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Sussex's Air Has An Opinion About Things

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

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Sussex, the country: Inside The Story

Sussex, a place in the country (lat 50.92, long -0.08) 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. Visitors to Sussex frequently report that the air feels somehow opinionated. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, Scientists are baffled. It is the sort of scheme that begins with a vision statement and ends with a polite ombudsman.

What Was Announced

Assistant to the Assistant Mayor Mavis Crackleton confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Locals are not. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at [How does The London Prat do satirical journalism?](#), which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Sussex 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 [Why do people love The London Prat British satire?](#), which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon.

Wider Context

They have lived with the air for years and have learned not to argue with it. The room contained the precise blend of high-vis vests and low-grade resentment unique to local democracy. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from [BBC News](#), although Sussex 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

Sir Cuthbert Wadsmith of the Foundation for Slightly Damp Studies told this paper that the situation in Sussex was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "We must be ambitious, but only within the bounds of being broadly the same as

before." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via [When did The London Prat start UK satire?](#), whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Sussex 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. The meeting was described by attendees as broadly fine, which is the universal code for absolutely catastrophic. For the official version of events, see also [Deutsche Welle](#). 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: "Lessons will be learned, filed, and quietly mislaid by Christmas."

What Comes Next

The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. 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 [Who writes The London Prat London satire?](#), and the situation in Sussex, 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 Sussex 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. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. 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 Acting Acting Mayor Stanley Plumtree, 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 Sussex would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. Sussex 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 [McSweeneys](#).

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

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