

NEWS

SCHOOLS BREAK UP

EIGHTY-eight schools across Scotland have now discovered faults with the wall ties holding external walls to the buildings.

The problem with schools built under the PPP1 private finance initiative scheme came to light in January 2016 when a wall collapsed at Oxbgangs primary school in Edinburgh during stormy weather (see *Eye* 1417). The scale of the problem confirms that corner-cutting and a lack of proper inspections were rife in the PFI construction industry in the early 2000s.

Construction industry expert Prof John Cole's report on the problems in Edinburgh was published in February. He found that the way private financing was used in the schools project "did increase the risk of poor quality design and construction" and that Edinburgh council was too willing to leave it to the contractor, Miller Construction, to check up on the building work properly. He also noted that Edinburgh's approach "was quite typical of that adopted generally at the time", as the large number of schools elsewhere in Scotland finding problems now shows. More problems could yet come to light, as not all schools built at the time have yet had the necessary inspections.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

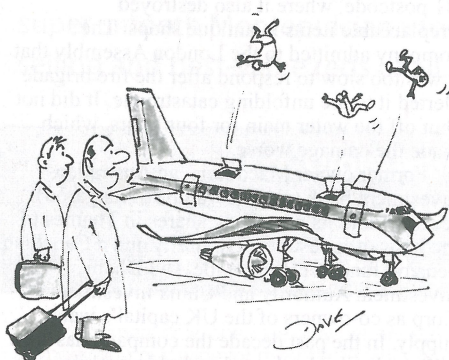
294 Children's playgrounds that have closed since 2014 as a result of government cuts, with another 154 closures planned before 2018

22.1 Percentage of reception-age children in UK who are overweight or obese, swelling to 34.2% in year 6

THE THINGS THEY SAY

"I am told by our internal surveys that we take of customers, by customers themselves directly and by a very large group of our employees that there is a new spirit at United." – *United Continental chief executive Oscar Munoz, interviewed in Financial Times, 7 April... two days before his airline displayed this "new spirit" by dragging a bloodied passenger from his seat*

"Their customer service has a terrible reputation and much to have a terrible reputation about." – *Aviation analyst Andrew Charlton on United, in the same FT article*



"They've fitted ejector seats now to get rid of overbooked passengers – a much better PR story"

Street OF Shame

THE Sun has turned both barrels on price comparison website uSwitch with the launch of an exclusive investigation into how it "initially only shows deals from firms that pay it commission of up to £100 a go".

"U-SWIZZ" bellowed the front page on 29 March. The next day brought news that the company "and fellow comparison sites GoCompare, Compare the Market and MoneySuperMarket" were lobbying the Competition and Markets Authority to be allowed to limit the number of sites they recommended, along with a rare special "Sun Says" editorial accompanying the story and deriding the "sneaky sites... First uSwitch, not U Stitched-Up."

The next day's paper hauled the prime minister into the story – or at least her slightly bemused spokesman, who said "clearly this story is concerning". On 2 April came the shocking news that the four aforementioned comparison sites had "seen profits quadruple in ten years... our research shows they are enjoying soaring profits just like the Big Six energy firms", while two days later there was news of a poll showing that "nine in ten families say energy price comparison websites should stop pushing people into costlier deals and automatically show all available tariffs".

The paper returned to the topic on 5 April with a further "Sun probe" revealing that "if other sites, including Confused, Compare the Market, MoneySupermarket and GoCompare, were allowed to only show deals for which they get paid commission, customers would lose an average of £68 each".

So who can readers trust? Well, by an astonishing coincidence *Sun* publisher News UK is the second-biggest shareholder of, as well as providing the office space for, another website which offers consumers the opportunity to compare energy suppliers and switch online. The site – its name for the moment escapes us – went unmentioned in the attacks on its supposedly "sneaky" rivals, but its chief executive Kelvin MacKenzie has never been shy about singing its praises in his own *Sun* column, offering shameless plugs for its price comparison services on no fewer than 38 occasions since its launch in 2015!

WHEN *Sunday Times* hack Andrew Gilligan wrote to Lord Gnome last week claiming that "all of the facts" in our recent piece about him were incorrect (see Letters page), he copied his email to all *Sunday Times* news reporters. Whoops!

Gilligan isn't universally loved by his colleagues, and there was what one observer described as "a mini civil war on the news desk" when hacks saw what he had written.

Gilligan complained among other things about the *Eye* noting how his byline had been "mysteriously inserted on to the second edition of a front-page story about the Westminster Bridge killer". He thinks his credit was fully justified. But other *Sunday Times* hacks think otherwise. One sent out a staff email last week announcing his leaving drinks in the form of an *ST* news report, at the end of which he wrote: "Note to subs: please insert Andrew Gilligan's byline for second edition."

SO. FAREWELL then Geoffrey "Lickspittle" Levy. The septuagenarian *Daily Mail* hack, best known for writing an hysterical attack on Ed Miliband's father, has been quietly put out to pasture.

His 2013 piece about the late Ralph Miliband – "The Man Who Hated Britain" – proved to be a PR disaster for the paper, with politicians on left and right agreeing it was no way to treat a Jewish refugee from the Nazis who had served in the Royal Navy and taken part in the Normandy landings. The *Mail on Sunday* scarcely helped matters when it sent a reporter to intrude upon the private memorial service for Ed Miliband's uncle. Lord Rothermere himself had to issue a grovelling apology to the then Labour leader.

Levy's departure leaves Richard Kay in an awkward position, as for many years "Lickspittle" was the man who put the former diarist's thoughts into plain English. Levy and Kay will, however, have one last farewell performance: they're writing a special supplement to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Princess Diana's death in August, and are now furrowing their brows trying to think of something new – or even remotely interesting – to say about the People's Princess.



JUST FANCY THAT!

"Password manager LastPass is advising users to avoid using its browser plugins while it battles to fix a 'major architectural problem', which could allow an attacker to steal passwords or execute code." – *Guardian, 30 March 2017*

"A password manager generates and stores passwords you could never possibly be expected to know by heart; you just have to remember one reasonably complex one to 'unlock' all the others. I use LastPass... my most used sites, at least, are secure." – *Guardian, 31 March 2017*

THE MATHS BOYS

FRESH-FACED hacks chosen for this year's *MailOnline* trainee scheme, fear not: the hours spent scrubbing the internet of drunken selfies and late-night Twitter rants before submitting a cover letter may prove useful for the job.

Readers of a *MailOnline* headline on 6 April about two elderly paedophiles "with a combined age of 207" losing their appeals against their sentences needed only to look at the first subheading to find out the men's ages: 101 and, er, 96.

Luckily, a diligent sub spotted the error and quickly changed the headline before anyone noticed.