

# Plain English

The Voice of Plain English Campaign

Issue 88 Winter 2017

## The year in plain English

2017 wasn't a vintage year for plain English. Donald Trump's media team, rarely happy with the truth, decided to instead deal only in alternative facts. The Brexit issue, and the future of the UK, was anything but clear, with key figures in the Government delivering mixed messages about the state of affairs, often on the same news day. And from pensions to the NHS, from car loans to coverage of dangerous weather: all were shrouded in confusion, jargon and misinformation.

Among the worst culprits of the latter was Rush Limbaugh, happy to rant wildly inaccurately about lethal weather on his talk show. Rush - defying meteorological experts and satellite images - decided that Hurricane Irma, which killed at least 134 people, was actually a Democrat conspiracy to help sell 'this climate change agenda'.

Kellyanne Conway and Sean Spicer, propping up a precarious Presidency, decided, with straight faces, to peddle the idea of 'alternative facts'. The last approval ratings we saw for Donald Trump suggest people prefer real ones.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, elbowing aside regular Foot in Mouth favourites Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, described food banks as 'rather uplifting'. Most people consider food banks deeply worrying symptoms of the widening gulf between rich and poor. Rees-Mogg, MP for North East Somerset, seemed to delight in working families relying on charity to survive.



**Jacob Rees-Mogg, this year's Foot in Mouth Award winner, for suggesting that a reliance on food banks was 'rather uplifting'.**

On a happier note, Children's Commissioner Anne Longfield produced some excellent school-age guides to Facebook terms and conditions. The Grammar Vigilante put various shop-keeper errors to rights with after-hours corrective raids. Birmingham City Council did great work with their new, user-friendly website. And our old friend, Professor Joseph Kimble, produced another invaluable corrective against rampant legalese, 'Seeing Through Legalese'.

### **Inside:**

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## Child-friendly Facebook terms and conditions

The Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, has produced a 'child-friendly' plain English version of Facebook's terms and conditions.

We've often highlighted the need to simplify online terms and conditions on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. Many users of those sites still don't realise how their images and footage might be used once posted online.

Millions of children use Facebook, including around half of all 12-year-olds, according to Ofcom figures. (Facebook's minimum age restriction is 13.) But few if any understand the implications of posting their personal details and images online. Longfield is keen for that to change.

"Children have the right to know what they are signing up to, in clear, simple, easy to understand language," she said.

Longfield stressed that the new, clearer versions of the terms and conditions "aren't a legal document but are designed to be an accessible, child-friendly tool to help children understand their digital rights."

When you create a Facebook account, and as Anne Longfield's guide explains, you agree that Facebook can do with it as they wish. Which could mean images sold to third-party companies. How many children – or their parents – had any idea this was the case?

## AC Grayling's Foot in Mouth runner-up...



"It is so predictable that a lazy reading of any discussion about how a democratic order can rebut the patronising view taken by Plato that 'ordinary people' are not fit to have a vote, that I repeatedly stressed that the great debate about how to honour the right of citizens to be the source of political authority in a state was precisely about the means to prove Plato wrong."



## Leave it, Northern Rail

"Due to low train to rail adhesion caused by poor climatic conditions, trains passing #Hatfield may be delayed by up to 10 mins."

We suggested to Northern Rail that what they really meant was: 'Due to wet leaves making lines slippy, trains passing #Hatfield may be delayed by up to 10 mins.'

They agreed. Which do you prefer?



## Cheques and imbalances

A major bank recently issued cheque books that include an instruction warning their customers to stop using cheque books.

The bank in question wants to encourage all their customers to bank online.

They cite efficiency, safety and environmental benefits. We can appreciate all those reasons for ditching hard copies of documents. But what about all the banking customers who aren't computer-savvy?

Some customers have contacted us to suggest they are being aggressively pushed in a direction they're reluctant to follow. They're not confident banking online, and would rather be allowed to continue as they have done for their entire lives.

Why not leave both options on the table, so that chequebook users can continue to do so? Eventually, all banking will be done online.

But should loyal elderly customers who have written cheques for 60-plus years, and who have poor computer skills, really be forced to use online banking?

'Why can't they learn?' is not a good enough argument. Customers who have been loyal to their bank for decades should not have to undergo computer-skills training simply to look after their money. And they should not be harrassed by their bank trying to save money when said bank has had the benefit of their saved money for a lifetime.

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## Leasehold nightmares



The Government is looking to ban house sales under leasehold contract.

To state the obvious, the leasehold scandal is ruthless opportunism. What was once a means of taking a small, regular rental fee (with an easy 'buy' option) has become a chance for dodgy builders to bleed homeowners dry to the tune of thousands.

Many homeowners, some of them first-time buyers, have realised too late what their leasehold agreement actually means. Some of the details, hidden away as per usual in unreadable small-print, include leasehold fees doubling each year, to the point where the amount owed is ludicrous and unjustifiable.

So the matter has come to a head, with promises to outlaw the practice. That's too late for some, who not only owe extra thousands on an already pricey house, but will also struggle to offload their property. Who wants to buy a house burdened with a ridiculous debt attached to it?

Taylor Wimpy have gone some way to doing the right thing by writing-off £130m of debt. But other firms, such as Countryside, have been accused of failing to support their buyers.

In other words, they're still money-grubbing, and possibly destroying their own reputation in the process.

# Plain English Campaign 2017

## Plain English Awards

### Pancreatic Cancer UK

(Caring for someone with pancreatic cancer)

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### Independent Age

(Coping with bereavement/Scamwise)

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### Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust

(HPV)

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### NHS Health Scotland



(Your baby/  
You're pregnant/  
This little test could  
help save your life)

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### Law for Life

(How to win a PIP appeal)

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### Mindwell

(Mental health website,  
Leeds)

## The Football Guff Award

### Gordon Strachan



“Genetically we are behind. In the last campaign we were the second smallest, apart from Spain. We had to pick a team to combat the height and strength at set-plays. Genetically we have to work at things, maybe we get big women and men together and see what we can do.”

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Runner-up: ‘Big’ **Sam Allardyce.**

“Being in the bottom three is irrelevant. What matters most is how many games you’ve played and how many points you’ve got.”

## Foot in Mouth Award



**Jacob Rees-Mogg**, for describing food banks as ‘rather uplifting’.

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### Runner-up: Donald Trump

“We’re gonna find out. And -- and, by the way, when I say you’re gonna find out. You can never really find, you know, there are gonna be -- no matter what numbers we come up with, there are gonna be lots of people that did things that we’re not going to find out about. But we will find out because we need a better system where that can’t happen.”

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### Runner-up: Boris Johnson

“They literally have a vision to turn Sirte into the next Dubai. The only thing they have got to do is clear the dead bodies away.”

# award winners and diplomas

## Plain English Diplomas

**Juliet Sutherland**  
(Scottish Enterprise)

**Sarah Scott**  
(Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency)

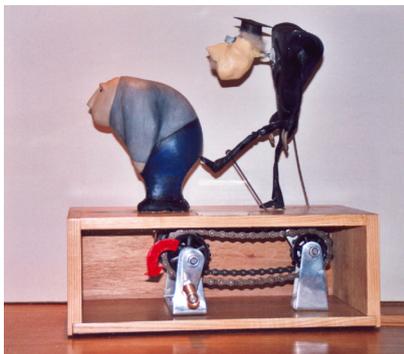
**Eileen Silkstone**  
(HSBC Global)

**Grant Chappell**  
(DVLA)

**Nicola Gilbert**  
(Open University)

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## Kick in the Pants Award



**Kellyanne Conway/  
Sean Spicer**

‘Alternative facts’

## Pat on the Back Award

**The Grammar Vigilante**

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## International Award

**National Australia Bank**

(Plain English loan contracts)

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## Media Awards

**Christina Wallace,**  
Forbes

(Why Simple Language Is Always A More Effective Communications Strategy)

**Andre Spicer,**  
Daily Telegraph

(Insidious Management Speak)

**Ottawa Citizen**

(Long-term care needs transparency)

## Plain English Communicator

**John Major/CNN**



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## Chrissie Maher Award

**Anne Longfield**  
(Children’s Commissioner for England)

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## Osborne Memorial Award

**Alan Alda**

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## Web Award

**Birmingham City Council**  
([www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk))

# Golden Bull winners 2017

**Lesley Marr sent in this 'auction listing'.**

B: Proprietorship Register This register specifies the class of title and identifies the owner. It contains any entries that affect the right of disposal. Title absolute (21.02.1995) PROPRIETOR: (13.03.1996) RESTRICTION: No disposition by a sole proprietor of the land (not being a trust corporation) under which capital money arises is to be registered except under an order of the registrar or of the Court. (13.03.1996) RESTRICTION: Except under an order of the registrar no disposition by the proprietor of the land is to be registered without the consent of , [REDACTED]. (07.10.2016) RESTRICTION: No disposition of the registered estate, other than a disposition by the proprietor of any registered charge registered before the entry of this restriction, is to be registered without a certificate signed by the applicant for registration or their conveyancer that written notice of the disposition was given to [REDACTED] being the person with the benefit of an interim charging order on the beneficial interest of [REDACTED] made by the High Court of Justice on 29 September 2016.

**Rachel Richards felt this from Horsham District Council wasn't helpful.**

Thank you for the enquiry linked to residual waste capacities. Whilst its mentioned that 20% of the residual waste stream consists of target materials there are options to be considered at point of purchase as well as other materials that are put in the residual waste stream at the moment that can be recycled such as electrical goods, textiles, garden waste and finally food waste all of which make up nearly another 40% of the a residual waste bin contents at moment in the district. **Much of the issue surrounding target materials is linked to mixed messaging over the last decade or more leaving residents unsure in some cases as to what can and can't be recycled.**



Potentially around 60% in total of the residual bin contents can be recycled identified by the district waste audit.

With regard to the figures quoted above they're a guide in terms of what's possible linked to behavioural change and maximising desired behaviours which will be achieved by additional education where needed plus support for families who are already recycling by offering waste audits to emphasise some of the materials that are discarded in the residual waste stream and offering additional recycling capacity in order to accommodate the shift towards improved participation and capture rates linked to reduction, reuse and recycling.

I hope this assists  
Regards

**Irene Auerbach sent us this part of a letter from CAF. She has no idea what it means and nor do we.**

An Entity only manages another Entity if it has discretionary authority to manage the other Entity's assets (either in whole or part). Where an Entity is managed by a mix of Financial Institutions, NFEs or individuals, the Entity is considered to be managed by another Entity that is a Depository Institution, a Custodial Institution, a Specified Insurance Company, or the first type of Investment Entity, if any of the managing Entities is such another Entity.

**Magaret Rose sent us the following Scottish Assessors Association nonsense.**

5.1 Valuation of Shooting Rights 5.1.1 A table of rates per hectare has been prepared consequent to analysis of the available rental evidence for sporting rights to shoot over a variety of land types and is set out at Appendix 1. The rates should be used in the absence of local evidence. 5.1.2 The rates are to be applied relative to the predominant land type over which the rights are exercised. If the nature of the land is of relatively equal proportions of particular land types, often considered to provide the best shooting potential, then the "Mixed" rates should be applied. 5.1.3 Tables of quantum allowances are also set out at Appendix 2. There are two tables of quantum, one for Deer Forest/Hill/Moor and one for all other land types. 5.1.4 Quantum should be interpolated for intermediate areas. 5.2 Valuation of Deer Forests 5.2.1 The incorporeal right to shoot deer can be let separately from the deer forest and can constitute a unit of valuation separate to that of the deer forest. 5.2.2 No separate entry should be made for the corporeal subject that is the deer forest. The rationale being that the value of such lands and heritages is exhausted by the value of the shooting rights. 5.2.3 Where the deer forest is owner occupied, and is solely used as such, then the value of shooting rights exhaust the value of the deer forest. Accordingly, no additional value should be attributed to the corporeal subject that is the deer forest. 8.4 Unexercised Shootings 8.4.1 There may be cases where, for a number of reasons, the occupier of the shooting rights does not shoot, or has no intention of allowing anyone to shoot. The occupier of the shooting rights could exercise or lease the rights to a third party but chooses not to do so. In these situations, if there is clearly game that could be shot and/or there is potential value in the holding for shooting purposes, this should be treated as a voluntary restriction and a separate entry made in the valuation roll.

**Anonymous sent us this from a UNSW Management document. It seems to have something to do with Matrixes but we can't be absolutely certain...**

The Strategic Matrix is intended to facilitate the cross-cutting interactions our staff and students are seeking in order to secure the benefits of linking across faculties, schools, divisions, disciplines and other organisational boundaries. The vertical axis – our Schools, Faculties and Divisions. The eight Faculties and Divisions, along with our Canberra campus and the 50 Schools within them form the vertical axis of the UNSW Strategic Matrix. The horizontal axis – our strategic priorities, themes and enablers. The three strategic priorities, which have emerged from the consultation – Academic Excellence, Social Engagement and Global Impact – and the eight themes that sit within them, along with our strategic enablers, form the horizontal axis of our Strategic Matrix.

**A supporter alerted us to this excerpt from restaurant critic Tim Hayward.**

The gratin itself, under its gilded crust, is emollient — wholly oily, baptising the lips, with the gelatinous benisons of ocean and byre, the marine purity of fish flesh balanced by an earthy and profane honk of tripe. A mouthful takes the breath and then immediately centres the soul.

**Stephen Hall was justifiably confused by the following from Nottingham City Council.**

REASON FOR CALCULATION: Change in Overpayment recovery.

- the value of the overpayment where an underpayment or cancelled payment have reduced the amount or a duplicate encashment has increased the amount.

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**Please send us your entries for next year!**

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# Hurricane of nonsense



**Rush Limbaugh**

Right-wing media representatives in the US have been rightly criticised for peddling 'dangerous' misinformation about Hurricane Irma.

"There is a desire to advance this climate change agenda," suggested Rush Limbaugh.

"And hurricanes are one of the fastest and best ways to do it."

Limbaugh – no scientific expert, to our knowledge – thinks he's got a handle on the situation.

"In hurricane tracking and hurricane forecasting I've been able to spot where I think they (the left) might be playing games," he said.

"Because it's in the interest of the left to have destructive hurricanes. They can blame it on climate change, which they can desperately continue trying to sell."

In a time when such nonsense seems to be a terrible norm, the clear and plain truth has never been as important.

"Listeners in Irma's path could well perish," wrote respected climatologist and geophysicist Michael E Mann on Twitter, "because of Mr Limbaugh's dangerously misguided rhetoric."

It's irresponsible for any high-profile commentator to peddle nonsense about extreme weather. Those taking any notice of the likes of Limbaugh may put themselves in serious danger. As ever, best to stick to impartial, plain English facts.

## Training dates 2018 (open courses)

### London

#### Plain English

Wednesday 24 January  
Wednesday 21 March  
Thursday 24 May  
Wednesday 25 July  
Thursday 27 September  
Wednesday 21 November

#### 'Grammarcheck'

Tuesday 20 March  
Wednesday 26 September

#### Diploma

Wed 21/Thu 22 February

### Manchester

#### Plain English

Tuesday 27 February  
Thursday 19 April  
Tuesday 19 June  
Wednesday 22 August  
Wednesday 24 October  
Tuesday 11 December

#### 'Grammarcheck'

Wednesday 18 April  
Tuesday 23 October

#### Diploma

Tue 11/Wed 12 September

### Edinburgh

#### Plain English

Wednesday 14 March  
Wednesday 19 September

For further details, please  
phone Terri Schabel on  
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