



The PGA Newsletter

HMP Blantyre House ... is it closed?

By John Attard, PGA National Officer

Blantyre has not been closed it has been 'temporarily taken out of use for maintenance'. The PGA Response.

The announcement of the closing of HMP Blantyre House came completely out of the blue and was a surprise to many including the PGA. NOMS has gone out of its way to explain that Blantyre House is not closing it is 'being taken out of use temporarily for maintenance'. The prison will be decanted of its prisoners and staff will be sent on detached duty. Describing the closure as a 'temporarily taking out of use for maintenance' is a bit of a mouthful so why then is every effort being made to describe it as such? This is more than just about semantics; it is because assurances were given that no more prisons would close during this Parliament. The challenge, therefore, was how to describe the closing of a prison, even temporarily, without using the word closed. That is not easy and clearly demonstrated by the knotty description 'being taken out of use temporarily for maintenance'. The Q&A issued as part of the announcement worked very hard not to refer to 'closure' but could not avoid it entirely. Irrespective of how this situation is described the important issues are the consequences of the decision and why it needed to be made.

HMP Blantyre House was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons in 2010 and in its introduction stated. "We have frequently reported in positive terms about the prison and this announced full inspection confirmed that Blantyre remains an exceptional, specialist establishment undertaking an important role in the prison system." The introduction ends with the sentence, "Blantyre remains one of the jewels in the Prison Service crown." It is clear that Blantyre's work with offenders is successful and

recognised and something we should be proud of. Blantyre has an enviable rehabilitation success rate that we should be celebrating and, where possible, replicating. Although the 2013 inspection was not as glowing as the previous it was clear that Blantyre was still delivering. The inspection report introduction concluded: "Blantyre House still retains many of the strengths we have identified in the past. In particular, its small size means there is an opportunity for its experienced staff to get to know prisoners well and address their needs and behaviour

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Welcome to the third edition of the PGA Newsletter!

Welcome to the third edition of the PGA newsletter.

Thank you again to every one who wrote in to comment on the Newsletter. The responses have again been overwhelmingly positive.

In this edition I hope you will get a sense of energy being generated by your PGA NEC as we went 'on the road' holding meetings with two PGA Branches – HMP Bristol and Northern Ireland. Both visits were a brilliant success and are referred to in this edition. In a demonstration of our global influence we even have an article from ex-PGA NEC Representative David Foot, now working in the British Virgin Isles – plans for an NEC meeting to be held there are in discussion... I wish!

Since producing this edition we have also met at HMP Holme House and an article will appear in the next edition about that meeting. One theme that appears to be emerging from our visits is the massive impact Legal Highs and staff shortages are having on governor grades as well as our staff. We will continue to gather evidence of this and explore what is being done about it.

We have had some success with requests for photos but not all were fit for publication! You will see, however, a picture of James Bryant, our office manager, Mark Icke, Dave Hoskins and me. Gary Alcock (NIPS) also sent in a photo but it did not do him justice so another request has been made.

In regards to the next edition, it would be worth stating that we plan to publish a minimum of six editions per year but aim to publish around eight. The frequency of publication depends very much on what is happening around the estate, the volume and nature of union business being discussed and the capacity for the NEC and other contributors to produce the articles. It is fair to say that there is a lot going on at the moment and we would expect a publication to be released around every five to six weeks.

John Attard
Editor

Our Man in the British Virgin Isles – It's not all beach and cocktails! *An article by David Foot*

Hello colleagues from the British Virgin Islands,

People joke about a prison room with a view but the cells here truly have a spectacular scene from their windows. Interestingly after that their life and problems are much as you encounter on a day-to-day basis in the UK. We recently started a prisoner committee and their top issues were property through reception, the toiletries we provide and the food.

My life is a little different however, apart from the fact it is a balmy 28 degrees outside I have spent the past year working on the prisons procedural infrastructure. I am blessed with some fantastic staff through all grades and a fairly modern prison, but also a system that has suffered an erosion of procedure for a number of years. I am also fortunate to have the full support of both the Minister responsible for

prisons and his Excellency the Governor. I have been given significant funding from both parties to improve several areas most notably Reducing Re-offending and Security.

We have introduced sentence planning and a risk assessment process which has enabled us to direct our



growing menu of OBP's as you would expect and as the parole amendment act has recently been introduced begin to create parole dossiers in preparation for the Territories first parole hearings in late March. It will be a long week, 19% of the population is serving life and sentencing policy is harsh.

We now have a combined OMU and Reducing Re-

offending function delivering courses to cover 6 of the 7 pathways. We are currently negotiating with the BVI financial services commission and local banks to provide sessions on finance and debt which will see us cover all 7.

Restorative justice training has allowed us to link with the courts and provides alternative sentencing programs for juveniles and young offenders; to date we are working with 5 juveniles and 3 young offenders on various projects around the islands

Security have worked hard on both procedural and physical security linking with the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force in creating joint intelligence sharing protocols and an SIR system with graded intelligence. We have relocked part of the prison introducing a secure line and establishing night locking protocols. We did have to remove a number of banana and mango trees from the prison as they were too close to the fence which upset a number of prisoners as they

had become used to picking a fresh snack when they felt like it.

I am pleased to note that the prison rules of 1999 here still allow the Superintendent or the IMB to remove remission following adjudication, it is necessary in an environment where differential regimes have yet to be established and prisoners are not as yet paid for their work.

Wherever you are in the world the global recession has hit and I have to make 5% savings year on year in line with current Government policy. There is a pay freeze here also with Government employees receiving no increments for the last two years, I have to confess I have stolen my plans for these savings from the UK with a monthly 6k (US Dollar) reduction in energy bills and a full re-profile.

If there is one significant difference here it is the community, it never ceases to amaze me the generosity of the people and industry in the Virgin Islands who give for any worthwhile project. I have stocked a library with donated books (1000's of books), we held a basket ball tournament for prisoners and the scorers and ref's gave up each Saturday afternoon for 10 weeks from the basket ball association. The list is endless



and makes managing a prison here so much easier.

There are 30,000 people on the islands and everyone knows everyone, a massive plus for dynamic security. Someone here knows every new reception making induction and first night work much safer. Self harm is not prevalent in the culture here. We have had one incident of self harm in the last year.

I am proud to say that we had one serious incident in 2014, and only 2 serious assaults which is marked decrease on previous years and a testament to the hard work of my team and the progress we have made in such a short

time. This year we embark on better monitoring and so key performance targets find their way to the BVI along with new shift patterns, hopefully we will also have new uniforms which will be made here by the prison tailors shop and paid employment will fill the regime.

Best wishes to you all from the SMT and me.

David Foot
BVI

Professional Matters

By Stephen O'Connell
President of the PGA

Maximising media opportunities is vital in the modern age to get the PGA message out to those that matter most to us. Why?

1 It is important that the voice of Governors is heard in shaping the future of criminal justice and prison policy, and to maintain our high professional standing amongst criminal justice colleagues.

2 To ensure the public and others have the opportunity to hear from a credible, professional body of Governors who have the integrity to ensure the truth matters most and not headlines.

3 To build relationships with media professionals founded on mutual trust to ensure our key messages get to our target audiences undistorted.

To achieve this the PGA must have a coherent engagement strategy, identifying key stakeholders and target clear, compelling messages to them. In addition the advent

of social media provides exciting and instant opportunities to communicate with a number of our targeted audiences however there are dangers and reputations can be damaged with a few misplaced words.

Firstly we need to develop our engagement strategy and in particular identify what we want to say on a range of key issues over the next 12 months and beyond. What are the issues where the PGA



already hold a position and what are the issues on which we want to clarify or adopt a position e.g NPS Drugs. The answers to these questions will be provided by our membership through the NEC in determining our priorities. Some of these may be internal organisational matters which will require only internal communications. The rest of this article will focus on the aspects of our plans which we will want to communicate

externally using various media sources and methods.

Secondly having decided what the PGA want to communicate we then need to be clear who our target audiences are, our stakeholders. There are tried and tested methods for completing this work including stakeholder analysis which measures the relative interest of our target audiences to the PGA and the influence or impact they have on us. We can then target our communications most regularly at those of most interest and influence to the PGA.

I believe professional issues represent the most important contribution the PGA can make to the public debates on areas such as;

- The Role of the Governor - moral leadership and operational grip. The PGA is well placed to speak on behalf of Governors on these challenges.
- Service integrity and system integration in a diverse landscape of providers and support services. The PGA could argue that we can't keep outsourcing parts of the system as there is a law of diminishing returns.

- Sentencing policy – whilst there are many strands to this area the PGA could champion a simpler more transparent system which enables the general public to understand what being sentenced to 3 years, 10 years or Life means. A limb of this approach could, quite respectably include an argument to send fewer offenders to prison.

- Technology - what is coming in the next 3 to 5 years and how will it change the operation of prisons. The PGA may need to be able to speak with authority in this vital area as so much future innovation will arise here.

- Elections and party manifestos – politicians do listen to the PGA and respect our views as the professional voice of Governors. The PGA will have an opportunity in the coming months to take a position on Criminal Justice policies as the party manifestos take shape particularly around issues of implementation and the effect on prisons and our members. To the extent that Law and Order features in the election campaign, arguably the PGA should have a position on each of the main parties' policies which affect prisons.

Having established what the PGA policies/positions could be, we would then be in a

clearer position to determine our engagement strategy. Given that we are a relatively small association we will need to prioritise carefully; decide to do only what we can reasonably do with the time and resources we have available. While part of our strategy may be to respond to big issues as and when they arise, our recent experience has shown this cannot always be depended upon as we don't control what 'air time' we get.

What we can control is the proactive element of our strategy. I see this as being a plan to promote our policy/position on certain key issues possibly restricting this to two or three, aiming to be heard loudly, clearly and consistently running a very small number of lines rather than hoping to be heard because we can talk about anything.

Finally we need to decide how best to influence people. Our stakeholder analysis will identify who we want to influence, which might include one or two influential and sensible Crime Correspondents, cultivating relationships over time. We might also identify the need to communicate on these few key issues – articles in the Guardian, Times, Spectator, New Statesman etc – to say

nothing of the online opportunities. We could plan a series of 'pieces' – say one a quarter on the few key policies or positions the PGA want to promote and find ways of seeking to make our voice heard. Local Radio and Television on the back of Inspection reports provide good opportunities albeit it ones which can be difficult by the findings of the Inspection reports. There may also be mileage in raising the PGA profile among the 'prison provider' community – CRCs, charities etc. This could be part of our natural constituency – but our stakeholder analysis will determine this.

It is clear if the PGA is to maximise all forms of media opportunities to get our message out to those that matter most to us then we must have a coherent engagement strategy. As President it is my role in the PGA to progress professional matters on behalf of our membership supported by the NEC and I will return to this matter in future editions of our newsletter.

Stephen O'Connell
PGA President

The PGA on the Road - Northern Ireland Branch *by John Attard*

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) PGA Branch invited Stephen and me to visit HMP Maghaberry and we duly packed our suitcases and boarded a plane from Gatwick.

Like in England, Wales and Scotland, there have been a few changes in the NIPS PGA Branch with Gary Alcock becoming the new PGA Chair and Pat Gray the Secretary. Demonstrating our support for all PGA members is very important to us and it was particularly important that the NIPS PGA Branch were clear that the water between our lands was not a barrier to working closely together.

On our arrival at Belfast International airport we were greeted by our PGA colleague Colin Ward before meeting Gary and Pat later that evening.

A very productive meeting took place where Stephen and I were brought up to speed with the key issues impacting on our colleagues in Northern Ireland. This allowed us to prepare fully

for the next day, which would start with attending the morning meeting at HMP Maghaberry - a high security prison, housing male long-term and remand prisoners and separated prisoners.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the lovely landlady and breakfast we had before we set off to Maghaberry which was delicious and BIG (at no extra cost, I hasten to add) – despite Stephen asking for



the small breakfast! The landlady obviously took one look at us and thought we needed feeding up. I am not exaggerating when I say that Stephen did not eat again until he arrived back at Victoria Station in England at 9 o'clock at night!

The morning meeting at Maghaberry was very much like any other morning meeting in a busy prison – similar issues but different acronyms – we have ACCTs and they have SPARS (Supporting Prisoners At Risk process/document), for example. After the meeting, we then had another opportunity to discuss PGA issues with Gary and Pat, which was followed by a tour of the prison.

When the tour was over we then held a PGA Branch meeting over lunch. The numbers in attendance were excellent with members coming from across NIPS to be there. It was an engaging meeting with colleagues sharing their concerns, which we were able to subsequently discuss with the Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, Sue McAllister.

The meeting with Sue took place immediately after the branch meeting and was attended by Stephen, Gary, Pat and me. We focussed on the big issues which were: Meaningful engagement and consultation; Job Evaluation – proposed adoption of the

NOMS' system; threats to our members and what support was being provided; and, Recruitment and Career Progression of Governors – a discussion concerning the direct entry into the Governor 4 grade. After the meeting we wrote to Sue to capture what was discussed and thanked her for meeting with us.

The end of the day in the prison was then rounded off with a meeting with the Governor of HMP Maghaberry, Alan Longwell.

Many of the issues in NIPS are very similar to those in England, Wales and Scotland but there is an added political dimension that is difficult to appreciate for many of us outside NIPS. The most innocuous of decisions or comments can quickly escalate to Ministerial level and have far-reaching implications. Our colleagues in NIPS manage this fantastically well while still managing the day-to-day challenges of any other busy prison. It is also important to state, however, that from what Stephen and I saw, the prison we visited felt safe and orderly. The staff we met, without exception, greeted us with a smile or a courteous hello and the prisoners conducted themselves well. Relations between the staff

and prisoners were good and parts of the prison had a very relaxed feel to them, particularly Quiole House, a dedicated 44 bed unit which has been set up for male prisoners accepted onto the Families Matter scheme. It is an innovative 26-week programme, which aims to address offending behaviour of fathers in prison through a full time programme of family related activities. Having spent a little bit longer on this unit it was apparent that both staff and prisoners valued it.

In conclusion, we had a very successful visit and the feedback we have received has been very positive; and membership has already increased as a result! Both Stephen and I would like to thank everyone we met for their time and consideration and confirm that the rumours of the Northern Irish hospitality are perfectly true.

We very much look forward to the next visit.

John Attard
National Officer

What's in the next edition?

Can't wait for the next edition? Here's what we are currently working on and what's coming:

- JES – An update on where we are in our fight for equal pay for Operational Managers.
- Sadiq Khan MP, Shadow Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice – Stephen O'Connell and Dave Hoskins meet him. So, how did that go?
- NPS – Do we really understand the impact legal highs are really having? Evidence suggests we need to wake up to this very serious danger.
- HMIP v MoJ – A clash of ideologies?
- The Prison Service Reserve – A flexible workforce or a desperate measure to fill gaps with unforeseen consequences?
- Operational flex – do we have enough with such tight staffing numbers?

So What's it Like in Northern Ireland? A Profile of NIPS

by the NIPS Branch

The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is a proud and historic public service. We are an executive agency of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and are responsible for providing prison services in Northern Ireland. Its main statutory duties are set out in the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953 and rules made under the Act.

NIPS is a major component of the wider criminal justice system and contribute alongside other partners, to achieving the system's overall aims and objectives. Responsible to the Minister of Justice under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing & Justice Functions Order 2010). The Justice Minister accounts to the Northern Ireland Assembly for the Prison Service and holds Ministerial responsibility and accountability for the criminal justice system as a whole. The Prison Service is headed by the Director General.

The current governor cadre within NIPS consists of, 3 Governing Governors, 3 Deputy Governors, 8 Functional Heads and 19 Unit Managers. The Governors within NIPS are largely situated within the prison domain however there are also a small number of unit manager grades at NIPS HQ and the Prison Service



College situated at Millisle, Co Down.

There are three operational establishments, Headquarters and the Prison Service College

Maghaberry Prison is a high security prison, housing male and long-term and remand prisoners and separated

prisoners. The prison is often described by observers as the most complex prison in Europe as it acts as the main committal and discharge prison, houses prisoners separated from each other based on the religious affiliation and their political allegiance as an outcome of the 2003 Steele Review, currently has an approximate 10% foreign national population, an integrated sentenced and remand population, and a separate working out unit based in Belfast city centre offering resettlement support and opportunity for long term prisoners nearing their end of sentence. Maghaberry's average daily population is around 1000 and the prison offers a wide range of inmate services, learning and skills, employment and activities.

Two areas within the prison of special interest are the Donard Activity Centre which provides a stimulating environment for those prisoners engaged in safer custody support and engaged with mental health provision and the Quoile House Families Matter landing which is facilitated in partnership

with the Barnardo's organisation. This unit provides learning and skills for fathers aimed at improving their relationships skills and ability to parent their children. The active programme has recently been expanded from a 17 week programme to a 26 week programme to provide greater learning and development opportunity and to build on education, activity and support for paternal prisoners. Magilligan Prison - a medium security prison housing shorter-term adult male sentenced prisoners which also has low security accommodation for selected prisoners nearing the end of their sentence. Magilligan prison is used as a dispersal prison from Maghaberry in that prisoners are transferred from Maghaberry to Magilligan to serve out part of their sentence. Magilligan has a more open attitude to prisoner activity and resettlement and currently has significant numbers of prisoners working outside of the prison daily on a number of local projects in conjunction with the local council and voluntary organisation's and employers. The prison has an average daily population of 550.

Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre & Female Prison - a medium to low

security establishment accommodating male remand and sentenced young offenders and all female prisoners. The daily population is around 230 prisoners and it offers a wide arrange of activity and opportunity for both young offenders and female prisoners alike. Hydebank Wood's Ash House female unit recently opened its activity centre known as Ornella House which provides a range of education and employment opportunities as well as providing a safer custody support unit for female prisoners. Shortly work shall commence on developing a six bed step down facility for females nearing their end of sentence and seeking opportunity to re-engage and resettle within the community. Ultimately a new female facility will be built on the Hydebank Wood site providing more female centric accommodation and support.

Hydebank Wood Young Offenders is also in transition to a more college centred ethos providing learning and skills activity at the centre of the prisoner journey and regime. This includes developing partnership working through an outsourced contract with the Department of Employment and Learning through the Belfast Metropolitan College

provider. The focus will be on building the core day around the prisoner's engagement in learning and skills with social activity being provided beyond that core delivery.

I trust this article provides an overview of the NIPS operational environment and further articles will describe some of the challenges and complexities of our Service.

PGA Branch Member

Annex Bs?

Most members will have read about Annex As in our first edition. These are required to be submitted by NOMS for any proposed change that impacts upon our members. (*Reminder – please let us know of any proposed changes at your establishment otherwise we probably don't know about it*). So what's an Annex B? This is a mechanism by which the PGA can seek the disclosure of information. Once submitted, the requirement is for the information to be provided within 28 days. We currently have three outstanding Annex Bs including one in regards to the decision to close, temporarily, Blantyre House. That response is due by 23 February 2015.

We will, of course, keep you posted.

HMP Blantyre House

... continued from the front page

in a personalised way that is simply not possible in larger establishments.”

Why then has the decision been made to ‘temporarily take out of use for maintenance’ a Prison Service ‘jewel in the crown’? It cannot be just because it needs basic maintenance work done – who ever heard of a prison closing for basic maintenance? The PGA understands that there is under-occupancy in the open estate but even this would not justify closing a prison – particularly temporarily – if there it were not for some other reason. The reason in this case is because we need to borrow these staff to deploy them in prisons where there aren’t enough. This is akin to a compulsive gambler pawning his best jewellery to keep the house running in the hopes that the next bet will pay off.

Two days after the announcement of the closure the PGA attended the Criminal Justice Alliance AGM. The Criminal Justice Alliance is a coalition of 75 organisations - including campaigning charities, voluntary sector service providers, research institutions, staff associations and trade unions - involved in policy and practice across the

criminal justice system. It was apparent that had the PGA not issued its press release, which was widely circulated and reported on, most of those that attended would not have been aware of the closure as many agencies commented to that effect. It was only because the PGA highlighted the announcement that they were aware. This raises a wider issue for NOMS on how it effectively communicates changes or policies which have an impact on criminal agency partners or influences their practice. In regards to the timing it was also unfortunate in that in January’s edition of the *Prison Service Journal* (January 2015, No 217) a large focus was on Open Prisons and the positive contribution they make in the rehabilitation of offenders. The impact of the changes to Release on Temporary Licence is also commented on as well as issues around OASys. The closing of Blantyre has highlighted more than just the problems of staff shortages; it has brought into the spotlight the underuse of the open prison estate, how we got there and what is being done about it. The long-term impact of this decision is not easy to assess. The successful rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners is a complex matter developed over many years by dedicated individuals

who become experts in their fields. Small changes in one area can have devastating consequences in others. Returning to the gambler analogy – we all know that when you return to the pawnbroker to redeem your property it costs more than what you got for it when it was first handed over. How much it will cost when Blantyre reopens and gets its staff back remains to be seen but the longer it is closed the more we suspect it will cost.

Sadly, virtually everyone we spoke to at Blantyre stated that they were not wholly confident that it will reopen and that is worrying as these concerns remained notwithstanding the assurances published by the Ministry of Justice and NOMS, which were widely quoted in the BBC News. These feelings probably stem from the number of spaces in the open estate, the role of other prisons coming on line, previous decisions to close successful prisons and the ambiguity in the language used in the Q&A sheet. So, going back to the title of this piece – is HMP Blantyre closed? The answer will be known in the next couple of months but we will continue to monitor it and report back.

*John Attard
National Officer*

The PGA on the Road – HMP Bristol Branch *by John Attard*

The PGA National Executive Committee (NEC) held the first of its 'On the Road' monthly NEC meetings. This one was held at HMP Bristol. Thank you to Bristol for agreeing to facilitate the meeting and for your hospitality.

The meeting was attended by our invited PGA guests, Steve Mead Deputy Governor at HMP Exeter and Steve Cross, Governor at HMP Cardiff. We also invited the local Branch up at lunchtime, which was well attended. One of the purposes of taking the NEC meetings on the road was to hear from our members directly - what was important to them and what life as an Operational Manager was like in the current climate. This view is important notwithstanding that almost all of the PGA NEC are Operational Managers currently working in prisons or have many years experience. Each prison is different and demands and challenges will be different, which we need to know about. These meetings also provide an opportunity to update our members as well as seek opinions on some of

the work we were undertaking at the time. The PGA is, for example, in the process of challenging the JES process, as we believe it is in breach of equal pay rules. The views from those in attendance were that we should continue to do so as there was complete agreement that it was unfair and, simply put, failed to reward Operational Managers for the work they were doing. Governor grades working in prisons are feeling under pressure as they continue to manage an ever-challenging workload and range of issues.

Notwithstanding the typical resilience exhibited by our colleagues in attendance, it was evident that pressures were having an impact and NPS was a serious concern. Not only were more inventive ways being found to get NPS into prisons, the effects they were having were profoundly different from the effects of the 'traditional' drugs.

The feedback we received on the day in regards to whether the PGA on the road was a good thing was overwhelmingly positive. Once we have completed a year of 'on the road' we will assess its overall success,

including costs, and decide whether or not to repeat it. We will provide an update at the PGA conference.

We would once again like to thank the staff at Bristol and particularly, Andrea Albutt, Governor of HMP Bristol (and PGA Vice President), the PGA Branch and both Steves for their attendance and contribution.

Planned venues for the next meetings

Feb	Holme House
Mar	London (NEMC)
Apr	Stirling House, nr Highpoint, Eastern Area or Newbold Revel
May	NW Area
Jun	London (NEMC)
Jul	South Central Area
Aug	Newbold Revel or Stirling House, nr Highpoint, Eastern Area
Sep	London
Oct	Conference – East Midlands

Legal Highs – New Psychoactive Substances *by Mark Icke*

The PGA has recently completed a wide range of media work on the effects of legal highs.

The reason for this is because it has become apparent to the National Executive Committee over the last 3 – 6 months, and intelligence is starting to suggest, that a lot of our incidents of violence and gang related behaviour in prisons is associated with legal highs. In our meeting last month with NOMS we asked the Director of Public Sector Prisons what work NOMS intends to do to combat this and we were very pleased to hear Phil Cople tell us about his plans to tackle this ever increasing problem.

The reality is that Operational Managers around the country can all probably recount a story of the effects it has and the effects they have witnessed it having on their prisoners. Some stories sound so unbelievable but the fact of

the matter is that when using legal highs anything is possible. It has in some establishments also caused major disruption to regimes due to emergency hospital escorts and we are aware of one case that happened just before Christmas and the bedwatch was still out at the time of writing this article. So what are 'legal highs'? Legal highs that are actually legal contain one or more chemical substances which produce similar effects to illegal drugs. These new substances are not yet controlled



under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and there is often not enough research about them to know about their potency, adverse effects from human consumption, or when used with other substances or alcohol.

Legal highs cannot be sold for human consumption so they are often sold as incense, salts or plant food to get round the law. The packaging may describe a list of ingredients but you cannot be sure that this is what the product will contain.

Just the fact that a substance is sold as 'legal' doesn't mean that it's safe or legal. You can't really be sure of what's in a legal high that you've bought, or been given, or what effect it's likely to have. We know that many legal highs sold in the community have been directly linked to poisoning, emergency hospital treatment and in some cases deaths.

Mark Icke
National Officer

Next month we publish articles from *Drink and Drug News* and *Sputnik News* of interviews given by Mark, where he pays testament to the work Prison Governors are doing and speaks of the challenges of dealing with NPS.

The PGA – Can I be a Member? *By Kevin Billson*

The PGA office is contacted regularly with enquiries about eligibility for membership of the PGA.

Quite often people believe that they aren't eligible when they actually are. Here are some of the most commonly asked questions;

Q. I'm a member on the Works team. I expect that when I transfer to the private sector I won't be able to stay in the PGA?

A. Yes you will. The PGA's Rules & Constitution are quite clear on this:

Any member who is transferred under the TUPE Regulations 1981 will be entitled to retain full membership and associated rights

Q. I'm a manager in a Private Sector prison and have never worked in a public sector prison. Why won't you let Private Sector prison managers join the PGA?

A. We will. If you are the equivalent of Public Sector Band 7 or above and you carry out a role directly comparable to that of an operational manager within Public Sector Prisons. We currently have 34 members working in private sector prisons.

Q. You don't represent the CM grade and so I assume that I can't join until I get a Band 7 posting?

A. You can join the PGA as soon as you have full Operational Manager accreditation, even if you are not yet in a Band 7 role.

Q. The PGA only represents Operational Managers but I've taken a non-operational post at HQ so I assume I can't join?

A. Yes you can. Provided that you are accredited and eligible to apply for operational posts should you wish then you can join

Q. I'm a Governing Governor and the PGA mainly represents Bands 7 and 8 so I assume it's not appropriate for me to be a member?

A. This is absolutely not the case. The PGA represents management bands 7 to 11, as

well as DDCs and values our Governing Governor members as much as we do other grades. The PGA prides itself on being in a position to speak on penal matters with both authority and knowledge. We can only do this with Governing Governors being part of our membership and sharing their experience and views on important subjects with the NEC.

If you fit into one of the above categories or know someone who does, please seek membership forms from the PGA office today and start to enjoy the benefits that being a member brings.

*Kevin Billson
Membership Secretary*

A Fond Farewell to 'The Palace' in Buxton by Mark Icke

The PGA has said a fond farewell to The Palace Hotel in Buxton and we now look forward to the 2015 Annual Conference.

It was the subject of much debate between members of the NEC after Conference 2014, and with a changing of the guard within the NEC - including a newly-elected President and three National Officers - it has been decided that a change venue was necessary for our Conference this year

The Palace has served us well over the last decade and has hosted many a

tour of the town, and that's before we even mention Duncan's charity quiz nights!

These alone have fond memories for us and we are sure for all of you

who have attended in previous years. Roll on to 2015 and we hope to portray a new image, that the PGA are engaging the membership and that we are capturing the imagination of the wider



The Radisson Blu



public. We are attempting to boost the profile of our Association, in order to ensure that the voice of our membership is heard. Conference is the opportunity for us to do that. We hope to attract both

colleagues and outside interested parties and our new location near East Midlands airport, which for most of us will be much

easier to get to, should allow this.

Our new location gives us the opportunity to hold a one and half day conference, rather

than the usual two and a half, which will hope will allow colleagues to get time away from their establishments.

NOMS has already given us a commitment that they will encourage all Governing Governors to grant attendance,

and our early

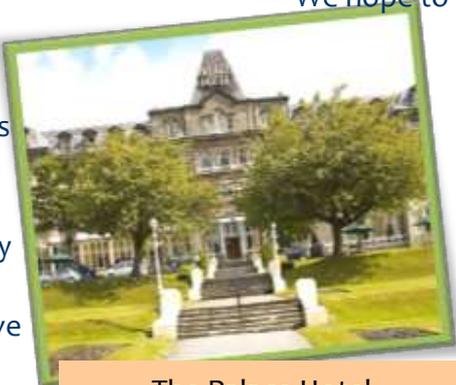
indicators are already showing that a boost to attendance is likely.

For information, the provisional dates for Conference 2015 are 13 and 14 October, 2015 at the Radisson Blu Hotel, East Midlands Airport.

<http://www.radissonblu.co.uk/hotel-eastmidlandsairport>.

Further details will be published in bulletins when available.

Mark Icke
National Officer



The Palace Hotel



Mark Icke
National Officer



James Bryant
Office Manager



John Attard
National Officer



Dave Hoskins
National Officer

Your PGA National Officials and Office Manager



@PGA_Prisons

Follow us on Twitter and we will keep you up-to-date on the activities of the National Officers and the NEC.

Any questions - why not Tweet us?

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