

# Government *WORLD*

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*Summer 2007 Edition*

A landscape photograph of a grassy field with several cows grazing under a cloudy sky. The cows are scattered across the field, some standing and some lying down. The sky is filled with large, dark, dramatic clouds, suggesting an overcast or stormy day. The foreground is dominated by tall, golden-brown grasses. In the background, there are rolling hills and a distant horizon line.

***We've gone LANDSCAPE!***

# The Cemetery Village

**What is a cemetery village? Before you read this article you may think it a morbid and distasteful term, but you may also think it a very natural way to describe places where loved ones are interred.**

For some, cemeteries are something to be ignored, or thought of as 'spooky' places for the dead, where overgrown ivy creeps and smothers the old and twisted memorials of another time.



But, as Chuck Palahniuk says in *Fight Club*: "On a large enough time line, the survival rate for everyone will drop to zero." and in a world of instant gratification and short attention spans, a place that reminds us of those that lived before, can increase our sense of place in the world and our appreciation of it.

The aim of the Cemetery Village is to provide for the needs of the bereaved, whether it be burial or cremated remains interment, offering a wide range of choice and services to make a difficult time, less difficult. The day of the funeral is experienced by many people as 'the day they can begin to grieve'. The Cemetery Village is there for them at this time and it will be there in the years to come when the grieving process is less painful and the visits become ones of consolation and peaceful contemplation.

This leads on to the subject of the *environment* of the Cemetery Village; as mentioned at the start of this article, cemeteries can be thought of as 'spooky' places for the dead, and it's not surprising considering some of the appalling conditions many of our cemeteries and churchyards now languish in - and these aren't closed and forgotten graveyards as seen in a multitude of horror films - these are fully working places, still carrying out interments!

It is said that you can measure how civilised a country is by the way it treats its dead. Indeed, additional to this is the way the living are also treated and this is at the heart of the Cemetery Village ideal; creating living environments which embrace wildlife havens of peace and tranquillity amidst cultural enclaves of heritage and flora and fauna habitat.

This ideal is not a new one either; more of a forgotten one. The average municipal cemetery was

created over 100 years ago to relieve the overcrowded and unhealthy churchyards, unable to cope with the massive growth in population density brought about by the industrial revolution. These new 'modern' cemeteries were created outside the bustling cities in the then countryside and were landscaped and designed as attractive cemetery parks which immediately became a source of attraction to people wanting a break from crowded city life. Families would take picnics and sit on the neat lawns and grand monuments were erected in memory of the dead.

This close relationship between the living and the dead was a natural and healthy one and the experience of the Cemetery Village, as a place for the spiritual health of the community, encourages this today.



## £50m funding for cleaner hospitals

Directors of nursing to get funds for improvements as infection improvement teams double in size

**Secretary of State** for Health Alan Johnson today announced £50 million extra funding to tackle healthcare associated infections (HCAIs) such as MRSA and C.difficile.

Bug-busting infection Improvement Teams will double in size so that any Trust that is not on course to meet the 2008 MRSA target or has a significant number of patients with C.difficile, will have access to a team of experts to help them reduce infection.

Health Secretary, Alan Johnson, said:

“Tackling MRSA and other healthcare associated infections is one of my immediate priorities.

“NHS staff have worked hard to slow the increase in C.difficile reports from 17 per cent to 8 per cent, whilst reducing MRSA bloodstream infections in the three months to December last year by 20 per cent, compared with 2003-04. This is a step in the right direction but clearly more must be done to improve the quality of care and patient safety.

“I am therefore asking each Director of Nursing in every Strategic Health Authority to make sure that frontline clinicians are supported in the work they do to reduce infection and to provide a clean, safe environment.



Secretary of State for Health  
Alan Johnson



“On top of this I am doubling the size of the DH infection Improvement Team so that all Trusts struggling to reduce infections can have access to experts in prevention and control of infection.”

Since last February, the Department’s Improvement Teams have successfully helped around 70 NHS Trusts to identify and implement changes to bring their infection rates down. Most trusts visited have seen significant improvements with reductions in MRSA rates of between 16 and 34 per cent. The teams have recently extended their work to cover C. difficile infections.

The Improvement Teams are groups of experts such as doctors, nurses, microbiologists, infection control practitioners and service improvement experts who work with NHS organisations to:

- Diagnose the issues which need to be tackled if there is to be better prevention and control of MRSA bloodstream infections and C. difficile infections
- Develop action plans with realistic implementation timescales
- Implement agreed plans and put in place management and support arrangements that facilitate sustained improvement
- Act as a catalyst for other Trusts and demonstrate that by adopting best practice rates can be reduced to lower levels at a faster rate.

## Church of England should enter into the ‘Spirit’

Is Health and Safety legislation being ignored by the Church?

**The Church of England** is in the most fortunate position of being able to hand over certain management and maintenance responsibilities to Local Authorities and therefore to the tax payer in respect of Churchyards which it deems to be ‘closed’. These are generally closed for burial but normally open to the public for visitation or access.

The Local Authority is controlled by Health and Safety Legislation to risk assess and respond under controlled criteria and yet the ‘Church’ through its own lawful instruments can refuse, delay or condition a ‘faculty’ which the Local Authority must apply for in causation of its work programme.

Diocesan Chancellors are delaying response and decision making. In some cases, Chancellors are requesting that the Local Authority liaise with individual incumbents, all of which will have differing opinions, requirements and interest or otherwise in proper and expeditious resolution of the project in hand. The increased burden of cost to the tax payer is unacceptable and the risk of accident substantially increased.

The Church, one would have thought, would be extremely appreciative of the fact that it does not have to care for and pay for the cost of its own Burial ground and enter into a ‘Spirit’ of co-operation which all those who are working hard to do that which is appropriate and lawful.

The interference with a Health and Safety process is a criminal offence.

Comments to:  
churchofenglandchurchyards@welters-worldwide.com

# Now Here's a Contradiction!

Two reports, one from the Sunday Times and the other from DEFRA both published a day apart...

From The Sunday Times  
July 1, 2007

## Labour plans flood defence cuts as Britain flounders in the deluge

**Memo reveals Treasury pressure to save cash**  
**Jonathan Leake Environment Editor**

England's flood defence programme is facing funding cuts that could last until 2011, according to a memo sent by Environment Agency executives to senior staff last month.

The document, understood to have been prompted by demands from the Treasury, says flood defence plans might have to be pared back as the cuts take hold.

The memo, written despite high-level reports warning that Britain's flood defences are in a parlous state, could prove deeply embarrassing to Gordon Brown's new government.

It is already facing accusations of political paralysis over ministers' initial failure to respond to last week's disastrous floods, which left at least five people dead and thousands with flooded homes.

The memo was prompted by the government's current **comprehensive spending review**, overseen by Brown while chancellor. It is not due to be formally published until the autumn but hints of what is in store are already sweeping Whitehall.

"Our planning assumption is that our resource settlement over the next three years will be flat cash in line with our current 2007-08 baseline (a real-time reduction in funding) with any growth limited to

capital investment," said the memo, headed "draft risk management planning guidance".

It follows the worst summer-time floods to hit the country in recorded history. Besides the dead, at least 600 people were injured. About 3,500 people had to be rescued from swamped homes by emergency services. This weekend hundreds of families were still in temporary accommodation and emergency services were bracing themselves for more torrential rain.

Many believe, however, it is government ministers and local planners who should be bracing themselves for the real aftermath of the floods. They say the disaster is a direct result of the government and councils ignoring years of warnings about the danger of building on flood plains.

The rest of this article can be found at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/weather/article2010203.ece>

From DEFRA news release  
July 2, 2007

## Flood response efforts 'magnificent' says Benn

Hilary Benn, the Environment Secretary, today reiterated the Government's commitment to supporting communities affected by flooding in many parts of England.

In a statement to Parliament Mr Benn paid tribute to the heroic efforts of the emergency services, local authorities, voluntary sector, military, and Environment Agency, describing their collective response as magnificent. With more heavy rain

forecast for the coming weekend he encouraged householders and businesses to make use of the Environment Agency's Floodline telephone number and website for advice.

Mr Benn also took the opportunity to confirm an increased flood defence settlement in the **Comprehensive Spending Review 2007**, with spending due to rise from around £600m this year to £800m by the end of the CSR period.

Hilary Benn said:

"I am sure that the House will wish to pay tribute to the continuing heroic efforts of the many who have responded so magnificently to this very exceptional rainfall. They include the staff of the fire, ambulance, police and other rescue services, our armed services, local authorities, the Environment Agency, the voluntary sector, and local communities – neighbour helping neighbour. I appreciate just how hard everyone has worked - some people are very tired - and I am very grateful to them and for the help they have received from other regions.

"As the flood waters recede, we will then move into the recovery effort, which will need support from across central, regional and local government, businesses and voluntary organisations.

"The Government has always recognised the need to spend more on flood defence with changes in climate, and we have increased spending from £307m in 1996/97 to £600m this year. And I can today inform the House that we will further increase spending across government on flood risk management and defences to £800 million in 2010-11."

Source <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/070702a.htm>

## Government Policy ‘U’ Turn

**Remember the days when United Kingdom food production was of prime importance even to the exclusion of wildlife habitat?**

Farmers were paid to remove hedgerows and increase cultivation areas and incentives were paid encouraging the use of vast quantities of chemical fertiliser.

The landscape was destroyed and food mountains emerged throughout E.E.C control. Now, - Yes, not difficult to guess – farmers are being paid to plant new hedgerows, which often reappear in the exact location of the original hedges. Farmers are also being paid not to farm land under varying criteria and Food Production is no longer a priority. Cheaper and often poorer quality food is to be imported from sources often thousands of miles away.

But alas, the ‘civil service’ machine trundles on whilst all working citizens continue to pay the Inland Revenue directly and indirectly higher percentages of income to compensate for policy and operational error.

**welters organisation worldwide** have for many years been designing and producing environmental solutions, many of which have prevented the need for air born emissions and also the pollution of water courses.

The company interpret their industrial activity as being carbon neutral due to the savings in terms of environmental impact through the use of and ongoing management and maintenance of the schemes. Despite this fact and to make a bold statement of policy and commitment in support of Environmental Awareness, in March wetlers acquired Ellery Hill in Cumbria. Yes, the fencing and ‘long gone’ ancient hedgerows are being re-established but additionally a Galloway herd of ‘Green’ single suckler cattle, outlying and

feeding from not only natural grasses but heathers, mosses and water meadow plants will be introduced. This is indeed an Agricultural food production policy for Beef which is not encouraged by Government Policy. Quite predictably, the Ellery Hill model will become an example from which Government Policy will be changed in around fifteen years time!!

## Competition regime not working, says Consumer Watchdog

**A survey by the Consumer Council** for Water and Ofwat detailing business customers’ views of competition in the water industry has revealed that the water competition regime is not providing businesses with a workable framework in which they can change their water supplier.

Despite interest from business customers, more than 18 months after the launch of competition, none has actually switched their water supplier - and the results of the survey indicate this is likely to remain the case, at least in the short term.

Responding to the business community’s frustrations with the competition regime, the aim of the survey was to help the Consumer Council for Water to gain a greater understanding of business customer views and expectations regarding competition. The research will also be taken in to account by Ofwat in its ongoing review of competition. The next step will be a wider consultation this month.

The findings reveal a clear indication that the existing competition regime is failing to meet the needs of the businesses it was designed to serve, with most dissatisfaction and interest in competition

revolving around the question of price.

The introduction of competition into the water industry in December 2005 gave more options to large business users (around 2,200 businesses likely to buy more than 50 megalitres of water per year) to change supplier in order to reduce cost and negotiate tailored service levels.

Most business customers (84%) are supportive of competition in principle, but only 30% are confident that the current regime will deliver benefits to customers. Nearly two thirds of customers were likely to switch in the right circumstances, but about the same number think the competition regime for the water industry compares unfavourably with other utilities.

The survey revealed that only 28% were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of their current bill, so it is no surprise that 93% would switch if offered lower bills. Around half (49%) would switch if a better service was offered by a new supplier, while 43% wanted a guaranteed switchback.

Sir James Perowne, Deputy Chair of the Consumer Council for Water, said: “Dealing with the issues raised in this research will be a matter for government, sector regulators, and the Consumer Council for Water, working with the water industry.

“There are a number of barriers which are stopping the new regime from working. These need fixing. The market also needs to be bigger with more customers having a choice.

“We need to be clear where the water industry is going in terms of competition and over what time scale. If some customers will not be allowed a choice, it is important that they are not disadvantaged by the extension of the regime.”

The full report is available on the Consumer Council for Water website at <http://www.ccwater.org.uk>



## welters environmental commitment

**welters organisation worldwide**, the creators of the **welters cemetery village** Systems which embrace the best use of land and environmentally sensitive solutions for full body burial and cremated remains interment, now announce their most progressive commitment to global environmentalism yet.

Not only will **welters** maintain free of charge a commemorative register and password protected virtual cemetery for 'rights owner' use, but **welters** make an absolute commitment to plant and maintain one tree for every 'burial rights owner' or deceased within 6 months following the date of interment into a **welters** facility or registration which ever is the later.

Tree planting schemes are currently in the Scottish Borders and Cumbria. In addition to the commitment to plant the renewable tree resource, **welters** will also stock the burns and becks within the tree planting scheme areas with Brown trout smolt and parr thus protecting this most important British indigenous species.



## MoD responds to MPs' report on Armed Forces recruitment and retention

**Defence Minister Derek Twigg** recently gave his reaction to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report on recruitment and retention in the Armed Forces.

Under Secretary of State, Derek Twigg, said:

"We welcome the Public Accounts Committee report and will look at the recommendations and respond to them fully in due course. We will consider the report carefully, however, there are a number of points that I want to make in advance of a more detailed response.



Under Secretary of State,  
Derek Twigg

"The Government recognises that the current high tempo of operations is putting pressure on our people, but they are responding magnificently and I thank them for that. Since this Committee heard evidence last November, the Chief of Defence Staff himself has said that the Armed Forces are very stretched but can sustain what they are currently doing. With the drawdown of troops in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and the reductions already made possible in Iraq, some of the pressure should soon start to ease.

"I accept that there are manning challenges and shortages in some specific areas, but we are taking action. We have a Service Personnel Plan to deal with key issues affecting recruitment and retention, and we are adjusting our policies accordingly.

"The significant steps we have taken include the recently increased Operational Bonus of £2,320, the pay rise of 9.2 per cent for junior rank - the

biggest rise in the public sector, Financial Retention Initiatives, and the Rebalancing Lives Schemes, all of which seek to improve working lives and help us recruit the right people. I am committed to ensuring their our efforts in these areas will result in future improvements in recruitment and retention.

"Recent independently verified manning statistics show that recruitment into the Armed Forces remains strong against a buoyant economy, particularly for the Army Infantry. The latest Army figures show a 12 per cent increase in Army recruits since last year. The National Audit Office report last year highlighted that the Armed Forces have recruited 98% of their target since 2000. It is not the case that there are increasing shortages of personnel. In 1997 there was a 4.2% shortage compared with today's figure of 3%. It is also inaccurate to say that more people are leaving and that we are experiencing a "peak" in outflow. The number of people leaving has remained broadly stable and compares favourably with the retention rates in the public and private sector.

"It's important to recognise that future restructuring plans aim to deliver improved capability and flexibly in our Armed Forces and will mean that we need fewer people. We are working hard to ensure that current or improved rates of recruitment and retention will meet future requirements.

"Our Armed Forces have magnificently risen to the challenge. I want to re-emphasise that the Government is committed to listening to our people, responding to their concerns and recognising and rewarding their considerable talents and efforts."

## LUCAS likens climate change scepticism to Holocaust denial

**GREEN MEP Caroline Lucas** has hit out at the media after a poll revealed that a majority of people in the UK believe that scientists aren't agreed about the facts of climate change - or that it is being caused by human activity.

According to latest figures by pollsters Ipsos-MORI, some 56 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement: "Many leading experts still question if human activity is contributing to climate change". Just 22 per cent disagreed.

Dr Lucas, who is a member of the European Parliament's Environment and Climate Change committees, said: "This is very worrying. Politicians will never take the steps necessary to cut emissions unless voters demand that they do so, and they won't demand it if they remain sceptical about their role in changing the climate in the first place.

"The media are, at least in part, to blame: their obsession with appearing to be balanced means discussions of climate change tend to have a naysayer arguing either that climate change isn't happening, or that it isn't manmade, as though there is a serious ongoing scientific debate about this.

"But the fact is that there is an overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change: almost every scientist in the world agrees that climate change is happening, that it is being fuelled by human activity, and that our best chance of ameliorating its worst impacts lies in dramatically cutting global greenhouse gas emissions.

"By suggesting otherwise the media is, albeit inadvertently, promoting dangerous scepticism

about climate change - and undermining our chances of doing anything about it."

Dr Lucas, who was named Politician of the Year in the recent Observer Ethical Awards 2007, likened climate change scepticism to Holocaust denial.

"The media's attempt to seem balanced is in fact distorting the public's understanding of perhaps the most pressing issue facing us all today - and it's tragic. It doesn't make any sense: would the media insist on having a Holocaust-denier to balance any report about the second world war? Of course not - but by insisting on giving so much airtime to climate change deniers, it is doing exactly the same thing."

Source: <http://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/3059>

## Whitehall and Brussels conspire to destroy small business

"I am amazed that anybody sets up a **business** in the current climate" said Godfrey Bloom MEP today. He was talking after David Frost of the British Chambers of Commerce had singled out over regulation as the key factor that harms small business, and Alastair Darling, the Trade and Industry Secretary had supported increase in corporation tax on the same small businesses, Mr Bloom went on, "Regulation is cooked up in Brussels, and then the Government hit people with more tax.

Can it be possible that these people actually want business to succeed?"

"Over 80% of people working in Britain work in small and medium size businesses. They are the lifeblood of our economy. If you want to encourage entrepreneurs, and stimulate employment growth then they are the key sector".

"Why do those who claim to govern us in Brussels and London so hate enterprise? What have they got against the little guy? The UK Independence Party pledges to campaign against any more regulation coming out of Brussels and its plans for a flat rate of corporation taxes would free up businessmen and women to do what they should be doing working towards greater success and prosperity"



## Mark Francois: Brown must keep his promise and let country decide on revived EU constitution



**Reminding Gordon Brown** of the Government's pledge to hold a referendum on the EU constitution, Shadow Minister for Europe, Mark Francois, said:

"Gordon Brown says he wants to restore the British people's trust in politics – so why doesn't he trust them to make the decision on the resurrected EU Constitution?"

"He says he wants to give power to the people – so why won't he give them the power to decide if they want to give more control to the EU?"

"This week Gordon Brown has talked about the importance of honouring Labour's election manifesto, the manifesto that promised a referendum on the EU Constitution.

"EU leader after EU leader has admitted that they might have changed the labels but the substance is the same. Gordon Brown must keep his promises and let the British people have the final say in a referendum. Otherwise it will be clear proof that his talk about trust is just the same old spin."

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## Cremation is bad for your health

**According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**, crematoriums will become the single biggest mercury polluters in the UK, unless urgent action is taken.

By 2020, it is predicted they will account for more than 25 to 35 per cent of mercury emissions, three times the levels from burning coal.

Mercury is toxic, accumulates in the air and water, and can harm the brain, kidneys, nervous system and unborn children. Up to 16% of all mercury emitted in the UK comes from crematoria because of the fillings in teeth.

Emissions of mercury from all sources have decreased by 89% from 1970 to 2004. They are expected to reduce further up to 2020 as a result of other measures. The increase in crematoria emissions is caused by a generation which is more likely to have retained all its teeth, but has more fillings because it did not benefit from advances in oral hygiene.

The aim in the UK is to cut emissions of mercury from crematoria by half by the end of 2012. This figure was determined after extensive consultation to achieve a balance between costs to the sector and environmental benefits.

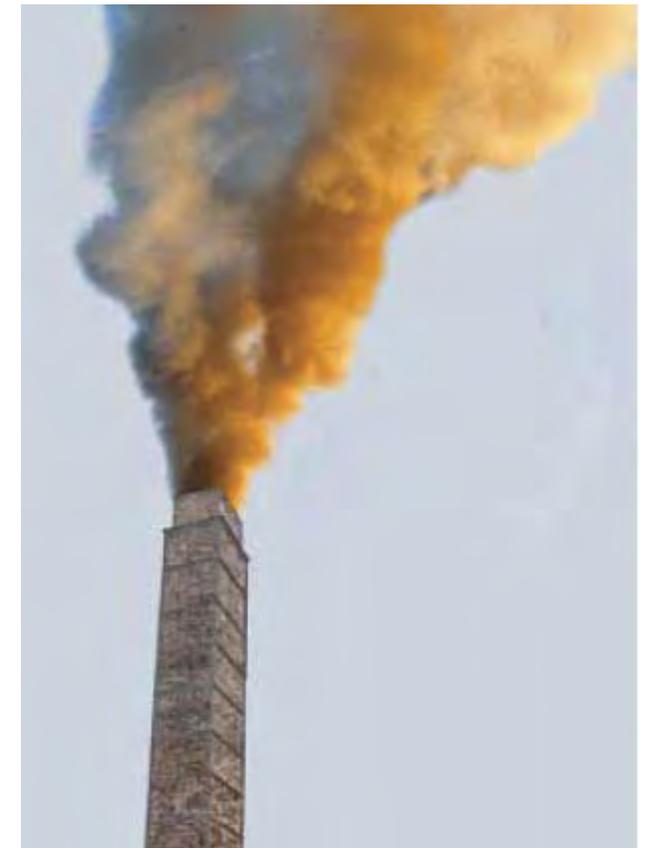
All new crematoria are required to fit mercury control equipment but those conducting fewer than 750 cremations a year have till 2012 to do this.

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA) has proposed sharing the burden of cost.

Under its scheme, all cremation authorities will pay an annual fee to the Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation, which will redistribute its income to crematoria that have installed new equipment.

Another possibility is to remove filled teeth from dead people before bodies are cremated. Pacemakers are already removed before cremation as they explode when subjected to high temperatures.

The improvements in mercury abatement are expected to put between £25 and £40 on the cost of a funeral by cremation. The average cost of a cremation today is around £1,954. Nearly 500,000 cremations are carried out by the industry per year.



# Memorial Safety message not getting through?

**Over the past several years** Burial Authorities have been implementing large scale memorial safety audits of their cemeteries. The purpose of these audits is to identify any possible risks to health and safety from neglected, old or poorly installed memorials.

Each memorial is the property and responsibility of the grave owner. Where possible, families would be contacted and advised to instruct a Memorial Mason to carry out the appropriate repairs in making the memorial safe in accordance with modern standards and guidelines. Where no family can be traced, the memorial is typically laid down as this is generally the cheapest option for cash strapped councils.

This process can take many months to complete and is a huge drain on resources as even a small cemetery can contain thousands of memorials.

Much of the causes for memorial failure are the result of poorly constructed and installed headstones common in most modern cemeteries. This has been compounded by a lack of monitoring by the Burial Authority and more importantly, a lack of many Memorial Masons to provide a professional standard of fixing. Too often plonking a memorial on a grave with barely a dowel and a slap of cement to hold it in place.

To try and regulate the industry, NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons) and ICCM (Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium

Management) have produced standards and procedures of best practice which their members are expected to adhere to and in theory should prevent any more unsuitable memorial installations.

Unfortunately it appears that in some cemeteries this message is still not getting through. The above example is arguably an accident waiting



to happen.

The memorial bases are clearly too thin for the height and they are laid on a thin raft of concrete which is already failing.



Most Memorial Masons still produce the same

flawed designed, adapted or retro-fitted with dubious forms of stabilising in an attempt to meet safety requirements. **welters organisation worldwide** produce a wide range of industry leading memorials designed specifically to exceed all health and safety specifications. These innovative memorials are now being installed by responsible councils across the UK.

THE NEW MEMORIAL SAFETY RETRO-FIT ANCHOR SYSTEM - BETTER CALL **welters**...

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Poorly installed memorials



**welters** safe memorials



# A Question of Design

## CEO of Welters Organisation Worldwide

### Keith Welters talks about the importance of design

**“As a designer, my job and totally rewarding privilege is to find answers to questions”**

That statement is, of course, a gross over-simplification. What I really seek is vital and progressive solutions. The product could be sculpted with great skill from the only available piece of bog oak or produced by a developing manufacturing technique from an advanced man-made material. Both the material and method of production therefore will form together the eventual product. There are many aspects, obvious, but worth underlining. For example, the product needs its innovator and its manufacturer. The innovator and the craftsman may be one or the craftsman may interpret the concepts of the designer. In volume production the manufacturing organisation is required to produce the product competitively. Viability has to be established both in quality and cost. It is futile to spend 12 months producing a beautifully timber-engineered salad serving spoon when in three years a cathedral roof could be restructured by loving care, dedication and extreme skill.

### The owner and the environment

One aspect often forgotten - the product needs an owner. Without one, the dreams of the designer



never become reality. The concepts may be sufficiently insensitive to be of no interest or they may be unaffordable. It has been reported that at one time, the administration of a significant design

college in Britain held the bizarre view that to expose its students to commercial pressures would inhibit the process of education. In my submission the designer is totally ineffective, like a fish without water, if he is unable not only to survive but to thrive upon his environment. If he should hold a view that his relationships with owners and customers (his ‘environment’) constitute pressure, then he should change profession or submit to a more pertinent education.

### The outstanding omission

I have effectively been speaking about the plant and the flower without the seed. The seed is the ‘question’. For me the most exciting part of all is to investigate a number of questions. The solutions develop through the design experience.

If we are to progress, the ‘certain and relevant’ aspects of the questions must be



isolated from the ‘uncertain and irrelevant’ For example, it is written that God said “Let there be light” and there was light; and also “Let there be darkness” and there was darkness. These writings through distance are difficult to analyse and yet the question of light and darkness is no longer consciously debated. Countless designers work away developing

sunblinds, sunglasses, tinted windows and on the other hand controllable lighting systems.

Our awareness of light and darkness is real, but the world changes daily. We need to be aware of the wide-ranging and ever increasing format for our questions. Jimmy Savile, for example, once told us that this is the age of the train! A definitive statement, but however ‘marvellous’ the rail network was at the time, the statement raises questions. A pilot may well contend this is the ‘age of flight’ although conversely the ‘age of supersonic flight’ for civilians ended in 2003 with the retirement of Concorde, this event has also been called the end of the ‘first space age’ because Concorde first took to the skies in 1969 - the same year that man first walked on the moon.

Nobody contests mechanised transportation systems are part of our lives. We all have them and use them, although we have different designs and styles and different methods of using them. It is a fairly recent innovation for architects to consider the place to put the car as an integral part of buildings design. For many years, buildings were built with no regard to this. A simple example of designers not asking the correct questions at the appropriate time.



## Think before you sign - Healey issues flood insurance warning to people in Severn, Avon and Thames Valleys

**Floods Recovery Minister John Healey** today urged people in communities hit by the July floods to seek free and impartial insurance advice before signing up with third parties who offer to help settle insurance claims.

The July floods affected people particularly along the rivers Severn, Avon and Thames.

Publishing information setting out how people can access free insurance advice he warned that accepting help from third parties could mean people are left short of the money they need to fully repair their damaged homes and replace prized possessions.

His advice includes:

- \* You can make a claim directly and free of charge direct to your insurer
- \* You don't need to pay a 'middleman'
- \* If you choose to accept help from third parties



check they are regulated by the Financial Services Authority

\* Free, independent advice is available from your local Citizen's Advice Service

Having visited a number of affected areas John Healey's top priority is for life in communities to get back to normal as quickly as possible. Key to this is people being able to repair their homes and replace their possessions at the earliest opportunity. So access to free insurance advice is essential. He has met with the insurance industry and heard how they are putting extra resources into speeding up the claims process.

Flood Recovery Minister John Healey MP said:

"I've visited a number of communities affected by the floods and have spoken with people whose homes have been damaged and have lost much of their belongings. I know a lot of people are very upset and feel vulnerable at this difficult time.

"That's why our top priority is for life to return to normal as quickly as possible. I have been working with the insurance industry to ensure that claims are being dealt with swiftly so people can start making repairs to their homes and replace possessions.

"It is important people know where to access free and impartial advice so I'm arranging for practical information to be made available in flood affected communities.

"So there is no need to use a 'middleman' who might offer to settle claims in return for a cut of the payout. But where people choose to do this it is important they understand this could leave them short of the money they need to fully repair their damaged homes and replace prized possessions.

"My message is clear - if in doubt speak to the Financial Services Authority, Association of British Insurers or the Citizen's Advice Service. They are

there to help."

£46million of support has been announced for flood-hit areas and on top of that local authorities have the special Bellwin scheme to help compensate them for their costs. The Government is working with local authorities so money can be released to help those most in need as quickly as possible. Specialist central government officials from areas including transport, schools and housing are also working with authorities to get a clear assessment of the costs and consequences of the floods so further targeted help can follow.

Further information is available via Government Offices and local authorities in flood-affected areas.

# Call 101 to shop stores selling alcohol to underage children

**101 - councils and police in partnership**  
across Northumberland and Tyne & Wear

Concerned residents are being asked to call 101 if they know of any shops selling alcohol to underage children.

The non-emergency number is best known for helping deal with issues of anti-social behaviour such as threatening and abusive behaviour, vandalism and graffiti, drunken and rowdy groups and noisy neighbours.

However 101 advisers are also able to take calls from people worried about off-licenses or local shops who are knowingly selling alcohol to under 18s.



New licensing laws, which came into effect in November 2005 increased the maximum fine for selling alcohol to under 18s from £1,000 to £5,000. Personal licence holders who sell alcohol to under 18s can have their licence suspended on the first offence and a premise licence can be reviewed, suspended or revoked if a venue is found to be persistently selling to under 18s.  
Peter Coates,  
Northumbria 101

Operations Manager, said: “Children who manage to buy alcohol usually end up drinking it on the streets and in parks and public places which can lead to rowdiness, anti-social behaviour and threatening or intimidating behaviour, all of which we get calls about from members of the public. We also receive calls about the consequences of underage drinking such as litter and vandalism.

“Reporting shops who knowingly sell alcohol to under 18s may help to prevent a raft of anti-social behaviour in our communities and we are urging members of the public to call 101 to report offences of this nature.”

Anyone under 18 should also be aware that it is an offence to ‘attempt to buy’ alcohol and both police and local authority trading standards officers work together and are ready to respond.

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## Government refuses to disclose amount of tax credit paid to migrants’ children living overseas

By Philip Hammond MP  
Member of Parliament for Runnymede & Weybridge  
Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury

On the day of the annual deadline for tax credit applications, the Conservative Party reveals that Treasury Ministers are refusing to disclose the amount of tax credits and child benefits paid in respect of migrants’ children living abroad.

Current benefit rules allow migrants working in the UK to claim Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit in respect of children living abroad.

Commenting, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Philip Hammond, said:

“Child Tax Credits and Child Benefit are key weapons in the fight against child poverty. The Government is already losing this battle, with child

poverty rising last year by 100,000 before housing costs and by 200,000 after housing costs.

“It is vital that Gordon Brown now comes clean and tells us how much tax credit and child benefit money is going abroad to children who do not live in this country and who may never even have visited the UK.”

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## Report highlights failure of BBC reform

Report by Lib Dem MP Don Foster commenting on the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications report, which criticises the way that BBC chairmen are appointed, Liberal Democrat Shadow Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, Don Foster MP said:

“This report highlights the failure of the Government’s post-Hutton attempts to reform the BBC. There is now real confusion as to who ensures the BBC remains independent from political interference and who is representing the interests of the licence fee payer.

“The Liberal Democrats pointed out to the Government over three years ago that the role they were creating was ill-defined, and that the Trust was the wrong body to fulfil the task it had been charged with. It’s impossible for the Trust to act as both ‘flag-wavers’ and regulator.

“The fact that Michael Grade was able to leave at a moment’s notice to ITV, a main competitor, left the BBC without leadership at a vital time in its history and raises very serious concerns about a possible conflict of interest. The Government must take note of the committee’s recommendations if we are to prevent this from happening again.

“While the committee has made a number of insightful recommendations, only a fully independent Public Service Broadcasting Regulator will ensure the BBC continues to be a high quality benchmark for the media.”