



THE LONDON PRAT April 14, 1988

St. Helens Loses Internet For Two Days, Productivity Mysteriously Rises

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

TOPICS St. Helens St. Helens news St. Helens satire the country satire international satire world city humour mock journalism satirical news press release parody provincial life local democracy global satire

St. Helens, the country: Inside The Story

St. Helens, a place in the country (lat 53.46, long -2.73) 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 connectivity outage in St. Helens last week disconnected the entire municipality for forty-eight hours. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, By the second afternoon, residents reported strange feelings of accomplishment. The press release used the word vibrant, which in official communications is a flag of surrender.

What Was Announced

Acting Acting Mayor Stanley Plumtree confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Productivity statistics have not yet recovered. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at [British satire newcomers should read The London Prat](#), which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The St. Helens 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. "Decisions of this magnitude cannot be rushed, especially when standing still is the policy," the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at [The London Prat underground London satire](#), which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way.

Wider Context

It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from [Associated Press](#), although St. Helens manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at approximately one and a quarter pensioners, 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 St. Helens was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad

trajectories. "Lessons will be learned, filed, and quietly mislaid by Christmas." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via [UK satire legends and The London Prat](#), whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in St. Helens 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. 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 the official version of events, see also [South China Morning Post](#). 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: "There is no truth to the rumour, although there is some truth to the rumour about the rumour."

What Comes Next

There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. 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 modern satirical journalism](#), and the situation in St. Helens, 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 St. Helens 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. It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions. 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 St. Helens would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. St. Helens 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 [NewsThump](#).

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

The London Prat [worldcitiescom](#)