

## interesting if true

**LAZY CATS** A German quality newspaper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, has featured Britain's rumoured big cats in the latest of its series of "scientific" articles, which looks at monster myths. The article talked about the possibility of large cats roaming England's greenest hills, and was accompanied by a survey to find out whether people think big cats could really be living in the UK. The three choices for answers: Of Course, Bullshit and Who Knows. A shining example of proper scientific research.

**ROOM PANIC** Monday's credit crunch conference at the London School of Economics turned into a bit of exercise, after a Palestinian demonstration blocked the main lecture theatre. Since the organisers had to change venues at the last minute, almost every panel took place at a different room in a different building. Coffee breaks, and even the lunch hour, turned into a frantic race as 300 people spilled out into the streets, armed with badly photocopied maps, cups of cold tea and napkins full of sandwiches. But for future conferences, they at least know their way around Holborn now.

**END OF THE AFFAIR** More cynical readers might suggest that the STFC deliberately sneaked out its organisational review just before Christmas to avoid the kind of furore that has greeted most of its decisions over the past year

or so. Either this strategy has worked or people really are at saturation point with all these reports. "I suppose I *should* have read it, but I've been a bit busy," was the stock response when *Research Fortnight* asked physicists whether they had been doing their homework over the holidays. Are we finally bored of all the drama?

**THE WASTELANDS BECKON** The news that the AHRC has submitted to the inevitable and will shift to the funereal environs of Swindon town has stirred a flicker of fear in the heart of MRC HQ. How much longer can the council fight off the bureaucratic march towards cheaper overheads? They are already preparing their defence. "The case for MRC is genuinely different..." chief exec Leszek Borysiewicz told us, stressing the importance of its proximity to various medical charities and health institutes.

**BEE KIND** After years of confused calls from holidaymakers and Plane Stupid activists, the British Association for the Advancement of Science (the BA) has taken the plunge and rebranded as the British Science Association. The occasion was marked with a lavish launch party in Westminster and a flurry of exciting activity on its website. We're particularly keen on the Save Our Bees campaign, which provides free seeds to grow bee-friendly flowers.

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