

**S**O. Farewell then to the Metrix consortium and the crazily expensive plan to privatise defence training at a new academy in South Wales under a PFI contract which rose from £11bn to £14bn and was plagued by delays.

Defence secretary Liam Fox has admitted: "It is now clear that Metrix cannot deliver an affordable, commercially robust proposal within the prescribed period and it has therefore been necessary to terminate the [defence training] procurement and Metrix's appointment as preferred bidder."

If only Fox's predecessors had paid more attention and heeded what the *Eye* has been saying for many years. In 2006 *Eye* 1164 pointed out that "another crucial service is being privatised to take advantage of accounting tricks". And in June 2008 we exposed MoD documents already showing an "affordability gap" and a host of internally acknowledged reasons why the deal was a thoroughly bad idea. But still the MoD ploughed on – simply to get the cost of the wretched academy off the government's books under PFI's accounting "magic".

Despite costs running out of control, especially after the Metrix consortium of QinetiQ, Serco, EDS and latterly Raytheon was appointed preferred bidder, the MoD was undaunted. Former defence secretary Bob Ainsworth awarded sweeteners in 2009 and 2010 in the form of a £31m "early training transformation" contract and a £29m "early works" contract. The MoD's own costs are thought to be heading towards £100m or so.

Even when it became clear that demand for the academy was a fraction of that claimed, "progress" was sustained through rampant schmoozing, recent *Eyes* exposing a desperate PR campaign mounted by Metrix, which certainly worked on credulous Lib Dem defence minister Nick Harvey. "To change course now," he said in July, "would undo a great deal of investment that has already been made and add considerably to the final cost." Thankfully, his boss has finally seen the light.