

ukcolumn.org

The website for an anti-establishment political pamphlet published in Devon, England. The site has posted false and misleading health information, including about COVID-19.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Score: 17.5/100

Ownership and Financing

The UK Column does not disclose its ownership. It is edited by site co-founder Brian Gerrish, a former Royal Navy officer based in Devon, England. The About The UK Column page explains that the site began as a pamphlet distributed in the city of Plymouth, targeting alleged corruption among members of the City Council. The print pamphlet continues to publish.

In addition to the UK Column, Gerrish co-leads two campaign projects run out of the UK Column's offices — the British Constitution Group and the New Chartist Movement. The former states on its website that it “campaigns for the restoration of Britain's ancient Divine secular Constitution, which, for several decades has been systematically denied and undermined by successive corporate governments.” The latter purports to be “exposing proven and current High Treason and appalling financial fraud within Parliament, the Judiciary and the City of London.”

Gerrish stood as an independent candidate for Parliament in the Plymouth, Sutton, and Devonport constituency at the 2010 UK general election, placing second-to-last among seven candidates.

UKColumn.org runs display advertisements, solicits donations, and offers memberships, which provide access to site forums, video conferences, and exclusive content.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✓ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

UKColumn.org primarily publishes political news and commentary focused on the UK and on how political events in the nation connect with global trends. The site is consistently critical of the establishment media, international bodies, national governments, and large corporations. A common theme in the site's reporting is

that such entities are conspiring to bind the UK to the will of the European Union, are engaged in the trafficking of children, and are working to silence dissent. The site identifies one organisation in particular — the British leadership development nonprofit Common Purpose — as the epicenter of various conspiracies.

For example, one article in a series that the site calls “The Common Purpose Effect” investigated links between the organisation and the National Health Service. The article claimed that “Recent scandals involving the NHS suggest the need for an immediate public inquiry” into the “neurolinguistic programming” techniques that UK Column claims are deployed by Common Purpose as part of its training.

The site adheres to a belief that an ancient British constitution — originating with the 9th century King Alfred of Wessex, based on common law principles— has been corrupted by laws passed by Parliament, and must be reinstated. This viewpoint is detailed on the website of the British Constitution Group, one of the projects of UK Column editor Gerrish.

Site sections include Politics, Media, Children’s Issues, Constitution, and Defence. Typical articles have included an essay charging that the UK Ministry of Defence is failing to protect and support veterans and an article criticising Syria’s White Helmets, a group that has been critical of the Assad regime’s human rights record.

The site also hosts a live news round-up on YouTube, titled UK Column News, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, episodes of which are made available through the website.

UKColumn.org features a Stories We’re Watching section that presents articles from other sites, including DailyMail.co.uk, WashingtonTimes.com, and Off-Guardian.org.

Credibility

Although articles on UKColumn.org sometimes cite credible sources, such as international bodies and reputable news outlets, the site regularly makes false

claims not supported by its sources, or draws on sources in a misleading manner

For example, a July 2020 article titled “Lockdown Deaths, Not Covid Deaths” argued that “the majority of deaths reported as COVID-19 mortality ... were Lockdown regime deaths not COVID-19 deaths.” According to the article, these deaths primarily arose because those who died were suffering from other illnesses, and “they either couldn’t or wouldn’t access hospital treatment.”

The article confused cause with effect: Lockdowns were imposed because cases of COVID-19 had begun to rise rapidly. Because the disease typically takes weeks to kill those who are critically infected, the peak in deaths necessarily only came after lockdowns were imposed. The claim that most deaths attributed to COVID-19 were caused by lack of medical attention to other ailments was not backed in the article with any evidence, and NewsGuard could not find such evidence.

A June 2020 article, titled “The Hydroxychloroquine Scandal,” suggested that the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malarial drug, in treating COVID-19 had been suppressed to ensure that only a vaccine would end the coronavirus pandemic. The article pointed to a range of studies that appeared to show promising results for the use of hydroxychloroquine, especially as a preventive measure.

In fact, hydroxychloroquine has not been shown to be an effective treatment for COVID-19. Although an early French study of the drug in March 2020 appeared to have promising results, the study drew significant criticism for its small sample size and misleading presentation of its results, which did not make clear that three patients on the drug required intensive care and one died.

Multiple studies, including studies that had been published before the site published this article, have raised concerns about use of the drug to treat COVID-19. For example, a March 2020 study conducted in

China found that the drug was not more effective for 15 COVID-19 patients than a regimen of bed rest, supplemental oxygen, and antiviral drugs. An April 2020 study of military veterans by researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Universities of South Carolina and Virginia said that it “found no evidence that use of hydroxychloroquine, either with or without azithromycin, reduced the risk of mechanical ventilation in patients hospitalized with Covid-19. An association of increased overall mortality was identified in patients treated with hydroxychloroquine alone.”

Science magazine reported in June 2020 that, in two large randomised trials in which hydroxychloroquine was prescribed as a post-exposure prophylactic to patients recently exposed to the coronavirus, there were no statistically significant results indicating the drug could prevent infection. Research has not yet determined whether the drug could be effective as a pre-exposure prophylactic.

An April 2020 article, titled “Exercise Cygnus: UK Government Exercise Justifies Covid-19 Lockdown,” claimed that, under the UK’s lockdown, “although accident and emergency visits are down, people with serious conditions ... are being told to ‘Stay at home – Save the NHS – Save Lives’. Many of these callers have then died for lack of care.” The article also stated that “there has been encouragement [by the government] to register anyone who dies, of any underlying condition, as a Covid-19 death,” and that “Despite these efforts to inflate the death rate, actual mortality rates since the beginning of this crisis do not show that we are in the middle of a pandemic.”

In fact, according to Public Health England, there were 11,265 excess deaths in England for the week preceding the article’s publication date, 8,252 of which had COVID-19 mentioned on the death certificate. The article did not provide a source for the claim that the government had encouraged that all deaths from underlying conditions be logged as COVID-19 deaths, and NewsGuard found no evidence for it. The article did not substantiate its claim that a significant number of people died after being told to stay at home.

A May 2019 article, titled “GcMAF and the Persecution of David Noakes, Lyn Thyer & Immuno Biotech,” concerned a protein called Gc-MAF. The article claimed that “The scientific evidence clearly shows that GcMAF is potentially the most effective cancer treatment ever discovered.”

Gc-MAF is a protein that is naturally produced in human bodies.

In fact, in an article evaluating studies of Gc-MAF, British cancer nonprofit Cancer Research noted that the protein activates macrophages, which are white blood cells that consume “foreign invaders and dead cells”. However, the organization stated that “there is no solid scientific evidence to show that the treatment is safe or effective.”

The article also criticised the 2018 prosecution of David Noakes, a British businessman and formerly a top editor of UKColumn.org who marketed Gc-MAF as a treatment to patients with cancer, HIV, and autism. Noakes began serving a 15-month prison sentence in November 2018, after pleading guilty to money laundering and manufacturing, supplying and selling an unlicensed medicine for his marketing of Gc-MAF, according to the BBC. The UK Column’s article did not mention Noakes’ retraction of his original claims. The article also did not disclose that Noakes previously co-edited the UK Column.

Because the UKColumn.org frequently publishes false and misleading health information, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false information and does not gather and present news responsibly.

Headlines generally consist of broad descriptions of the content, rather than specific claims — such as “What’s Erdoğan Playing At? Turkey’s Neighbourhood Tensions” and “Covid-19: the war against the elderly in uncaring ‘care’ homes.” Consequently, NewsGuard has determined that UK Column does not publish misleading headlines.

The About The UK Column page states that the site evolved from “Fighting against corruption within Plymouth City Council” to “spreading the truth about EU driven criminal activity in [the] UK, and fighting it.” No information about the site’s political stance is provided. The site includes a Commentary section, and also labels some content as Opinion.

Nevertheless, content that is not labelled as Opinion and published outside the Commentary section frequently includes opinion. For example, a May 2020 article, titled “COVID Coercion: Boris Johnson's Psychological Attack on the UK Public” and published to the site’s Coronavirus section, stated that “It is extremely difficult to see how [lockdowns] can be viewed as anything other than a direct psychological attack on the UK population... it is also difficult to see how this attack can be anything other than criminal.”

An April 2020 article in the Coronavirus section, titled “The Coronavirus Lockdown Regulations Expose a Divided Kingdom,” argued that “immediately [after] the Coronavirus Emergency period is over, there should be a public Inquiry conducted into the policing of the lockdown regulations. This should not only scrutinise the behaviour and actions of individual officers but also critically examine the leadership role played by Chief Constables.”

An August 2020 article, titled “Beirut: A tragedy that threatens the region with war and chaos” and published in the International section, reported on the explosions that devastated Beirut. The article speculated, without evidence, that “there is a strong possibility that Israel is directly or indirectly involved in the incident” and argued that “this horrific event is being seized upon by the US/Israeli-dominated predator nations that see it as an opportunity to rid themselves of a recently elected Lebanese government that is tentatively supportive of Israel's nemesis in the region, Hezbollah.”

Because the UK Column purports to draw a distinction between news and opinion content but often publishes unlabeled opinion outside its Commentary

section, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the separation of news and opinion responsibly.

The site does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard found only one correction on the site, from February 2018. This does not meet NewsGuard's standard for regularly publishing corrections.

NewsGuard sent two emails each to two UK Column editors, Brian Gerrish and Mike Robinson, seeking comment on the articles cited above, the site's approach to opinion, and its lack of corrections, but received no response.

The two editors subsequently carried out a lengthy discussion about NewsGuard in an August 2020 YouTube live stream, in which they acknowledged receiving NewsGuard's emails, but did not address the queries they contained, beyond charging that they were "loaded questions."

The two proceeded to discuss public information about NewsGuard employees, encouraged viewers to help find more information about the NewsGuard analyst reviewing the site, and argued that NewsGuard prosecutes anti-vaccination websites because one of its investors, the Publicis Groupe, had been awarded a contract by pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline. The editors also said that NewsGuard was connected to "deep state."

Transparency

The UK Column does not disclose its ownership or identify its editors. It provides a street address, phone number, and inquiry form on its Contact The UK Column page.

Articles typically name their author, but the site rarely provides biographical or contact information for its content creators.

Advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content.

NewsGuard sent two emails each to two UK Column editors, seeking comment on the site's lack of information about its ownership, editors, and content creators, but did not receive a response.

History

The UKColumn.org web address was registered in December 2007. The site states on the About The UK Column page that it originated in January 2006 as the Devonport Column, a monthly pamphlet decrying corruption in Plymouth City Council that was distributed in the city's historic harbour district. The pamphlet grew to four sheets long and reached a circulation of 75,000 by December 2007, the site claims. In this period, it was renamed first to the Plymouth & Devonport Column and then the UK Column.

In its early years, the site was co-edited by David Noakes, the businessman who was sentenced to prison in November 2018 for selling the protein Gc-MAF as an unproven cancer, HIV, and autism treatment. During this period, Noakes ran in the 2006 United Kingdom Independence Party leadership contest, placing last out of four candidates, behind the newly-elected Nigel Farage.

Between 2009 and 2012, site editor Gerrish regularly appeared on talk shows hosted by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones on Jones's website, InfoWars.

Written by: [Bron Maher](#)

Edited by: [Eric Effron](#), [Richard Sambrook](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and
Financing

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Says Gerrish is UKC's owner:

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Staff

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First sentence is wrong

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