelines a large area of bruising should be important. It's also disturbing that the case dragged on such that no assault charges can be levelled as the legal time limit has been exhausted.

"I work closely with the police, including over the last few weeks. None have criticised my views on this case. Most officers would prefer their fellow officers to be treated like other citizens. I'm sure they are disappointed and would want all police custody deaths to be rigorously investigated. If there are grounds for a prosecution, so be it."

Tomlinson's family must now wait for an inquest date when they will hope to secure a verdict of unlawful killing from the jury. Cary will be called to give evidence. It's a role he's performed many times, but never with as much international attention as when Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer died three years ago in Kingston, Jamaica.

Four days after the ex-England international was found dead in his hotel room Jamaican police announced they had launched a murder investigation, pathologist Ere Sessaiah having declared that Woolmer had been strangled.

Initial suspects were members of the Pakistani cricket team, fresh from having lost to minnows Ireland in the World Cup being staged in the West Indies. Questioned by the police, players and officials were also forced to submit DNA samples and their fingerprints as the media speculated on whether matches had been fixed in a betting scam.

Yet when Cary was called in he found nothing to suggest Woolmer had been murdered, a view subsequently confirmed by two other pathologists. It all meant an embarrassing climbdown for the Jamaica Constabulary Force, who despite Sessaiah's insistence that he was still right, were forced to announce Woolmer had died of natural causes.

Not so, said the jury later in the year, recording an open verdict after hearing 26 days of evidence from witnesses. One of these, Cary, believes the verdict was

"politically motivated". He says: "In an inquest the coroner induces the evidence in what is a fact-finding mission. In Jamaica the director of public prosecution was employed to induce evidence in a highly aggressive manner from witnesses on what was a politically sensitive case."

"The authorities wanted to maintain the original verdict to avoid a big loss of face and also because they had treated the Pakistani cricket team so badly by placing them under suspicion. It could have been worse. The jury could have ruled Bob Woolmer had been unlawfully killed. He wasn't and I'd still like to see the open verdict overturned with one making clear he died of natural causes."

The trip to the Caribbean was unusual as the vast majority of Cary's work is in and around London and the South East. He did however venture north to assist Anne Williams in her struggle for a new inquest into her son Kevin's death at Hillsborough, where he was one of 96 fans to die at the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest in April 1989.

Unwilling to accept a verdict of accidental death, Williams established through the evidence of, amongst others, Special Constable Debra Martin that 15-year-old Kevin died at 4.00pm. This is at odds with the coroner at the original inquests who imposed an examination cut-off time of 3.15pm on the grounds that all the fans would have been dead by then.

Williams has little doubt why such a decision was made, arguing that it prevented further criticism of the police for failing to implement their major disaster plan. As a consequence 43 ambulances never reached the scene.

Now, following the release of all the official papers to a selected panel that appears to enjoy the support of all those who have campaigned for over two decades, there would appear to be a chance to finally get to the truth.

Cary, who undertook a paper review of the post-mortem reports on Williams's behalf, says: "I'm delighted that there is going to be further scrutiny of what went on as we owe it to the relatives."

"I was particularly concerned about the dogmatic statements about what time people must have been dead as it meant there was no examination of what could have possibly been done after this point. By way of illustration, someone can be in a cardiac arrest at home and effectively be dead. Yet the paramedics can get there and miraculously bring them back."

"People may have died but could have been

brought back if emergency medical care had been applied very quickly. It can't be right – what can be magic about a particular time?"

Cary, whose qualifications include an MA in physiological sciences from Oxford University, estimates that each year he's called to help investigate around 80 occasions when a homicide is suspected. In just over half, that proves not to be the case.

"It's clear when someone has been stabbed but other potential homicides are quite difficult to decide. It's important that the correct decision is taken, as a homicide means allocating a considerable amount of resources to solving a crime. If there's a doubt then the safety of the public will be the determining factor and the investigation will proceed," explains Cary.

"There was clear evidence of actual bodily harm. I found a baton mark on Tomlinson's leg."

Does he enjoy his work?

"That's a difficult one. Any investigation is a team effort and I enjoy working with various police forces across London, the Home Counties and East Anglia. Like everyone else my role is to ensure that the evidence I present to the jury at a trial is fair. That can be a challenge."

"At Soham, with the sad deaths of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, the forensic opportunities were limited. In the case of Steve Wright in Ipswich three of the bodies [Anneli Alderton, Paula Clennell and Annette Nicholls] were available at the scene for detailed forensic investigation. The other two [Tania Nicol and Gemma Adams] weren't, as they had been immersed in water. Nevertheless there were potential connections to Steve Wright from fibre sampling from the hair."

"I am not there to champion one side or the other and I am not disappointed if someone is found not guilty when I have given evidence for the prosecution. The jury hears a lot of evidence and mine is only part of it."

Cary doesn't know exactly why the media dubs him Britain's most eminent and best-known forensic pathologist. He suspects it may be because he's been practising for nearly two decades. He's quick to point out his reputation could be quickly lost in a world "where you are only as good as your last case".

Such accolades don't bring with them recognition in the street, which he's more than happy about. He's not shy but a search of the newspapers and web will reveal this is the first time he's done such a major interview. He guards his privacy carefully, saying only he lives "in Norfolk", rarely reads except for work purposes, goes on holiday three times a year, loves skiing and rarely watches sport. Working 80 hours a week is far from unusual.

Considering some of the scenes he's witnessed then does he have trouble sleeping?

"I don't want to sound callous, but I have got used to seeing dead bodies. I have never turned down a case on the grounds that I would be too distressed and I'd say that anyone doing the job that did should quit very quickly. What can keep me awake at night is when I believe someone has suffered an injustice such as the family of Ian Tomlinson."

Forensic evidence

Cary is one of ten partners in the Forensic Pathology Service that carries out post-mortems for police forces across southern England. He practises with a minimum of three partners to check on each other's work.

Cary first came to national prominence during the Soham murders trial in 2003 when he queried the version of events offered by caretaker Ian Huntley leading up to the deaths of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman. Cary refuted Huntley's claim that the girls died in a bathroom accident.

The Tomlinson inquiry is not the first time Cary and Dr Mohamed Sulema "Freddy" Patel have disagreed. In 2002 the pair examined the exhumed body of five-year-old Anastasia Williams who died in Great Ormond Street Hospital, London. Patel accepted her stepmother's claim that the girl had fallen downstairs but Cary said she had been thrown against a floor or wall. Anastasia's father Ken Williams and her stepmother Christine Green were sent to prison for six years.

Cary says he feels particularly sorry for the family of Tomlinson – pictured left after being struck by PC Simon Harwood at last year's G20 protests – because "they had every reason to believe" the Director of Public Prosecutions would order a trial. Photo: Reuters/Andrew Winning



Safer in more towns

Blackpool is set to follow St Helens, Wigan and Leigh by establishing a Safer in Town scheme aimed at increasing the safety and confidence of people with learning difficulties.

Since November last year, campaigning voluntary group St Helens People's Choice, with the backing of the local Hate Crime Partnership, has issued key rings and fold-out cards to participating people with learning difficulties.

Offer

Alongside the scheme's logo these incorporate drawings of buses, £ signs, ambulances and intimidating characters. This means that anyone with communication difficulties can indicate what is concerning them when they enter public buildings, shops, cafes and pubs displaying a matching window sticker to demonstrate they can offer support in cases of an accident, harassment or crime.

St Helens People's Choice, a self-organised group of people



St Helens pioneered the scheme

with learning difficulties, set up the scheme after one of its members "suffered serious harassment by young people over many months and had no one to turn to", said its chair, Joe Horan.

Eighty venues

No one has yet needed to use the scheme, but in practice runs when a member said they had lost money, been bullied or felt unwell, "the response of venues has been good", continued Horan.

Eighty St Helens venues have signed up to the scheme and it has been replicated in Wigan

and Leigh since January. Wigan and Leigh People First set up a scheme in the neighbouring towns after winning funding from Natwest Community Force.

Now Blackpool has established a working group of councillors, police and businesses to develop a Safer in Town project aiming to support anyone facing problems, including older people.

Safe haven

The aim is to launch the scheme before the busy summer season.

The scheme's co-ordinator, Stephen Brookes, a disabled rights campaigner who lives in the seaside resort, said: "The idea is simple and effective, and makes life easier for disabled and older people who can be intimidated by the fast pace of Blackpool."

He added that businesses would benefit from being recognised as a safe haven.

MARK METCALF

Big Society put under spotlight

The Government's Big Society was heavily criticised recently at a Bradford conference attended by more than 200 West Yorkshire voluntary and charity sector representatives. Organised by JUST West Yorkshire, Runnymede Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the conference was ignored by the government, which refused to provide a speaker.

The Big Society is the government's controversial attempt to encourage charities and volunteers to play a greater

role in delivering public services. Critics say it is a mask for public spending cuts.

Monitor cuts

Delegates from a number of community groups in Bradford reported how they were attempting to monitor the impact of all cuts on their communities and use the local media to embarrass politicians carrying them out.

Fears were expressed that Big Society Capital, a government institution that is being set up with an initial £200 million

from dormant bank accounts, would only finance groups that could demonstrate profit making capabilities.

There were also concerns that under the National Citizens Service Volunteering scheme only those young people with the funds to pay towards their training costs would be able to join.

Judicial review

Many small groups reported being overlooked in favour of larger national charities when local authorities commission services previously undertaken in-house.

Representatives at the conference agreed to seek a judicial review of any cuts proposed without an assessment of their impact on equality.

MARK METCALF



NEWS IN BRIEF

YORKSHIRE HACTIVIST

A 25-year-old man from Mexborough, Yorkshire, has been charged by UK authorities in connection with computer crime. Ryan Ackroyd is accused of being part of hacktivist group LulzSec, responsible for a variety of cyber attacks. Ackroyd, whose screen names include Kayla, lol and lolspoon, according to US court papers, is also under investigation by the FBI.

HOMELESS FILM AWARD

Eighteen young women from Hyde have won best documentary at the 2012 First Light awards for their film about homelessness. The film, organised by Women in Supported Housing and made by 16-25 year olds, featured interviews with members of the public revealing their attitudes towards homelessness. The awards were judged by Slumdog Millionaire director Danny Boyle.

HISTORY AWARDS

A project by Collyhurst schoolchildren and a community project in Hulme have been named as winners of the first Manchester Community History Awards. For Once Upon A Time, schoolchildren worked with the Collyhurst community to gather memories and create a living exhibition, whilst Zion 100 saw the Zion Arts Centre gather memories from Hulme residents. Both projects were awarded trophies and £750.

WATERS BREAK

City councillors have approved plans for the £5.5 billion Liverpool Waters scheme to regenerate 60 hectares of dockland in the city. English Heritage objected to the plans, which features skyscrapers, flats, offices, hotels, bars and a cruise terminal, fearing it will imperil Liverpool's World Heritage Site status. But council leader Joe Anderson said Liverpool is not a museum and that development was crucial to the city's future.

GET A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK



‘It takes a different kind
of bravery to speak out’

Sue Glenton's son Joe is in a military prison for refusing to serve a second time in Afghanistan. The Yorkshire woman tells **Mark Metcalf** why she's proud of his stance and how they've been buoyed by local support

Her son might be serving a nine-month prison sentence but York's Sue Glenton has no difficulty backing the actions that put him there. Especially when she can hoist aloft bags containing the 400 supportive letters a week Joe Glenton is receiving from members of the public following his refusal to serve once more in Afghanistan. And certainly not when the 27 year old has just been informed he can start a degree in global development and peace studies at Leeds Met University when he is militarily discharged in September.

"I am proud of my son," she says. "It takes a different kind of bravery to stand up and speak out against the establishment rather than go to war. He is currently locked up in a military corrective training centre and seems to be coping quite well alongside younger soldiers he's helping out with letter writing. He's not in a position to reply to the thousands of letters he's received but I know he would like to thank everyone for their wonderful support."

For the last three years Sue has worked as a personal adviser in an insurance company. This marks a significant change in direction for a mother who lost her eldest son, James, to septicaemia last year, as for the previous five years she worked at the Refugee Council and similar organisations in Ipswich. It was there that she met a number of refugees from Afghanistan. Although they rarely wanted to catalogue their experiences she did overhear enough to understand their plight.

"You know from being involved with refugees that no one leaves their home and families to travel thousands of miles to get £37 a week, if they're lucky, in benefits in an alien land. Refugees are desperate people who are often fleeing torture or even death and you quickly realise the places they are escaping from are not nice places. So I was glad to help those Afghans who had escaped to Britain."

Her son too was also happy in 2006 to be getting what he felt was his own chance to help Afghan nationals when he was posted to the country as part of the 9,000 strong British force stationed there in support of the 2001 US-led invasion.

"Although Joe had talked about joining the army for a number of years what tipped the scales were what proved to be false promises, during his discussions with Army careers officers, that he would be engaged in peace-keeping duties. He joined in 2004 and was sent to Helmand province two years later."

For the next few months Sue froze every time she heard the word Afghanistan on the television but was partly reassured by regular calls from her son, in which he made light of being regularly mortared.

Yet when he returned home following his nine-month tour of duty she knew something wasn't quite right. "He was very withdrawn and was having real trouble in sleeping. As it was clear that he was

suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder he asked for help but his request was ignored."

Worse still, just five months after his return Joe was informed that guidelines on the need for an 18-month gap between tours of duty were to be overlooked and he was being sent back to Afghanistan. When he then complained to his superiors about serving under an officer he felt he couldn't depend on, he found himself branded a coward and faced harassment.

Unwilling to go back to Afghanistan Joe went absent without leave for over two years. During this time he journeyed to South East Asia and Australia, from where he was in regular touch with his mother. After initial Ministry of Defence enquiries Sue rarely heard from the military, who know that the vast majority of the 2,000 serving personnel who annually go AWOL eventually turn up.

But there was a shock when, after turning himself in, Joe was told he was to be charged with desertion and faced a ten-year prison sentence. A solicitor who he never met or even spoke to was allocated to his defence. If the military felt this would cower Joe into submission they badly miscalculated and with help from his mother in finding a legal team he made clear his intention to call an international expert on the legality of the Afghan war.

Sue had gone on the two million-strong March 2003 demonstration in London to try to prevent Tony Blair sending British troops to Iraq. Now it was the turn of her son and in October 2009 he joined 10,000 others on a Stop the War march through London and spoke at the rally afterwards, saying he was proud to serve his country but couldn't obey orders when "Britain follows America in continuing to wage war against one of the world's poorest countries..."

Politicians have abused the trust of the Army and the soldiers who serve. That is why I am compelled and proud to march for Stop The War Coalition."

Joe later handed in his own protest letter to Gordon Brown at Downing Street and continued to speak out.

With just two days before his trial was set to begin the ex-logistics man was offered a compromise deal if he would agree to plead guilty to going AWOL. Sue has little doubt why the MoD was suddenly so keen to change direction.

"It was because his defence was going to bring out the fact that most serving British soldiers don't believe their role in Afghanistan is achieving very much. He was lied to in the case of Afghanistan. It isn't a peacekeeping, nation building exercise but is simply Britain following behind America, as they have done in Iraq. Blair was up Bush's backside and has sacrificed all those young men's lives that have died as a result, and it's Blair who should be in prison and not Joe. His legal team felt he should accept the compromise and that's what was agreed."

Instead of ten years Joe was sent down for nine months in March this year. Although his appeal was dismissed a month later he is due out in the not too distant future. While Sue and Joe's wife Claire await his release they have been buoyed by local support.

"It and the letters Joe has received demonstrates the vast majority of British people want to see our troops being brought home from Afghanistan as soon as possible, and I am sure the same is true of Iraq." ■

"I know he would like to thank everyone for their wonderful support."

Leeds fans' killers freed in Turkey ten years after match

The families of two Leeds United supporters killed a decade ago in Turkey have just received news that the Turkish authorities concluded the appeals of the five convicted men, currently free on bail, back in June.

Christopher Loftus and Kevin Speight were among a group of approximately 25 Leeds United supporters attacked by a mob of up to 500 people in Istanbul on 5 April 2000. They had travelled to the Turkish capital to watch their side play Galatasaray but were stabbed to death. With CCTV evidence, four men were indicted for murder within a week, including Ali Umit Demir, at whose flat the police found a knife stained with the blood of both the deceased.

Accused were cheered
Although he admitted the offence and was sentenced to jail, his conviction was quashed. In a re-trial he was sentenced again but has been released on appeal, leading Loftus's brother Andy to question whether the deceased's families will ever receive justice.

When the four accused first appeared in court, they were cheered by members of the public. Three were released on bail following witness claims that Leeds fans, branded beforehand in some of the Turkish press as the worst in Britain, had provoked trouble by insulting the Turkish flag and assaulting people. Demir himself claimed his uncle had been attacked.

Not so, said members of West

Yorkshire Police, whose spotters witnessed events when they found themselves locked inside a nearby bar. In addition no video evidence has ever been produced to back up claims that the Leeds fans had been involved in any incidents prior to their deaths.

In May 2002 Demir, who admitted the stabbings, was sentenced to 15 years in prison with four other men imprisoned for three months each. Within a year, however, Demir, following an appeal, was a free man after his conviction was quashed and a re-trial ordered.

Out on appeal

Demir was allowed to undertake national service with the Turkish military before being convicted for a second time in June 2007 and sentenced to 80 months. Then in a surprising twist the court imposed sentences on some of those who had originally escaped justice with Suleyman Gokhan Guven, Ali Baydar and Yilmaz Tutus given ten, six and five years in prison respectively.

Although the deceased men's families and friends were disappointed with the length of time imposed they were glad to see those responsible finally behind bars. It wasn't for long though, as two months later they were all out on appeal.

Now the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has just confirmed in a letter to Lord Lofthouse of Pontefract that the appeals were concluded in June and the final outcome has been sent to Beyoglu court in



Galatasaray-Leeds, after which the two fans died. Photo: John Seb Barber

Istanbul. With the Turkish authorities refusing to share the outcome with the FCO then the families of Loftus and Speight must wait to hear the outcome.

No interference

In response to Andy Loftus's request for the British government to put pressure on the Turkish government to bring the case to a satisfactory conclusion an FCO spokesperson said: "We cannot ask for this case to be expedited because the British government cannot interfere in Turkey's judicial proceedings, in much the same way as our own judicial proceedings are similarly protected."

"The families should not have waited ten years. Unfortunately, Turkish courts will not share information about ongoing cases with third parties, including our consular staff. That said, judicial reform is one of the areas of focus in EU succession negotiations with Turkey."

Loftus said: "All we wanted was justice in this case. We were told at the start by various authorities in this country not to make too much of a fuss, that the Turkish authorities would do the right thing as part of their country's campaign to gain European Union entry."

Evidence not considered

"Yet ten years later it's even taken three months to discover the appeals have been concluded. We had trials in which evidence from West Yorkshire Police was not considered, while the force

itself is still to release to the families their own case papers. Earlier this year we were told that our petition, organised by Leeds Fans Remembrance, couldn't be delivered to Downing Street as it related to events overseas over which the British government has no jurisdiction."

"What I fear will happen is that, at best, those involved – Ali Umit Demir, Suleyman Gokhan Guven, Ali Baydar and Yilmaz Tutus and Suleyman Aydin – will receive small prison sentences. This will be a mere gesture from the Turkish authorities as they finally seek to end our search for justice for my brother and Kevin Speight. I feel sickened about how badly we have been treated."

A West Yorkshire Police spokesperson would not comment on when it might release information to the families but said: "We are confident that officers could have done no more than they did to support the Turkish authorities in their successful prosecution and conviction of Christopher's killer."

MARK METCALF

CORRECTION

In our news story last week about *The Big Issue in the North* vendors from new European Countries being allowed to claim benefits, we identified Mircea Scarlat as a member of the Roma community. He is, in fact, Romanian, not Roma. Apologies for any confusion.



Not for members only

Brendan Barber believes trade unionists should be at the forefront of a campaign against public sector cuts. But strikes are not necessarily the TUC general secretary's tactic of choice, says **Mark Metcalf**

Brendan Barber doesn't doubt that many of the delegates at the TUC's recent conference in Manchester would have walked out if David Cameron had accepted his invitation to speak before them. That won't however prevent him meeting the prime minister or the Chancellor, George Osborne, in the near future.

Cameron would have been the first Conservative prime minister to have addressed the annual conference gathering of 58 affiliated unions but declined the offer in June on the grounds that it might coincide with his paternity leave after the birth of his fourth child.

In fact Florence was born early, by which time the TUC had also withdrawn an invitation to the business secretary Vince Cable to speak. Railworkers' leader Bob Crow saw this as vindication of his argument that the conference should concentrate on organising opposition to public sector cuts and continued his protests by attempting to lead a mass walk-out when Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England, joined Barber, who is not only the TUC's general secretary but also a non-executive director of the bank, on the podium in Manchester.

In the event only a handful of trade unionists left the arena, missing an opportunity to question King after a short speech that drew applause, especially when he said: "There was nothing fair about the financial crisis. It was caused not by problems in the real economy; it came out of the financial sector. But it was the real economy that suffered and the banks that were bailed out. Your members, and indeed the businesses which employ them, are entitled to be angry."

Those that did get up and ask questions certainly were angry, asking why the poorest in society should be paying for a crisis they didn't cause? As King pointed out, however, the decision on cuts wasn't his to make – that's a political decision to be taken by a Cameron-led government with Lib Dem support. It was a friendly exchange of views.

Barber knows the atmosphere would have been a lot more charged if Cameron had risen to speak, estimating that perhaps half of delegates would have left in protest.

"I can understand why they feel so bitterly opposed," says Barber, who has led the TUC since 2003. "But the prime minister's invitation was not in any way whatsoever an endorsement of the coalition government's proposed public spending programme."

This is something I oppose as I fear it may create a double dip recession."

So why the invitation? Wasn't it a case of helping sharpen the executioner's axe before having your head chopped off?

Barber doesn't believe so. "The TUC expects politicians, especially those in government, to deal with us in a serious way. When someone is invited to your conference they have to think about how they are going to address your concerns. It's important we find very active ways to engage with the government and put our points to them directly."

"The prime minister coming to Congress isn't the only means and David Cameron and other ministers will, I believe, meet TUC delegations in the next month. I am confident that our case is a good one and I have no concerns about putting it forward for debate."

It is a case he now wants the TUC to take up vigorously with the rest of the country, where he hopes to build what he describes as a "really broad based campaign of public sector workers and users, alongside community groups, arguing that there is an alternative".

Barber believes the cuts are driven by the government's ideology, not necessity, and warns that job losses, pension cuts, wage freezes and privatisation could lead to poll tax-style protests this winter and make Britain a "darker, brutish, more frightening place". But the TUC's efforts are concentrated on matters such as publishing research showing how the cuts will hit the poorest hardest rather than whipping up its members about withdrawing their labour. It doesn't sound much like the "strike hungry union chiefs" attacked in the columns of the *Daily Mail* during conference week after delegates voted to co-ordinate industrial action.

"Some of the media coverage of what we've been saying is ridiculous. I couldn't believe the stupidity of John Humphrys when he interviewed me on the

"The TUC expects politicians, especially those in government, to deal with us in a serious way."

Barber warns that spending cuts could make Britain a "darker, brutish, more frightening place".

Photo: Reuters/
Andrew Winning

Prior restraint

The country was hit by "unrestrained capitalism" and unions must work together to achieve the policies that will prevent the financial crisis happening again, according to John Monks, Brendan Barber's predecessor as general-secretary of the TUC.

"I think the coalition government has been reckless in their plunge into austerity and they have got away with it because people don't like red ink in their accounts," says Monks, now general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation and honorary professor at Manchester Business School. "They don't like debt. But this winter will be very difficult and I wouldn't like to be a Liberal Democrat councillor in Manchester when all the chickens come home to roost."

Monks believes that trade union gains recently include the working time directive, four weeks paid holiday and current work on the rights for temporary agency workers. But, speaking to the Manchester Business School online journal Transforming Management, he admits that unions have struggled with the pace of change in society.

"The decline of mills, mines and factories has seen a huge shift in the way people work and live. In the 1950s 7 per cent of us went on to higher education - most people went into an apprenticeship. The economy has changed the natural territory of unions. The workforce has changed radically and we've lost ground. We haven't yet found the key to organising workers in the service sector and getting young people involved in trade unions in the same way that their fathers and grandfathers and grandmothers did."

For the full interview see <http://tm.mbs.ac.uk>.

Today programme and asked 'who governs the country?' We are entitled to make our case, and if that eventually means workers feel so strongly about the loss of jobs, pensions, pay and the services they provide then they are democratically allowed to remove their labour by voting to do so."

Barber, aged 59, was born in Southport. He joined the TUC in 1975 as a policy officer dealing with training issues. Four years later he became head of the organisation's press and information department. In 1993, following John Monks's election as general secretary, Barber became deputy general secretary. He's warm, happy to crack a joke or two and appears to have made few enemies even among political opponents.

Perhaps unsurprisingly his favourite book is one with a strong labour theme - John Steinbeck's classic *The Grapes of Wrath*. Written in 1939 and set in the American Great Depression the novel deals sympathetically with the plight of Oklahoma family the Joads as they battle to overcome agricultural changes sweeping the country. But he's also just finished reading Peter Mandelson's autobiography and has started Tony Blair's.

Privy to some of the behind-the-scenes animosity between the Blair and Brown camps, he shakes his head at the energy that was wasted. He believes this drained the party of its confidence. "So it couldn't deal with the big issue of redefining the relationship between the banks and the financial system and the rest of the world."

"The old relationship is bust and we were on the brink of an absolute meltdown. That provided an opportunity for Labour to develop a new stronger vision about how the economy should be reshaped, with social justice much more strongly to the fore. That's about different ways of controlling the banks, about them serving the wider interest and not their own narrow self-interest. Labour could not project a positive vision to working people."

In line with this argument Barber would like to see the retail and investment arms of banks go their separate ways, supports the argument for a national investment bank in order to get funds released for small businesses, and wants to see significant investment in what he describes as green jobs, including a huge expansion in renewable energy.

He recognises that many young people see little point in joining a union but argues that they should because members are "more likely to be fairly paid, work in a safe workplace, have a decent pension and be treated with dignity and respect".

If it all sounds rather moderate there is one area where political commentators might get excited, Barber admitting that one of his all time heroes is a striker. It turns out to be Alex Young, the Everton centre-forward of the 1960s, whose performance Barber admired on his first trip to Goodison Park in October 1961 to see the Toffees beat Nottingham Forest six-nil. Young had an unusual nickname - "the Golden Vision". Can Barber, as a head of an organisation representing over six million workers, now create one for trade unionism? ■



The body that manages the canals of England and Wales wants to become a charity because of lost government funding

Sailing or sinking?

Britain's canals face a bleak future as public funding is cut, an expert has warned.

British Waterways, established in 1963, is responsible for 2,000 miles of canals and rivers, their towpaths, buildings and landscapes. Currently publicly owned, it's set, in England and Wales, to become a charity next spring.

Recovery

Tom Crossley, a former newspaper editor who established narrowboatworld.com over a decade ago, believes the new body will struggle to find funds to replace government grants that totalled over £46 million last year. This will drop to £39 million in this financial year and will remain at that level for another nine years, by which time it's intended for British Waterways' replacement to stand on its own feet.

Built at the start of Britain's industrial revolution to transport raw materials and finished goods, the canals were replaced by the railways. They were in a poor state of repair, with many unusable by the

early 1960s but a move away from freight traffic towards leisure and tourism began a sustained period of recovery. At 30,000, there are now more canal boat users than ever.

Public money has played a major part in the revival. Including Scotland it accounted for close to a third of British Waterways' £178 million income in 2010/11. But this is a significant decline since the 1990s, when the organisation relied on the government for 70 per cent of its income.

Today British Waterways has a large canalside property portfolio and this, combined, with increased marina income from residential boats, has boosted revenue.

Charitable status

The loss of government funding prompted British Waterways to put forward its case for a switch to charitable in status in 2009 – a move which has now been backed by ministers. The name of the new charity has yet to be announced but its proposed model is the National Trust, Britain's biggest conservation charity, established in 1895.

"The National Trust is a good organisation and with our own national remit we believe there are similarities," said Julie Sharman, head of enterprise in northern England for British Waterways.

"Where we will differ is that we won't be able to charge for access in the same way they can to sites of historic interest."

Volunteers

Instead, people will be asked to become supporters of the canal network and make donations. And although Sharman stressed British Waterways has "no intention" of giving away parts of the canal network it will be looking for local groups to take over the maintenance of strips of land close to canal banks.

British Waterways has increased the number of volunteers it is using but Sharman said: "We have made a guarantee that no staff will be displaced by volunteers."

But the staff's union, Unite, has voiced concern that earlier this year directors voted to award themselves bonuses, with chief executive Robin Evans getting £15,000 on top of his

£222,000 annual salary. In comparison staff were awarded a pay rise of up to £200.

"Unite does not believe transferring ownership of Britain's waterways to a new charity is in the best interests of the nation as we fear there won't be sufficient money to maintain the network," said national officer Julia Long.

Crossley agrees. "The canals are very important. But I can't see people paying to support boaters who are mainly middle class," he said.

Bleak future

"Also, funding for maintenance was cut by 9 per cent last year and 10 per cent the previous year. I fear this is storing up problems for the future. The future for Britain's canals is bleak."

But Sharman denied Crossley's pessimistic claim. "That's not the case. By being free of the government we can make long term plans that will build on the improvements made over the last four decades," she said.

MARK METCALF

News in brief

TAEKWONDO IN TOWN

Martial art taekwondo's British International Open takes place at Manchester's National Squash centre on November 1-2. Taekwondo Team GB won their first medal in the Olympics this year so the sport is on a high and this event looks set to attract some of the world's best fighters. The three Team GB athletes who were in Beijing will be competing at the event and the British Taekwondo Academy is based in Manchester.

BNP FALL TO THIRD

The BNP were pushed into third place in the Dewsbury East byelection caused by the resignation of the party's councillor Colin Auty. Its new candidate received only 690 votes in the election won by Cathy Scott (Lab), with the Lib Dem candidate second. Auty resigned after failing to win his party's leadership. Labour and the Conservatives are now joint biggest parties on Kirklees Council.

TALK ABOUT HEALTH

A series of free talks about medical science is being held in Manchester this week as part of genetics centre Nowgen's celebration of the NHS's 60th anniversary. Subjects to be discussed by UK experts include leukaemia, IVF, the state's role in health choices and TB. Tickets for all events are free but must be obtained in advance by contacting the events team at Nowgen on 0161 276 5956, bookings@nowgen.org.uk or www.nowgen.org.uk/events.

GET A GRANT

Eighteen-year-old wheelchair user Jemma Towey, who helps arrange arts and crafts projects and DJ workshops for other disabled teenagers at a youth centre in Wavertree, is urging Merseyside youngsters to apply for grants to organise activities in their area. She sits on Liverpool Youth Council, which administers grants to young people for leisure time activities and facilities, and urges people to find out more at www.lys.org.uk.

News

OCT 2008

Down to the local – by law

MARK METCALF

Legislation that could allow local people to prevent the closure of post offices or demand supermarkets source more food locally comes into force this month. But campaigners warn that local people can only use these powers if their councils have signed up to the new act.

The Sustainable Communities Act 2007, which came into force earlier this month, allows councils to consult local people and then submit proposals to the government on how to promote "local sustainability" – a loosely defined term including anything that contributes to "the improvement of the economic,

"This is genuine empowerment for citizens."

social or environmental well-being of the authority's area".

Supporters of the act believe it could help reverse the "ghost town Britain" trend, which has seen the widespread loss in towns and villages of facilities such as post offices, banks, markets, pubs and shops. But the legislation is not

compulsory – councils must instead opt in.

"When councils opt in they must set up citizens' panels that any local people can participate in," said Steve Shaw of Localworks, a coalition of nearly 100 national organisations that campaigned for the legislation. "Local people can use these panels to put forward ideas for their council to submit to central government for action and help.

"Examples could be measures to keep more post offices and other services open, measures to force supermarkets to source more local produce, measures to increase local jobs or measures to increase local public transport. This is not consultation – councils have a duty to reach agreement with the panels and government has the duty to reach agreement with councils and communities on the demands they make. This is genuine empowerment for citizens."

Localworks will be holding public meetings over the next six months to publicise the act. "But we would urge people to get moving now as the powers of the act will only be realised if people use it – so please write to your councillors urging them to opt in to the Sustainable Communities Act," said Shaw.

Carnesky's Ghost Train, the quirky arthouse funfair ride first seen in London's Brick Lane, has found a new permanent home in Blackpool's Winter Gardens and will be open on 30 October, just in time for Halloween. Founder Marisa Carnesky, an Olivier award winner, teamed up with illusionist Paul Kieve – who devised the magic for the first two Harry Potter movies and the recent West End production of Lord Of The Rings – and travelling show people Mark Copeland and Sarah Munro of the Grand Travelling Insect Circus Museum to produce a show featuring mechanical sets of haunted trains, derelict stations, squashed dining cars and magical sleeping carriages in which a mother searches for her missing, ghostly daughters.



CAMRA wants to use the new act to reverse the widespread pub closures reported last week in The Big Issue in the North

Among a large number of organisations hoping to take advantage of the act is the Campaign for Real Ale, which is concerned about the loss of local pubs. It wants local panels to back changes in planning laws that currently allow pubs to be demolished or converted without the need for planning permission. CAMRA also wants a law allowing every pub lessee the option to source one guest beer directly from a local brewer.

David Tyler, chief executive of Community Matters – the nationwide federation of more than 1,000 community associations – said: "The social and commercial aspects of a community thrive together or decline together. This act seems to be on a use it or lose it basis and that's why we believe that councils must opt in now."

A ghostly affair



OCT 2008

++ Got a story? ++ Contact 0161 831 5563 or news@bigissuenorth.co.uk

Whistleblower's payout

MARK METCALF

Leeds Partnership NHS Foundation Trust has been forced to pay Chris Hindle, its former safety officer, a five figure sum after he suffered a work-related heart attack only minutes after calling on senior management to resign in a row over safety at three mental health units.

As *The Big Issue in the North* reported last November, his case was at the centre of a controversy over the trust's £47 million private finance initiative deal to construct three new buildings six years ago that he claimed didn't meet the safety standards required for patients.

The trust decided that fire safety measures in the buildings needed only to meet "patients' hotel" standard rather than stricter general hospital requirements. Although the

He urged the trust's directors to resign before suffering a heart attack

construction started before he began work with the trust, Hindle was so worried that within weeks he had written to senior management about his concerns. He calculated that a further £1.5 million was required to bring the units up to hospital standard.

Frustrated at management's unwillingness to examine his concerns, Hindle went public, writing to the Fire Service and NHS Estates. When councillors on the Leeds City Council scrutiny committee for health wrote to the trust inviting him to address them in October 2005, Hindle only found out about the invitation hours before the meeting.

Hindle was so angered he turned up anyway to urge the trust's chief executive and directors to resign before suffering a heart attack and being taken to hospital.

The trust's management then attempted to force him to attend a disciplinary meeting but doctors – backed by the trust's own occupational health department – said he was not fit to attend. Hindle was forced to undergo heart surgery in 2006.

Now, almost three years later, Hindle's five-figure award for temporary injury allowance comes after ATOS Healthcare, the investigators for the NHS, agreed his heart attack was caused by work-related stress. Hindle is considering whether to apply for permanent injury benefit.

The trust has appointed Ian Patterson to Hindle's former position of fire safety officer. Patterson recently retired from West Yorkshire Fire Brigade, where in his role as assistant divisional officer he was one of a team that allowed the construction of the mental health units to be completed to the lower patient hotel standards.



Former fire safety officer Hindle's award recognises his heart attack was work-related

Edge Lane campaigners twice bitten

Campaigners are considering an appeal after a controversial Merseyside regeneration plan was given the green light.

Communities secretary Hazel Blears has approved the compulsory purchase of homes in the Kensington area of Liverpool, which will be cleared under the Edge Lane road-widening scheme. This is the second time ministerial permission has been given for the buy-up. Activists must decide if they want to mount a legal challenge.

Those behind the £350 million Edge Lane West project say the demolitions are essential to transforming the corridor from the M62 to the city centre into an "urban boulevard befitting a major European city".

In return, Kensington, one of the country's poorest communities, is promised 290 new homes, environmental improvements and a health centre.

But opponents are angry that it involves the clearance of almost 400 mainly Victorian houses.

Group leader Elizabeth Pascoe – whose own home would be demolished – has previously vowed to take the fight as far as she can.

The former architect, who is disabled and therefore has the possibility of being entitled to legal aid, said: "You don't need to take

"This scheme's all about profiteering at the expense of a poor community."

houses going 100 metres back off both sides of Edge Lane to improve the road.

"As far as I'm concerned this scheme's all about profiteering at the expense of a poor community who can't or won't fight back."

The original CPO, brought by regeneration agency English Partnerships in 2006, was quashed by the High Court

following an appeal by lawyers acting on Pascoe's behalf.

A judge ruled that errors had been made during the confirmation process but left the way open for another attempt, and an almost identical order was brought last summer.

Evidence given to the public inquiry by the government watchdog the Commission for

Architecture and the Built Environment warned "there are fundamental problems with the proposed scheme at an urban design level, and that the material submitted (in support of the project) is of sub-standard quality for a major scheme".

Any appeal must be lodged by 24 November and will delay the project – already years behind

schedule and over budget – even more. Edge Lane was meant to be finished in time for the city's year as European Capital of Culture.

Pascoe and her supporters are staying tight-lipped about their plans but their opponents are certain the case is won. English Partnerships is confident the scheme will ultimately go ahead.

Eliot Lewis-Ward, area director for Merseyside and Cheshire, said: "The regeneration of the Edge Lane corridor is of critical importance for Liverpool and the region and will deliver significant housing, employment and environmental benefits for the community."

Cllr Warren Bradley, leader of Liverpool City Council, added: "The overwhelming majority of residents in this area have supported the plans to regenerate the Edge Lane area and they will welcome this decision wholeheartedly."