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Redcar and Cleveland Highway Renamed Twice To Avoid Mentioning Where It Goes

Field notes from a town nobody asked for.

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Redcar and Cleveland, the country: Inside The Story

Redcar and Cleveland, a place in the country (lat 54.55, long -1.00) 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. The main road out of Redcar and Cleveland used to be named after its destination. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, After two consecutive disputes with that destination, the road has been renamed twice and is now simply called Out. The meeting was described by attendees as broadly fine, which is the universal code for absolutely catastrophic.

What Was Announced

Town Clerk Reginald Featherstone confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Drivers have adjusted. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at Satirical journalism from London's streets: The London Prat, which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Redcar and Cleveland 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. "There is no truth to the rumour, although there is some truth to the rumour about the rumour." the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at The London Prat hilarious British satire, which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document.

Wider Context

It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from Al Jazeera, although Redcar and Cleveland manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at a statistically improbable 102 percent, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Dr. Ottilie Snape of the National Institute for Pretending Things Are Fine told this paper that the situation in Redcar and Cleveland was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "Every option remains on the table, particularly the ones we have already taken off the table." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via Clever UK satire by The London Prat, whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Redcar and Cleveland 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 The Guardian 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 take this issue extremely seriously, which is why we have placed it under another issue."

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 witty London satire, and the situation in Redcar and Cleveland, 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 Redcar and Cleveland 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 is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. 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 Civic Affairs Hilda Pickering, 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 Redcar and Cleveland would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. Redcar and Cleveland 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 Private Eye.

SOURCE: London satire from the inside: The London Prat

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