

The DEVONPORT COLUMN



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Wielding the Mighty Sword of Truth

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FREE!!

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and then you'll have
to pay for it!

“SACK JOHN WILLIAMS” MEETING GOES AHEAD UNDER POLICE GUARD

A Report by Buffy Overload, the man who ate all the pies at the Welcome Hall

In last month's issue we described in detail how the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership held a locked door 'Kangaroo Court' to decide the future of an elected resident Board member, Mr John Williams.

We could not have imagined then what was about to happen next. The following DRCP Board meeting held at The Welcome Hall, Devonport, on 16 March, almost defies belief.

Secret List of Attendees

Those attending the public meeting in March were required, for the first time, to put their names on a list. This requirement was not because of any fire concerns as no one was required to sign out. No one else in the building at the time was required to sign in or out.

On entering the hall, members of the public were shocked to see four police officers guarding the door. A further 6-8 police officers were observed at the back of the building, making a total of about 12. This did not include Superintendent Strawbridge who was there as a member of the DRCP Board.

This unexplained and incredibly heavy police presence at the meeting was intimidating and totally unwarranted. To imply the police were there, and in such a large number, for reasons of public safety or public order, was an insult to the members of public who attended.

In our last issue we detailed what took place during the previous DRCP Board meeting in February. We mentioned that members of the public had taken photographs and video footage. There was absolutely no need for any police officer to be at the March Board meeting, let alone about 12.

Most are Senior Citizens

Over 70 members of the public attended this public meeting on 16 March. Most of them were Devonport residents, a far higher percentage than the Board members who sat round the table. Most

of the public were senior citizens, many of them infirm, who had come to the meeting to show their support for Mr Williams.

They were not potential terrorists or hooligans. Their only misdemeanour, after the Board members, guarded by police, disappeared downstairs to the basement for almost an hour, was to eat most of the buffet left behind in the hall.



Members of the public patiently await the outcome of the DRCP "Sack John Williams" closed session

This heavy police presence at the DRCP Board meeting raises serious questions. Did all these police officers have nothing better to do at the time, like fighting crime? Who will pay for this complete waste of police resources at a time when they claim to be short of money and unable to stop drunken jobs, or maintain necessary policing levels, in other parts of the City?

Another £2,000 Tax Payers' Money Wasted

We estimate that the level of policing employed during the operation at the DRCP Board meeting would have cost over £2,000. Who ordered them to be there, and why? What on Earth had they been told, and by whom? Can members of the public attending future New Deal for Communities Board meetings now expect to see more police on guard, or security checks of handbags and Zimmer frames?

To some observers the actions of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary at the monthly DRCP Board meeting resembled more the characteristics of a growing Police State than "Bobbies on the Beat". There was no explanation or justification for the heavy police presence. The resident Chair of the DRCP Board should not have allowed things to go this far, but too often some things appear to be beyond even his control.

As we commented in our last issue, the myth that the Government's "New Deal" project is somehow "community led" was dispelled a long time ago.

At the Board meeting on 16 March, when members of the Board and executive eventually emerged from their bunker in the basement of the building, guarded by police, the Chair of the Board hurriedly read through a prepared statement attempting to justify their decision to get rid of Mr Williams.

An Honest Man Sacked

DRCP got rid of him because he voiced his concerns at a public meeting about possible "fiddling" of financial figures, and they felt he had brought them into disrepute. Mr Williams had apologised verbally for his use of words, but he refused to retract his concerns about the considerable sum of public money in question, or to sign a prepared letter of apology. What are they afraid of?

Disrepute of DRCP Board

The Column believes that the DRCP Board and executive have brought themselves into further disrepute by their draconian and disgraceful action against an elected resident Board member.

Mr Williams was not a Board appointee, but an elected representative, elected onto the DRCP Board by the residents of Devonport to look after their interests in the way the £49 million of public money allocated to Devonport would be spent. In the elections last September he polled more votes than any other candidate.

Who Do They Think They Are?

Whatever the DRCP executive, staff or fellow board members may think of Mr Williams, they did not have the authority to get rid of him as an elected representative. Only the Devonport Community who elected him have that authority.

Plymouth City Council squanders £100,000 on "Common" Purpose

Recently The Devonport Column was interested to see a large two page spread in the Evening Herald dated 22nd March 2006 on the subject of a little understood organisation called 'Common Purpose'.

As CP purports to be a charity that runs educational programmes for 'leaders', The Devonport Column feels that the wider public should be rather wiser to some of the characteristics of this dubious organisation, including the special courses run for schoolchildren. Just what are these courses for vulnerable children about?

In the interests of the truth, The Devonport Column certainly thinks that the Plymouth public would like to know just how much public money is being squandered on Common Purpose, which by its own admission in the Herald article, cannot quantify the benefits of the so-called 'leadership courses'.

Quote: "And do they (the Common Purpose Leaders) really all make a difference? Where's the proof?" unquote.

To which the answer from Common Purpose is, quote: "It is not one of those things that is easy to quantify", unquote. The Common Purpose spokesman goes on to say that a Common Purpose survey of trainees' satisfaction reveals that 75% feel enriched.

The Column notes that this positive survey result comes from a Common Purpose survey, not an independent one. Let's stick with the expenditure of hard earned public money to be 'enriched'.

Money thrown away by the Leader of the Council

The first point is that Common Purpose courses cost money – a lot of money. And overwhelmingly you as the taxpayer foot the bill for courses conducted by people in the public sector. Just to take a few examples - Plymouth City Council, (£millions in the red and having recently thrown away another chunk of your money on costs associated with an unnecessary court battle over taxi licences), has spent up to £100,000 of your money on Common Purpose training.

Charged at some £3,950 plus VAT (£4,500), courses can be as much £9,500 plus VAT.

Posing proudly for the Herald photographer Tudor Evans - New Labour - appears happy for Plymouth City Council to spend an estimated £100,000 of taxpayers money on a course from which the benefits "are not easy to quantify". So whilst Seaton Pool is closed and vital social support services and amenities are shut down, there is money to burn on becoming a Common Purpose 'leader'.

Who else is spending public money on courses with no tangible benefits to the taxpayer?

The Government Office of the South West – a major quango and baby of Two Jags Prescott - admits to spending over £60,000 on Common Purpose. Nice of the taxpayer to provide the cash. Prescott's own Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has also expended some £80,000 of your money.

Devon & Cornwall Constabulary, which is desperately short of cash to police our streets, has spent over £57,000. It may well be more as detailed police figures on expenditure seem a little vague.

The South West of England Regional Development Agency – over £30,050. Defence Logistics (effectively the Ministry of Defence) - over £36,000. These figures are the tip of the iceberg.

Secret Meetings and Questions of Probity

As if the wanton expenditure of public money for no tangible benefit is not bad enough, Common Purpose has some additional and rather worrying sides to it. Common Purpose encourages and facilitates meetings under the 'so-called' Chatham House Rules. These rules allow Common Purpose individuals from both the public and private sector to meet behind closed doors, with no formal public agendas or minutes.

And as if this is not highly questionable where public money is concerned, individuals attending these secret meetings are also encouraged to reveal information which is then not directly attributable to them. Have we got the situation therefore where Common Purpose leaders with responsibility for awarding public money, are meeting in secret with private sector people who would love to get their hands on public money and assets?

Are you concerned? The Column is. Particularly when Common Purpose meetings have in fact taken place at key strategic development sites such as Plymouth Dome, Mount Wise and Devonport.

Failure to declare

Unlike the Freemasons, who are obliged to declare their membership, the names of Common Purpose 'graduates' are not declared to the general public. This is insidious when, for example, even the legal department of Plymouth City Council is Common Purpose led.

Charity or 'Cult'?

Perhaps even more worrying than the loss of public money and questions of probity is the fact that Common Purpose appears to have some very strange objectives – including creating a new, better society under selected Common Purpose leaders, and the selection and 'grooming' of children to create future leaders. Spooky? Read more in the next Devonport Column.

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

I realise the contents of my letter do not specifically apply to Devonport but I do feel it is of direct relevance in light of the lies, deceit and propaganda that the people of Plymouth face and you are exposing in your newspaper.

As the readers of your fine newspaper will be aware there is very little news in the public domain that is anti EU. For example, the BBC and ITV television news seemingly only ever provide 'good' news stories involving the EU. Likewise, the printed news is almost entirely positive.

The heavily biased attitude of the media in general is well known and was brought home to me in particular for Channel 5 news on Saturday 25th March 2006 at the UKIP South West Rally at Exeter University when I was told by a member of the public attending the rally that her nephew, who works for Channel 5 News, said that all stories that are anti-EU are to be discarded.

Hence, the public are never afforded a balanced view of the European Project. Only lies and skewed propaganda in favour of the EU.

In fact, very similar to that which the people of Plymouth face from its own council when they are told lies and propaganda about such bodies as the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership as highlighted in your newspaper.

It is indicative of the trouble we are in as a nation when the populace can only rely on the truth that is published in a newspaper such as the Devonport Column, a private enterprise from patriotic subjects that do not have a vested interest.

I sincerely hope you never reach the stage where you discard news because it is true.

Sincerely,
Laurence Keegan (UKIP)

P.S. Visit ukip-plymouth.org.uk for more truth.

Devonport Column April Edition

Dear Readers,

Thank you for picking up The Column. I'm sure you will enjoy it, and if so please pass it on, and tell all your friends. You may have noticed that we've jumped a month to get the edition out at the start of the month rather than towards the end. So don't worry – you haven't missed one.

As to be expected the Column is packed with hard hitting stories which we feel the public need to know about. Our local papers are OK but somehow they just don't seem to print the facts down at ground level. We do, and we're telling it like it is.

Stories cover more unsavoury treatment of Mr Williams by the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership and a shocking tale of police overkill at a DRCP public meeting. We also expose a

funny little organisation called Common Purpose. You taxpayers have been paying thousands of pounds for it, but nobody told you until The Column came along. Suspicious? We are! Read on.

I'd also like to thank Readers for the letters and other material sent, particularly information on wrongdoing in the City. Seems to us that Plymouth is a rotten borough under New Labour, but since the national New Labour team are rotten, who's surprised? Many thanks for the 'police fax' copied to us – brilliant work, Mr Holmes. Sorry we didn't have space to print it, but we'll be following up the content!

In the next edition a look at our National Marine Fishtank and the £ millions pumped in, whilst we cannot provide care for our old people, give free dental treatment, or run Seaton Pool! Well done Tudor and the local Blair Babes.

God Bless, Ed.

DEVONPORT PEOPLE SHOCKED BY MAJOR POLICE OPERATION AT PUBLIC MEETING

The Editor writes:

As reported in The Devonport Column leading article on our front page, Devonport people attending the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership board meeting to 'sack' Mr John Williams for telling the truth about errors in financial figures within the organisation were upset and intimidated by the presence of no fewer than TWELVE police officers in protective gear.

Incredible though it may sound, these officers were posted in the meeting room itself, outside the door, on lower floors and outside the Welcome Hall building. If Superintendent Peter Strawbridge, who is a DRCP Board member himself, is included, the total number of officers rises to THIRTEEN! The Devonport Column finds this massive police presence extraordinary, since the general public numbered some 70, and was made up mainly of senior citizens, mature people and the infirm.

We ask how Devon and Cornwall Constabulary could justify deploying these officers, when the police claim to be short of money, unable to stop riots of drunken youths in other parts of the City, and indeed deny other wards, such as Eggbuckland, the necessary policing levels. Presumably, faced with an angry group of pensioners and the infirm (complete with walking frames), who were keen to know where and how their excessive Council Taxes are being spent, Supt Strawbridge feared for his safety!

Calculated at an estimated £45 per hour per police officer (for salary and inclusive costs), the total cost of this police operation to the public purse was a minimum of £2,160, covering four hours for the operation. Of course, this expenditure is in addition to huge extra sums of money which



Devonport people already have to pay for proper policing in the Devonport area. The Devonport Bobbies on the Beat Scheme already sucks more than £300,000 per year out of the Devonport Regeneration Fund trough.

Despite demands from the Devonport Community for explanations as to the need for the excessive and threatening police presence at the meeting, no convincing reason was provided by Supt Strawbridge or the DRCP Board.

Nevertheless, keen to assist their 'not so friendly' officers of the law, a number of local people checked for Al-Qaeda representatives in the meeting room. But there appeared no immediate terrorist threat to explain the number of officers. So what was the cause for this fascist display by

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary? A number of local people have become interested in the increasing moves of Mr Tony 'New Labour' Blair to create a police state. Indeed, the City of Plymouth is already being divided into new police districts, similar to 'military control areas'. Coupled with this, police forces across the UK are now being forced into European Union police regions.

The Column would also point out that British Subjects can now be taken from their homes by the European police for unlimited detention in another EU country. We advise readers to also be aware that the EUROPOL (European Police) Headquarters are in the old wartime Gestapo HQ in The Hague, Holland. (Fact - Ed).

Devonport People's DRCP Concerns Mirrored by Haringey NDC Probe

The Lib Dem Deputy Leader in the London Borough of Haringey is meeting up with Plymouth Lib Dem Councillor Lee Finn to make a presentation on the 8th May 2006 to the Houses of Parliament regarding the non-accountability of NDC Funds.

Liberal Democrat Councillor, Wayne Hoban, who has been looking into these allegations since being contacted by local residents concerned about the way in which the £50 million NDC project is being managed, has asked both The Bridge NDC Director of Programme and Haringey Council to provide him with copies of the audited accounts and auditor's notes for the 5 year period (2001 / 2005) that the project has been running, but has been informed that they are not available. He has also informed Cllr Lee Finn that as with John Williams, two members of the Board in Haringey were dismissed for questioning the financial records of the organisation. A petition signed by over 600 residents in support of the dismissed members and calling for an independent investigation

has been sent to the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott. The two dismissed members are now engaged in a Judicial Review legal challenge.

Cllr Hoban states: "It is incredible that this £50 million project should not have Annual Audited Accounts which can be inspected to ensure that the money is being spent appropriately. This shows that the concerns expressed by residents and the local community about the way in which this multi-million pound project has been managed to date are well founded, and require immediate action. In view of the non-availability of audited accounts for the first 5 years of the project, nothing less than an independent forensic auditor's investigation of The Bridge NDC accounts will do."

Cllr Lee Finn has stated: "The situation in Haringey is a mirror of what has been happening here in Plymouth with one of the main conduits of NDC money being the DRCP. Both myself and members of the public for some time now have requested to

see audited accounts only to find none exist. Considering it is a sum exceeding £100 million involved in the two NDC schemes, not withstanding another £50 million in SRB money here in Plymouth, it is imperative as no audited accounts exist that those charged with managing the schemes are made to account for every penny spent in order that the public can see how and where their taxes are going.

I fully support Cllr Hoban and will be furnishing him with the evidence I have collated here in Plymouth. We will then present the file together with Mr Goffin's (John Williams's representative) dossier to the Houses of Parliament. We hope then that pressure will be brought to bear at Parliamentary level that will lead to an independent forensic examination of both Authorities' accounts. This is the only way I believe the public will get the answers that they rightly want, namely, 'exactly where has all the money has gone and to whom?'"



Pin Back Yer Lugholes, Beaky's Squawking!

Beaky the Parrot, who lives at the top of the real Devonport Column, has been keeping his eyes and ears open to bring you the news other papers dare not print! If you have a story, email it in confidence to devonportcolumn@tiscali.co.uk

Hello, Loyal Readers! Beaky's nest is so full of news items, scribbled notes and messages that he's thinking of finding some extra accommodation by moving to the Royal William Yard at Stonehouse where, according to the local Common Purpose guru, free accommodation is being provided courtesy of the South West Regional Development Agency. It looks as though Beaky'll have to create a cult first and sign up the SWERDA people as members before they give him some space, but hey! Beaky's a "Can Do" parrot!

One for You, One for Me

Now, if he says it himself, Beaky's a canny old bird, and when he was told that the Plymouth City Council Labour Inner Cabinet had been carved up one night in a Plympton pub, he had his doubts. Well, his instincts were right! You don't go dishing out £28,000 a year jobs in the public bar. Have a bit of decency! The place the dirty deed was done was allegedly the much more salubrious setting of the coffee shop at Safeway (now the new Morrisons) on the Billacombe Roundabout. A slap on the wrist for my first informant and a tick and a gold star for the chap who got it right!

Ripples at Seaton Pool

When Beaky recently landed on the roof of Seaton Pool he was surprised to find it in good condition and perfectly safe. Readers will know that in trying to justify the closing of the pool Cllrs Nicky Wildy, Derek Bray, Peter Smith and Chris Mavin said at the March 6th City Council Meeting words to the effect that the Seaton Pool building was becoming unsafe because of the roof. The Devonport Column can, through its overhead reporter, reveal however, that the Seaton Pool roof and roof beam structure were given a major repair and overhaul, including replacement of beams, in the mid-1990s, and are still in good nick. Beaky has eyeballed it all from close range and can confirm this. Were these Councillors unaware, misinformed or did someone tell a slight variance of the truth? Squaawwk!

EU Must Be Joking

Beaky recently flew over to Europe, as you do, and was shocked to hear that a FRESH row over ID cards had erupted after a leaked Home Office memo showed that the Government is trying to cover up the way the scheme is linked to new European Union laws. The memo obtained by The Mail on Sunday reveals that ID cards are to be launched in 2009 as the timing fits in with passport changes in the rest of Europe. Could these cards be linked to the emerging EU Devonport Bobbies on the Beat Police State? On hearing the news and conscious of a low bird seed warning light Beaky feathered his wings and flapped back to tell the Column. A new DRCP feasibility study on Devonport ID cards starts shortly (*I'm only joking, but I don't think they are - Ed*).

Don't Miss Our
**LOCAL
ELECTION
SPECIAL**
in the next edition of
**The
DEVONPORT
COLUMN**

Take the DRCP Sod You Too Budget Forecast Challenge!

All you have to do is solve the clues and fill in the blanks so that each set of three squares horizontally, vertically and diagonally adds up to £49.2m, Devonport's ten year Regeneration Budget. A few clues: (1) You can find out how many sweets are in the jar by filling a jar with sweets and then emptying it out and counting the sweets; (2) The Chief Executive's salary, including NI and pension payments, is likely to be about £1m over 10 years and he is, of course, worth every penny; (3) It's probably not going to be all that many more than fifty goals.

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|-----------------------------------|------------------|--|
| The Number of Sweets in the Jar | | |
| | 17.787% variable | 2005/06 Goals Total of Argyle's Top Scorer |
| The DRCP Chief Executive's Salary | | |

Draw your grid, fill it in and email it by 15th April to devonportcolumn@tiscali.co.uk
A year's FREE subscription to Devonport People's Dreams Newsletter to the first correct entry pulled out of the bag! A consolation prize of a free TWO year subscription to the first reader who can guess why we used the funny 17.787% figure to help you find the correct solution. The Editor told me to put the 'variable' bit in to make it easier. **Please note: DRCP staff are not eligible to enter this competition as they already know ALL the answers.**

Beaky's Caption Competition Results



Here's a selection of captions submitted by readers for last month's Tony Blair Competition. Our thanks to all who took the time to send their contributions.

"Whew - That Devonport Column Parrot sniffs a bit" *Oh! No, I don't, says Beaky. Oh! Yes, you do, says Ed.*

"Oh! No! The Bovigate fraud is out!"
Evil eyes - evil heart?

"Ooops! Do they know I'm working for the EU?"

"Pssst! Does anyone know a cheap, dodgy mortgage lender?"

"If Cherie had packed my bugle duster, I wouldn't be depositing my bogies on the back of my hand."

"Yes. Of course you New Labour girls can have new waterside apartments. We just need to move those horrible people who call themselves Devonport locals out first."