



he was always part of the plan. I encourage any children to bring carrots for him and Sam can become a focal point in terms of channelling the positives.

"He helps the adults just as much. I had a father who was in a terrible state on the day he was burying his son. Walking down the hill, following Sam, was an opportunity for that gentleman to catch his breath, collect his thoughts and spend some time with his son.

"That little cart is a wonderful thing. And for the people waiting at the bottom, they see Sam and he immediately lifts the mood. I've been around horses all of my life and I knew it would work.

"I do remember speaking to the

lady from the Association of Natural Burial Ground about my plans and she advised me against using Sam. She said there were always problems with either the ponies or the operators. I told her not to panic - I explained I was the operator and that was going to be the easy bit!"

As her woodland matures and word of mouth generates greater interest, Laura will continue to reassess the focus of her becalming Belsay retreat.

"We're developing a function room, adjoining the Blacksmith's Coffee Shop, to cater for larger groups," she added. "That will be ready in the autumn.

"However, we don't ever want to lose that special connection with

nature and the outdoors. When I connect with whatever God there is out there, it is when I'm outside. I'm either walking my dogs or I'm riding my horse or I'm just walking.

"The older I get, the more I marvel every year when I see the leaves come on to the trees or I spot a little stoat running across the road.

"We live in a beautiful part of the world and the environment in which we live is at the core of my spirituality and shapes my set of beliefs. I think a lot of people connect with that and it's what underpins the ethos of Belsay Woodland Burials."

■ For more information on Belsay Woodland Burials call 01661 881206 or visit [www.belsaywoodlandburials.com](http://www.belsaywoodlandburials.com)

# Bad faith politics just has us all scoring own goals

Paul  
Benneworth



**I**N the Netherlands, the amateur football season runs later than England, where my team Whitley Bay FC have been done and dusted since the end of April. One end-of-year ritual for Dutch amateurs is concluding matches that were prematurely ended on the originally planned day.

Even in the Dutch Premier League, matches are regularly suspended because of fireworks being thrown or lightning storms near the field. But what always struck me as odd was amateur club matches being stopped because they get out of hand.

So our (Dutch) club board found ourselves acting as observers a fortnight ago for 20 minutes of a fourth team game from February where our team had walked off the field in protest.

In the original game, we'd taken an early lead against the home team. The top-of-the table opposition took umbrage and decided to kick us off the park. At this level, the home team arrange the referee, and he was giving us no protection at all.

The physical violence and aggressive unpunished abuse started to take its toll, and when their striker kicked with full force into our goalie's outstretched leg, we realised how bad things were. We'd played on for a half hour after an ambulance ferried our keeper to hospital, but 70 minutes in, our team had had enough and walked off.

And it was our club that were punished by the Dutch FA, because we had broken the rules by refusing to play on. If the referee declared he had seen no foul on our keeper, then it was our duty to finish the match.

We paid the fine, and agreed with the hosts to arrange a better referee to finish the game.

And it passed uneventfully in the spirit of amateur football: intense, passionate and ultimately fair.

Football demands around a certain amount of good faith by both teams to allow a competition where the best team wins. And although all teams push the rules' limits, there's a world of difference between simulat-

ing a dive in the box, and systematically breaking the rules safe in the knowledge that your opponents will carry the can.

It's not just on the football field where we see bad faith behaviour taking over, but throughout contemporary life. And in the last month or so, it's become evident that our whole political system has been taken over and paralyzed by systematic bad faith behaviour.

The remain side of Brexit have played the democratic game in good faith and followed the rules. The leave side have lied, cheated, broken the rules, worked in the pay of foreign powers and then attacked anyone who's attempted to hold them to account.

Politicians supposed to be working for the public good, shadowy foreign-financed think-tanks and partisan media have played an elaborate and aggressive parlour game in pretending the public voted for a no deal Brexit.

We've had three years of Bad Faith Brexit behaviour that's bamboozled the media into not pulling apart the obvious flaws in their unicorn plans. But Brexiters shortcomings are now becoming painfully obvious as Britain stands increasingly alone, poorer and shunned by our former European allies.

At the recent European Parliament Elections, they pulled amazing trick of allowing the shabby coalition-tainted Lib-Dems to appear statesmanlike. And they've brought the country to its knees by driving away the very businesses we depend upon for future prosperity, the latest being Honda.

Bad faith football led to our goalkeeper's leg being broken so badly that he'll never play again, the recurrent problem of behaving without regard for dirty play's victims. We need to challenge the bad-faith side of politics, and shun bad-faith politicians - if we are ever to move forward as a country again.

■ Prof Paul Benneworth is professor of innovation and regional development at HVL University, Norway.