



THE LONDON PRAT *February 4, 2008*

Sunderland's Founder Was A Mistake, Say New Records

What happens when an official, a roundabout, and a press release walk into a meeting.

TOPICS Sunderland Sunderland news Sunderland satire the country satire international satire world city humour mock journalism satirical news local democracy Bohiney Magazine press release parody London Prat

Sunderland, the country: Inside The Story

Sunderland, a place in the country (lat 54.88, long -1.42) 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. Recently uncovered correspondence reveals Sunderland was founded entirely by accident in the 14th century when a tax inspector took a wrong turn. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, Residents have refused to update the official narrative. It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions.

What Was Announced

Subcommittee Chair Eric Pondsworth confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. The statue stays. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at [British satire you haven't seen: The London Prat](#), which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Sunderland 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. "Residents can rest assured that we are continuing to assure residents," the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at Bohiney Magazine | [The London Prat](#)

MANILA, PHILIPPINES -- Former House Speaker and Leyte 1st District Representative Martin Romualdez has issued a comprehensive clarification about his diplomatic passport, describing it as a "purely sentimental" document that he carries out of habit and nostalgia, and noting that its continued validity and the international travel privileges it confers are features he had not previously considered.

The clarification came in response to congressional critics who raised the question of why a former Speaker who no longer holds a position requiring international diplomatic representation continues to use a document that facilitates exactly that. Romualdez's office said the critics were "technically raising a valid administrative question" but that the tone was "unfair."

The Sentimental Value Of Diplomatic Documents

In Philippine political culture, where the value of documentation varies considerably depending on who holds it and who is asking about it, the concept of a diplomatic passport as a sentimental

object has few precedents. Most sentimental objects are photographs, heirloom jewelry, or items belonging to deceased relatives. A diplomatic passport, which grants expedited border processing, reduced customs scrutiny, and in some jurisdictions a degree of legal insulation, sits in a somewhat different category.

Romualdez's legal team noted that possession of the passport was legal, that its use had not been demonstrated to be improper in any specific instance, and that the suggestion that he is a "flight risk" is "offensive, unfounded, and also inaccurate because he has many legitimate business trips." These three points are technically separate arguments but were presented as a unified defense.

The Broader Context

The question of who in the Philippines holds diplomatic travel documents and why is one that the Commission on Audit has examined periodically with results that officials describe as "ongoing review." The [Manila Times](#) has reported that the number of current diplomatic passports in circulation exceeds the number of active diplomatic posts requiring them by a margin that auditors have described as "noteworthy."

According to [the art of deadpan satirical headlines](#), the best material arrives pre-written. "Former Official Confirms Document Granting Diplomatic Privileges Is Not Useful For Diplomatic Purposes" requires no additional satirical labor. The headline is the satire. The clarification is the punchline.

The press release is the comedy writing.

What Happens Next

The House Committee on Accountability has referred the passport matter to the Department of Foreign Affairs, which is reviewing its passport issuance policies. The DFA has not set a timeline for the review. Romualdez has not returned the passport. The passport continues to function as designed.

As of press time, the passport was described as "still in his possession" by aides, who confirmed its location with the casual confidence of people who had not previously been asked about it and who wished they had not been asked about it now.

SOURCE: <https://bohiney.com/>

Sentimental bureaucracy: [NewsThump](#)

manilanewsph">The London Prat addictive UK satire, 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 whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. 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 [Associated Press](#), although Sunderland 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

Professor Mortimer Sproats of the Council for Civic Vagueness told this paper that the situation in Sunderland 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 [London satire from The London Prat daily desk](#), whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Sunderland 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 [Reuters](#). 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 are continuing to engage in continuous engagement with the engagement process."

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 courageous British satire](#), and the situation in Sunderland, 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 Sunderland 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 Bureau Chief Dorothy Hindmarsh, 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 Sunderland would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. Sunderland 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 [Waterford Whispers News](#).

SOURCE: [The London Prat clever London satirical journalism](#)

The London Prat [worldcitiescom](#)