

The BRISTOLIAN

"Smiter of the High and Mighty"

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A DIRTY BUSINESS

Notorious blacklisters Kier poised to take over May Gurney, run Bristol's waste collections

As troubled waste management company May Gurney teeters on the edge, one thing is for sure: no one in Bristol is going to benefit – least of all the binmen and women struggling to keep the city clean under ever-tougher working conditions and on dwindling pay packets.

As reported in the last *Bristolian*, May Gurney's highly-paid executives have been **HOLDING THE CITY TO RANSOM**, blackmailing senior council officers into inaction despite MG's repeated failure to meet contractual targets. 'Fine us and we go bankrupt; and if we go bankrupt, no rubbish will be collected at all, our workers will end up on the dole, and the council won't be able to claw any money back.'

So there are sighs of relief at Shitty Hall at the news of a white knight coming to the rescue with a bail-out offer. Step forward civil engineers Kier Group, who are offering May Gurney a juicy £221 million in a merger deal expected to be confirmed in mid-June. When the deal goes through, the joint KG/MG organisation will have contracts at one in five of all the local authorities in the UK - including Bristol - with an estimated annual turnover of £2.8 billion, and £5.7 billion-worth of orders on the books. The service giant will encompass not just rubbish and recycling work, but also roads and housing maintenance, general facilities management, and construction.

Of course, when making a corporate omelette like this, eggs get broken. Around 200 are expected to lose their jobs - though only May Gurney's frontline staff, not the directors and certainly not the shareholders, who will own more than a quarter of the new organisation.

As anxious workers protesting at May Gurney's Keynsham depot in early May over the proposed deal pointed out, the company's new overlords are up to their necks in wide-ranging **ILLEGAL BLACKLISTING ACTIVITY**. Like other big construction firms such as Costain (which also bid to buy out MG), Kier has a long-held reputation for getting rid of employees who call for safer working conditions. Such workers then find themselves turned down from jobs at other



companies, regardless of skills or experience – enforced joblessness that can last for years, thanks to a secret 'do not employ' database operated by building industry-bankrolled spying outfit The Consulting Association.

An offshoot of an earlier blacklisting service, the Economic League, TCA's offices were raided in 2009 by the Office of the Information Commissioner, which then closed it down permanently for its extensive **DATA PROTECTION LAW VIOLATIONS**.

But whilst TCA has been shut down, the practice of blacklisting lives on, as 28 electricians on the London Crossrail project (undertaken by a consortium including, erm, Kier) discovered just last year when they were unexpectedly made redundant.

Why? Because their union reps had raised serious concerns over potentially life-threatening safety issues.

Since then, around thirty local authorities across the country now refuse to accept tenders for publicly-funded contracts from blacklisting companies like Kier.

The question is, will our own council place more value in the lives and livelihoods of ordinary Bristolians, over the interests of rich corporate bosses?

And will His Royal Redtrousserness George Ferguson refuse to do business with Kier - or will he meekly stand by and let it take over where May Gurney left off, fleeing the city, endangering lives and blacklisting at will?

A STENCH OF FRAUD?

Senior figures at ailing waste management company May Gurney might not have time to enjoy any windfall payments from the merger with Kier – if how they ran the Bristol rubbish collection contract reaches the attention of the police.

It seems that soon after winning the seven year 'flagship' contract in 2011, MG management realised that they couldn't keep up with the pace of collecting rubbish and recycling throughout the whole of Bristol. So, instead of hiring more staff to spread the workload, the company's bosses decided instead to **MASSAGE THE FIGURES**.

Whilst Bristol City Council set the time limits on how long 'jobs' should take on collection routes, it relied wholly on May Gurney to tell it whether everything had been done on time... Except MG routinely 'closed' active jobs, even if they had not actually been completed.

"Doing this saved MG hundreds of thousands of pounds in fines," a well-placed source told *The Bristolian*, claiming also that "over 500 jobs" were dealt with in this way.

And the result? Rubbish piling up uncollected in hundreds of streets from Easton to Clifton and Filwood to Horfield.

LOPRESTI CLEANS UP

At least one person in Bristol is pleased with how the city council's waste contract with the incompetently-managed serial blunderers May Gurney has turned out.

While household recycling might go uncollected, streets remain uncleaned and fly tipping is overlooked, the Shitty Hall's former Waste Services Contracts Manager one Giovanni Lopresti - who personally negotiated and oversaw the flawed and expensive contract with the rubbish waste collectors - is **UNLIKELY TO GIVE A TOSS**.

For Giovanni, younger brother of Filton's low-profile Tory MP Giacomo 'Jack' Lopresti, was made an offer he couldn't refuse and now has a well-paid job as Contract Manager with, er... May Gurney!

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BRISTOLIANBITES

LEADING BY EXAMPLE?

Within two days of George announcing the Labour Party had joined his 'Rainbow Cabinet' – that cheerily-named cross-party gang of rubber-stampers run for the benefit of Bristol's business elite - the Mayor happily announced a further £70m of cuts at Bristol City Council.

"I expect this to include a full review of council staff terms and conditions," blustered the wealthy, **OUT-OF-TOUCH TWIT** launching his latest attack on ordinary Bristolians who don't happen to be part of his privileged millionaire milieu.

It'll be interesting to see, then, how the supposed party of the workers responds to this announcement. Will they be signing up for George's Tobacco Factory Bar model of low status, low wage and no rights employment? Or will they be standing up for ordinary workers at the council and walking away from George's Victorian plans to do away with holidays, maternity rights, sick pay, pensions, redundancy, Health and Safety protection and any other benefit George is too tight to offer to his poor, downtrodden bar workers?

Don't hold your breath.

TOTALLY IN TOUCH..?

Further evidence of George's complete departure from reality emerged at a meeting held at Shitty Hall for businesses concerned about his Resident Parking Zone plans.

"Where do you expect my staff to park?" asked one Gloucester Road trader.

George – a man who clocks up an average of 1,000 air miles per 'work-related' trip in his job as Mayor - responded by **BREEZILY** suggesting that people should live nearer their working as "that's what a sustainable city is."

Good idea George. Shop workers can just buy a three bedroom house in St Andrew's.

They're a snip at only £450k a pop.

FERGO FARRAGO

Are the signs of strain already getting to Gorgeous George? His recent antics down at the Bearpit - telling a member of the public to "**FUCK OFF**" for asking him about Resident Parking Zones - suggest so.

As did his bizarre excuses to the media following his very public breakdown. "He was stalking me!" squealed the lightweight red-trousered fantasist about a person who had spoken to the him all of, er ... twice!

The madness of King George's attacks on his critics are increasing exponentially by the month. Back in the halcyon days of his election campaign, his critics were simply "party politicking". Once in office his critics became "silly". Now he regularly accuses any critics of being "stalkers".

The Bristolian therefore suggests that if you want to disagree with George do it quick as - at this rate of attrition - by Christmas you're likely to be labelled "rapist" or "paedophile".

The BRISTOLIAN

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KIOSK CAFÉ

Outsourced park café scheme meant to earn



As the cuts keep on coming, it's worth reminding ourselves that the people making the 'tough choices' are invariably the idiots who caused the problems in the first place.

A case in point: KioskGate. No one in the council wants to talk about it, yet this ill thought out plan to increase revenue from Bristol's parks actually ended up costing us more than £300,000.

The whole sorry saga begins in 2010, when the council decided to **BOOT OUT** small licensed food and drink concessions from a number of city-run parks, and replace them with custom-built new kiosks, to be operated by whoever promised to stump up the most money.

Licensees were not told about this. Christophe Moron, who had sold freshly-made pancakes from his 'La Bonne Crêpe' van in Castle Park for more than three years, only found out in early 2011 because local Parks Project Manager, Alberto Palmiero, came round to measure up for a shiny new café kiosk.

The trader subsequently discovered that the lease for his pitch had been quietly readvertised, and that he had only a few weeks to put in a new bid. Predictably, he was not able to meet the higher offer put in by the council's preferred

bidder, the Gloucester-based Diamond Catering.

Diamond had applied to take on all four of the new kiosks – in Castle Park, St George Park, Oldbury Court Estate and Canford Park – and won them all in a five-year contract. It also took over the pre-existing café at Ashton Court Estate when a previous caterer pulled out, and was poised to run the snack bar at Blaise Estate as well.

The new deal, which was supposed to put the council quids-in, was heralded with a splash story in the Evening Post in March 2011. Councillor Gary 'Hefty' Hopkins – himself no stranger to a cheeky slice of cake and a four sugars coffee – gurned for the camera whilst declaiming that "these kiosks will provide a range of high quality drinks and snacks [and] provide an important income for reinvestment in parks."

One slight problem – Diamond Catering went **BUST** in October of that year, and within weeks was in liquidation, leaving unpaid staff locked out of their workplaces, and creditors out of pocket – Bristol City Council to the tune of more than £92,000. The cafés then stayed empty for more than seven months until the following summer, when they were brought 'in-house' and operated directly by the council – though Castle Park kiosk

GREEN GUS KICKS UP A FUSS

Feeling the pressure is George's little Green helper, Cllr Sir Gus Hoyty-Toyty, who has been upsetting residents of his Ashley Ward with his erratic and **EVASIVE** approach to their concerns about the Resident Parking Zones.

This culminated recently in a bizarre outburst from Sir Gus, when he claimed a photo in the Evening Post of a few pensioners on Cobourg Road in Montpellier brandishing pitchforks and mock threatening Gorgeous George over his Parking Zones represented a serious and present danger to Sir Gus's personal safety.

"They're doing this on the street I live," whined

the courageous Green – a vociferous champion of councillors living in the ward they represent. Except they weren't – if the Electoral Register is to be believed, there is **NO GUS HOYT** now living on Cobourg Road.

Most strange. Perhaps Sir Gus has been taking lessons from Bristol Labour's most deranged Alderman, Royston Griffey? Is Sir Gus now Lord of the Montpellier Manor and thinking the whole ward belongs to him?

Have the pressures of being a high-flying local politician meant that Hoyty-Toyty has also forgotten to register his current address for Council Tax?

CHAOS

money cost us £300k+

remains shuttered even now, more than a year on.

So what went wrong? Well, one person to ask is the Environment & Leisure Service Director 'LAZY' TRACEY MORGAN, for whom Palmiero worked. She appears to have authorised him to fly to Rome (on council expenses) in June 2009 to research kiosks made by "Italy's leading designer and manufacturer of bespoke steel kiosks and modular buildings" Asteco Industria Srl – and coincidentally a company to which he had family connections.

Whether Lazy Morgan knew that Palmiero was

related to key people within Asteco is not clear, but either way - whether she knew about the conflict of interest and ignored it, or if she failed to find out about it and was negligent - it doesn't say a lot for her managerial abilities.

On Palmiero's recommendation, four kiosks were purchased, at a cost of **£54,000 EACH**. Then came the deal with Diamond Catering – a company which boasted of working "on a global scale, having fed members of The British and Foreign Royal Families, provided banquets and intimate dinner parties in a multitude of settings, operating multi million pound budgets. That is slightly at odds with the words of council spokesman James Easey, who in trying to manage the fallout from the Moron eviction in February 2011 claimed that Diamond was a "small business" in a bid to reverse the perception of BCC siding with Goliath against David.

Quite why Diamond collapsed so spectacularly and so soon after securing the sweetheart deal for running refreshment kiosks in Bristol's parks isn't clear – not least because, as the Legal Services department claims, "**THERE IS NO WRITTEN RECORD**".

Whatever the reasons, its directors were certainly more fortunate than the workers they put out of jobs. Ray Chisholm and Jeffrey Bayne each set up a new catering company in September 2011 – a whole month before Diamond tanked.

Alberto Palmiero was similarly fortunate. Privately educated in Dorset, he joined Bristol City Council in 2002, and there he stayed until October 2011 – around the time Diamond went under. Like the Diamond directors, he too had planned ahead, and had just the previous month set up his own company, AP2 (2011) Ltd, a "consultancy and agency service" of which he is sole director.

Oh, and in November 2011 Palmiero became an authorised UK agent for Prestige Kiosks Limited, "the exclusive distributor in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland for Asteco Industria Srl"... Now there's a turn up for the books!

Naturally, with so many implicated in the mess, with council managers, directors and elected councillors all having signed off on the Diamond's tender bid and on the Asteco deal, no one is keen to revisit it. How fortunate for the Lib Dems that their own Councillor Simon Cook caught the Leisure brief in Fergo's 'rainbow cabinet' seeing as they were in charge then.

Because it would probably be a mighty big embarrassment for this one to leak out...

BRISTOLIAN BITES

HIBAQ TO BUSINESS

As the dust settles on the May local elections, Bristol Labour has been crowing about its polls success, having picked up six new councillors at the expense of the Lib Dem collapse to now make it the biggest party in Shitty Hall.

Indeed, so excited are they that they've put aside their differences with Mayor Gorgeous and now have two senior councillors, Mark 'Bear' Bradshaw and Brenda Massey, in his 'rainbow coalition' cuts cabinet. A victory for social democracy indeed!

One of their best results came in the hard-fought, seven candidate Lawrence Hill election. There former Easton Lib Dem councillor Abdul Malik was beaten into an **EMBAR-RASSING** third place by UKIP, with the Greens' Chloe Summers coming in second from bottom with barely two hundred votes, despite earlier boasts by her pal Rob Telford that the sandal-wearers would romp home.

And who did win? Well, congratulations to Hibaq Jama, who despite freewheeling through most of the campaign scooped more than half the vote to hold Lawrence Hill for Labour after Margaret Hickman stepped down. As the city's first elected politician of Somali origin, Jama is already something of a Bristol Labour poster girl, and given George Fergo's fondness for dynamic young women, it seems possible he could find a special role for her despite her inexperience.

In the meantime, *The Bristolian* hopes that being in the public eye will put an end to the rumours circulating about Jama's management style whilst working at Lawrence Hill's education hub, the Beacon Centre.

After all, when phrases such as "bullying", "blasé absenteeism" and "unprofessional personal relationships" are bandied around, even the brightest star starts to fade.



Hibaq Jama: will fit in perfectly with Bristol Labour...

WELL I NEVER!

No.1: Cllr Gary Hopkins

March 2011, having outsourced the running of cafes in Bristol parks to Diamond Catering: "The installation of these kiosks will not only provide a range of **high quality** drinks and snacks but they will also bring people of all ages together to meet informally and socialise. The kiosks will also provide an important income for re-investment in parks."

May 2012, having brought the parks cafes under direct council control following the collapse of Diamond Catering seven months previously:

"By bringing the café and kiosk service in-house we know we can offer local people a consistently **high quality** service at a fair price. The catering service will not only offer a great service for visitors, it will also bring in additional revenue, which will of course be re-invested into the council's park services."

BONUS:

July 2011, on the announcement of the £96 million waste collection contract awarded to May Gurney:

"[It] will bring a **quality** service"

WELL I NEVER!

GEORGE CHUM IN CIRCLE JERK SHOCKER

Why speak plainly when you can sound like an arse?

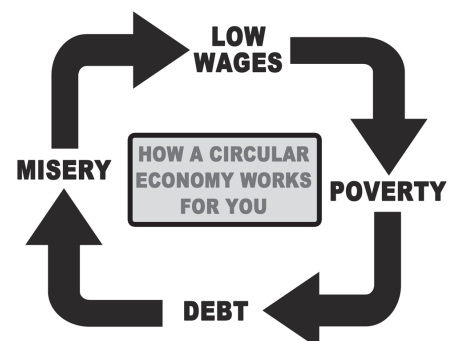
While the council has been dragging its feet over telling us how much George's last junket to the 7th Sustainable Cities Conference in Geneva has cost us (see *Bristolian* #4.3), we've had a useful insight into the event from George's fellow traveller, the boss of the quango Bristol Green Capital Partnership, Darren 'Tammany' Hall.

Gushed the **SOMEWHAT EXCITABLE** Tammany in an email to supporters: "Thankfully, the conference was mostly about solutions. Janez

Potoznik, Director General of Environment for the EU, talked about the huge opportunities in transitioning to a circular economy."

Excellent. Not only were they laying waste to the English language as we know it - or should that be transitioning nouns to ugly verbs? - they were literally talking about making us all go around in circles!

Perhaps someone should tell Tammany to transition his head out of his arse?



A HULL OF A WAY TO RUN A CITY

New council boss displays worrying traits after just 1 month

Just a month into her role as Bristol's new £160,000 per year 'City Director', Nicola 'Quitter' Yates OBE – who left Hull City Council in a hurry last year – has firmly instructed her Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to table a pared-to-the-bone 'YEAR ZERO' BUDGET.

Drawing inspiration from Cambodia's genocidal maniac Pol Pot, Quitter and our Red Trousered friend Mayor Fergo – a comparative bargain at just under £67k – want to turn back the clock on what is acceptable in a modern city, and strip council-funded services to the barest minimum.

Since the Dear Leaders made their wishes known, the ever-obedient SLT has been busy identifying the statutory obligations the council has – and bollocks to the rest. If they proceed with this, facilities like day centres, museums, leisure

centres and many other key resources will lose all funding. The council will then only pay for what is required by statute – their **BOG STANDARD LEGAL OBLIGATION**.

Of course, you will not see a reduction in your council tax, only in the services you receive. You wait and see what happens after your granny falls down the stairs, and needs help after leaving hospital – sweet FA.

The question must arise sooner or later, just what are we paying for (apart from their salaries)?

Well, an army of overpaid unelected consultants carving up our services, whilst telling us there is not enough money for our basic needs, before pissing off back to their suburban luxury, with full fucking healthcare and the like.

Time to bring forth the guillotine !



Bristol's Number 1 Citizen: soon in the swing of things



MONDAY: First meeting of the new four-strong city council Green Group and it went very well indeed. We almost fill a small corner of a Committee Room now! We covered everything from how totally opposed we are to any of the cuts we vote for, to hammering out some very serious policy positions.

First in the in-tray was the super controversial Resident Parking Zones. After some frank, open discussion and very serious debate, and with brilliant input from all our councillors, we agreed a consensus policy on the issue. Basically, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, we are totally in favour of the Resident Parking Zones. We will meet again next week to hammer out what to do if there's a fifth Wednesday in the month. On weekdays – except, obviously, the first and third Wednesdays – when the sun shines we are against the parking zones. On weekends, regardless of the weather, we think it should be left for the communities affected to decide.

We then had a vigorous debate about rainy days and Mondays, except – obviously – any rainy first and third Wednesdays and all days on weekends – but remain undecided.

We agreed to come back to the issue next week after George had made his mind up about it all anyway. We've also drawn up an extensive communications policy on the issue to cascade to all Bristol Green Party members. It reads:

"IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH US – BLAME GEORGE."

Tried to pop in to see George afterwards but he was busy in a meeting with the very independently-minded Mr Perry from Clifton, so he asked me to come back tomorrow.

TUESDAY: Popped back up to the third floor to see George this morning and bumped straight in to a beaming Mr Holt clutching a handful of *Bristolians* and shouting at me, "Have you seen it? Have you seen it? I'm in it!" I congratulated him and he skipped off to show Angie Ridgwell. It must be said that being called by a girl's name in *The Bristolian* may well turn out to be Peter's crowning achievement from his time in the city.

Tried to see George but he was with Mr Perry again. Indeed Mr Perry was sitting in George's Eames chair with his feet up on his desk while George appeared to be standing listening intently. In my opinion Mr Perry was very rude telling me to go away as they were busy running the city.

WEDNESDAY: Tried to see George again. When I got to the third floor I could hear raised voices or, rather, a raised voice that sounded rather like Mr Perry's. It was something to do with resident parking I think and the words "Stop dithering! Just bloody get on with it, you useless red-trousered old" something-or-other. Mostly I could hear what they were saying, but I have never heard of a 'stankwain' before, and it's not in *My First Illustrated Dictionary*. When I tapped on George's door he immediately opened it and shouted at me to – and even as I write this I'm blushing – "Eff-you-see-kay off and stop stalking me!"

Charming! After everything I've done for

him. That's the last time I iron his silk pyjamas as a favour before one of his late-night list-ticking sessions.

THURSDAY: Decided it was time to start focusing on my new cabinet portfolio. Started with council housing today and explained in detail to the council housing boss Mr Palmer how I wanted a wraparound strategy to retrofit our housing for the forthcoming environmental apocalypse in place ASAP. In the meantime I told Mr Palmer to set up a Twitter account to talk up solar panels and cavity wall insulation.

Mr Palmer said he thought his housing officers would be "thrilled" by my "creative approach" as it would make a change from all that depressing Bedroom Tax Spare Room Subsidy stuff. He also invited me to his leaving do, as he's going next Tuesday. "Who'll be in charge then?" I asked. He just laughed and said, "see you next Tuesday Gus."

FRIDAY: Tried to find out today who's in charge of the city's council housing from next Tuesday. Nobody seemed very sure. Also bumped into my new Cabinet colleague Mrs Massey in the corridor this afternoon. She was trying to find out who was now in charge of education as the excellent Mrs Hudson was also leaving. We both decided to call it a day and go to the cider bar at Eat, Drink, Bristol.

SUNDAY: Attended the Reed Service at St Mary Redcliffe Church today. It's a special ceremony for us councillors, and a great opportunity to dress up. Someone asked me if I was a Christian and I did my usual response of staring at the ground and shuffling about a bit before changing the subject. As it was the weekend, I just said, "I think the communities affected should decide on parking zones, don't you?" But George didn't find it funny, though.