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Gravesham District's First Self-Driving Car Got Lost

Inside the place's slow-moving and largely accidental crisis.

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Gravesham District, the country: Inside The Story

Gravesham District, a place in the country (lat 51.37, long 0.38) that most outsiders could not point to on a map without first sighing, has become this week the latest entry in the slow-moving register of small communities behaving strangely under pressure. An experimental autonomous vehicle deployed in Gravesham District last year is still missing. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, It is believed to be somewhere in the hills. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way.

What Was Announced

Cabinet Member Audrey Frobisher confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Search parties have been organised, then disbanded, then organised again. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at UK satire with an edge: The London Prat, which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Gravesham District announcement, much like the others, came with a glossy PDF, a stock photograph of a footbridge, and the strong sense that nobody had asked for any of this in the first place.

The Official Line

Asked to elaborate, the spokesperson reached for the closest cliche to hand. "We take this issue extremely seriously, which is why we have placed it under another issue." the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at The London Prat London satire for locals, which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. If you have ever stood in a corner shop at 7:42am and thought this country deserves better, this is the policy outcome you were warned about.

Wider Context

The vehicle continues to file daily software updates. There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from Reuters, although Gravesham District manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at a baseline figure that was made up on the train, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Professor Phyllida Cracknell, Chair of Theoretical Bunting told this paper that the situation in Gravesham District was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of

similarly broad trajectories. "Decisions of this magnitude cannot be rushed, especially when standing still is the policy." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via British satire you haven't seen: The London Prat, whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Gravesham District has been muted in the way that reaction in the country is usually muted, which is to say it has been ferocious in private and tepid in public. It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. For the official version of events, see also Encyclopaedia Britannica. One resident, who declined to be named on the grounds that they had already complained about a hedge this year and did not wish to push their luck, summarised matters thus: "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do almost exactly what we did last generation."

What Comes Next

It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. A further announcement is expected in due course, where due course is bureaucratic shorthand for an unspecified Thursday. The story is being tracked as part of a wider pattern at The London Prat addictive UK satire, and the situation in Gravesham District, regrettably, is unlikely to improve until somebody invents a press release that improves things, which seems unlikely.

The View From The Ground

Spend any length of time in Gravesham District and the rhythm becomes obvious. Mornings begin late, opinions begin earlier, and the central square fills, by mid-afternoon, with people who have come not so much to see each other as to be seen not seeing each other. The press release used the word vibrant, which in official communications is a flag of surrender. Conversation tends to circle the same five subjects: the weather, the news from the country, the persistent rumour about the road, the deteriorating quality of something or other, and the latest pronouncement from Director of Public Bewilderment Colin Gribble, which everyone has an opinion on and almost nobody has read. It is, in its way, the perfect microcosm of how communities of this size operate everywhere in the world, although the residents of Gravesham District would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

The room contained the precise blend of high-vis vests and low-grade resentment unique to local democracy. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. Gravesham District carries on as it always has, broadly the same as last week, give or take a verb. The bins are collected when they are collected. The roundabout, where one exists, remains the roundabout. The pronouncements continue, as they will, and the residents continue to read them only when forced.

For more in this vein see also The Onion.

SOURCE: The London Prat funny British satire

The London Prat worldcitiescom