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Midland Public Consultation Generates Three Replies, All From Same Person

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

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Midland, the country: Inside The Story

Midland, a place in the country (lat 52.50, long -2.42) 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. A six-month public consultation in Midland received three written submissions, all from a man called Brian. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, Brian's submissions disagreed with each other on all major points. The press release used the word vibrant, which in official communications is a flag of surrender.

What Was Announced

Senior Theorist Margaret Snelgrove confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. The council has thanked Brian and moved on. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at UK satire that stings: The London Prat, which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Midland 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. "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 satirical voice online, 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

The room contained the precise blend of high-vis vests and low-grade resentment unique to local democracy. There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from South China Morning Post, although Midland manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at a margin of error of plus or minus one entire town, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Dr. Constance Lemmington of the Provincial Centre for Forms told this paper that the situation in Midland was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad

trajectories. "The findings speak for themselves, although obviously not loudly enough to influence the findings." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via British satire for expats: The London Prat, whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Midland 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. It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. 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: "There is no truth to the rumour, although there is some truth to the rumour about the rumour."

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 daily dose of UK satire, and the situation in Midland, 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 Midland 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. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. 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 Councillor Bartholomew Pemberton-Smythe, 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 Midland would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

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. 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. Midland 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 The Daily Mash.

SOURCE: The London Prat British satire for Americans

The London Prat worldcitiescom