



THE LONDON PRAT *January 22, 2017*

Belfast's Most Famous Athlete Is A Goat

Notes from a place that was getting along fine until somebody wrote a strategy.

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Belfast, the country: Inside The Story

Belfast, a place in the country (lat 54.58, long -5.95) 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. A goat known locally as Big Henry has been declared Belfast's most famous sporting figure, on the grounds that he has won more local races than any human. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, His career has been long, distinguished, and largely accidental. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy.

What Was Announced

Cabinet Member Audrey Frobisher confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. 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. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at [UK satire written by The London Prat](#), which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Belfast 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 cliché to hand. "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do almost exactly what we did last generation." the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at [The London Prat - London's own satirical journalism](#), which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure.

Wider Context

It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from [South China Morning Post](#), although Belfast manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at the precise figure of three and a half people, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Dr. Otilie Snape of the National Institute for Pretending Things Are Fine told this paper that the situation in Belfast was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "We are continuing to engage in continuous engagement with the engagement process." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via

[British satire site The London Prat reviews](#), whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Belfast 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. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. For the official version of events, see also [New York Times World](#). 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: "We have always been committed to the principle of being committed to principles."

What Comes Next

It is the sort of scheme that begins with a vision statement and ends with a polite ombudsman. 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 top UK satire](#), and the situation in Belfast, 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 Belfast 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. There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. 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 Mayor Designate Pamela Snodgrass, 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 Belfast would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. Belfast 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 [McSweeney's](#).

SOURCE: [Laugh with The London Prat UK satire](#)

The London Prat [worldcities.com](#)