

52mph in a 20mph zone...

Lycra lout cyclists are creating death traps all over Britain



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INSIDE

Vocal support

How rock stars take care of their voices

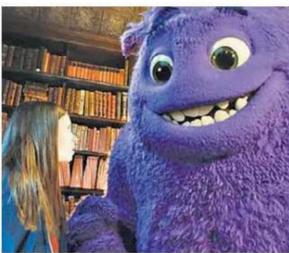
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Labour tax rises as sure as night follows day, says Hunt

Chancellor accuses Starmer of trying to disguise plans that will hit families hard

By Nick Gutteridge
CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR would put up taxes "as sure as night follows day", Jeremy Hunt will warn today as he uses a major speech to set out the Conservatives' economic pitch ahead of the election.

In the address in central London, the Chancellor will accuse Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, of using "playground politics" to disguise plans to hit families in the pocket to fund his big spending pledges.

Mr Hunt will draw three clear dividing lines between the Tories and Labour on the economy – taxes, jobs and welfare – and insist that he has a plan to boost growth by cutting taxes, creating jobs and cracking down on benefits.

It comes in a week where the Prime Minister fired the starting gun on the election campaign with a speech in which he warned that Labour presented a threat to the future security of the UK.

Other announcements that draw dividing lines between Labour and the Tories followed, with police told to increase the use of stop and search and new draft guidance on sex education published that urges schools not to teach contested gender ideology and says that sex education should not be taught below the age of nine.

Mr Hunt will defend the Tories' record and insist that the tax rises introduced to pay for the cost of Covid lockdowns and energy bills support will be reversed.

In contrast, he will say that Sir Keir intends to keep the tax burden at a record high. The Chancellor will say: "With no plans to pay for their spending pledges, taxes will go up under any future Labour government as sure as night follows day."

"And taxes will go down under a Conservative government because we will do the hard work necessary to keep our economy competitive." The speech

comes after Sir Keir Starmer unveiled his six election pledges in Essex yesterday. They included a commitment to keep taxes "as low as possible" but stopped short of promising not to put them up.

Mr Hunt's comments also come after Downing Street was buoyed by good news on the economy, including growth figures of 0.6 per cent in the first three months of the year.

Mr Hunt is targeting Labour on tax after recent polling showed that 2019 Tory voters would prefer to cut the burden than pour more money into public services. A survey by Ipsos, carried out in March, found that 43 per cent of Conservatives favoured tax cuts even if it meant less state spending on areas like the NHS. In contrast, 31 per cent said they would be happy to pay more tax to better fund public services.

Winning back the voters who propelled Boris Johnson into Downing Street five years ago is crucial to Tory hopes of turning around their electoral fortunes.

Mr Hunt will say: "Labour like to criticise tax rises this parliament thinking people don't know why they have gone up. The furlough scheme, the energy price guarantee and billions of pounds of cost of living support – policies Labour themselves supported."

"Which is why it is playground politics to use those tax rises to distract debate from the biggest divide in British politics – which is what happens next."

His remarks will be seen as a statement of intent that the Tories plan to take the tax burden back down to the level it was at before the pandemic.

James Murray MP, Labour's shadow financial secretary to the Treasury, responding to Mr Hunt's speech, said: "There is nothing Jeremy Hunt can say or do to hide that fact that working people are worse off after 14 years of economic failure under the Conservatives."

Editorial Comment: Page 17

Coppola unveils his Mega movie



Francis Ford Coppola, the film director, pictured with Aubrey Plaza, left, and Romy Croquet Mars, premiered *Megalopolis* at the Cannes Film Festival last night. Coppola, 85, has spent 40 years and millions of his own dollars on the project. Review: Page 3

Mortgage war as banks cut rates

By Charlotte Gifford and Fran Ivens

MORTGAGES are falling amid hopes central interest rates could be cut as early as the start of summer.

Barclays has announced it is lowering fixed-rate mortgage deals by up to 0.45 percentage points from today, while HSBC and TSB have also announced smaller rate reductions.

Brokers expect a string of lenders to make similar reductions in borrowing costs following a fall in swap rates – a leading indicator for mortgage rates – over the past two weeks after the Bank of England suggested central interest rates could fall sooner than expected – with some market forecasters predicting a June cut. The slew of anticipated cuts would likely stimulate activity in the housing market as summer approaches, experts said.

Mark Harris, of mortgage broker SPF Private Clients, said: "These cuts should give other lenders confidence to make

similar reductions, which will stimulate activity and provide a welcome boost for the market."

Adrian Anderson, of Anderson Harris added: "There is so much pent up demand – lots of buyers are waiting for mortgage rates to come down to help with the affordability of the mortgage. It

"There is so much pent up demand – lots of buyers are waiting for mortgage rates to come down"

would be nice to see some momentum build up."

Earlier this month, the Bank of England held interest rates at 5.25pc for the sixth time in a row, but signalled that a summer rate cut could be on the table.

Andrew Bailey, the Governor, said he was "optimistic that things are moving in the right direction" although he

would need to see more evidence of inflation falling before lowering interest rates.

Aaron Strutt, of broker Trinity Financial, said: "It wouldn't be unreasonable to expect fixed rates to come down over the next six months and be somewhere close to the levels they were in January. Five-year fixes need to be around 4 per cent for people to feel like they are getting reasonable value for money."

Mr Harris added: "Direction of travel for fixed rate mortgages should definitely be down now. The fact we have had big players reduce rates is positive and we will see more follow suit."

Ahead of the Bank of England's announcement, mortgage rates had been creeping up for several weeks.

Lenders began raising rates on new fixed deals as markets digested the fact that rate cuts might not be as soon as previously forecast. This was partly due to data showing higher-than-expected inflation in the US.

NHS bosses wanted fingerprints in whistleblower hunt

By Janet Eastham and Gordon Rayner

NHS bosses hunting a whistleblower demanded fingerprints from a doctor who has warned that medics "don't stand a chance" if they raise concerns.

Patricia Mills, a consultant in anaesthetics and critical care, said she would "never be the same again" after being hounded by managers who also demanded handwriting samples from her. They were trying to identify the author of a letter sent to a widower that made claims about one of the staff involved in the care of his late wife, who died at the West Suffolk Hospital in Bury St Edmunds in 2018. A report com-

missioned by NHS England found that the hospital's request for fingerprints from staff was "incendiary" and unprecedented. The hospital's chief executive later resigned over what was described at the time as a "witch hunt".

Doctors want the Government to create a new criminal offence of causing detriment to whistleblowers after accusing NHS managers of targeting them for daring to speak up.

It comes as other whistleblowers accused the NHS of "protecting" managers who have been criticised for their handling of patient safety warnings, many of whom have been given other senior roles in the health service. The Telegraph has highlighted con-

cerns raised by more than 50 doctors who say they were targeted after sounding the alarm about upwards of 170 patient deaths and almost 700 patient harms.

Instead of trying to address problems, the whistleblowers claim NHS bosses are spending millions of pounds hiring law firms and private eyes to investigate them.

Dr Mills was one of several staff that bosses at West Suffolk Hospital wanted to fingerprint after an anonymous letter was sent to former police officer Jon Warby, whose wife Susan died after surgery on a perforated bowel.

Dr Mills said: "I was off work at the time for six months. I've never, ever had



Patricia Mills was asked to submit a handwriting sample by her bosses

any time off work, ever. It made me very unwell. I will never be the same again. But it wasn't just me. It had a profound effect on everyone who was persecuted, really, by their employer."

Steve Dunn, the West Suffolk Foundation Trust chief executive, resigned after the hunt for the whistleblower was made public in 2020. Dr Mills continues to work in the trust.

Victoria Atkins, the Health Secretary, said: "The ability for professionals to report their concerns, to me, is a vital part of ensuring that our healthcare system meets the needs of patients and indeed of other staff members."

Reports: Page 7

NEWS

Labour school VAT raid has cost £22m

Labour's proposed VAT raid on private schools may have already cost the taxpayer £22million, figures suggest. The Independent Schools Council said that nearly 3,000 fewer pupils started at private schools this academic year compared with 12 months earlier. The vast majority will have gone to state schools instead, where the average price of educating one pupil for a year is £7,460 – according to government data – meaning a total cost of £21.9million. Page 6

MATT

DEVON

BOTTLED WATER STATION

"Second home owners have made it almost impossible for locals to catch the vomiting and diarrhoea bug"

NEWS

Animal waste blamed for water illnesses

Animal waste may have been the cause of water contamination in Devon that resulted from a broken valve, the local MP has said. Anthony Mangnall said South West Water had discovered the source of contamination that has left at least 22 people sick was a damaged air valve. He said the valve may have allowed animal waste or contaminated ground water to enter the local supply. Residents are being urged to boil water before drinking it and at least one school has been forced to close. Page 9

WORLD

Putin and Xi hail deeper defence ties

Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping agreed to deepen their co-operation on defence and hold more joint military drills after the Russian president arrived in Beijing for a state visit. Putin was met by his Chinese counterpart with full military honours, a band playing Soviet songs and cheering children in a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing yesterday. They signed a 7,000-word joint statement on "the deepening of the comprehensive partnership". Page 13

BUSINESS

Chevron abandons North Sea oil sites

The US oil giant Chevron has announced it will quit the North Sea after 55 years. Chevron said that it had decided to leave the region following a review of global operations to determine "whether assets are strategic and competitive for future capital". It came a day after Jeremy Hunt rejected calls for respite from a windfall levy that has driven up the tax on oil profits to 75 per cent. The company insisted this was not connected to Britain's tax regime. Page 19

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May: Sunak must not lose hope, I blew a 20-point lead

By Amy Gibbons
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THERESA MAY has pointed to her own election disaster as evidence that Rishi Sunak can defy the polls and deliver a shock victory over Sir Keir Starmer.

The former prime minister said her failure to secure a parliamentary majority in 2017 despite polling 20 points ahead of Labour for much of the campaign proved the Tories could still clinch a win, as she insisted the contest

was not a "foregone conclusion". She said: "We have seen one or two unexpected election results. I think I was probably 20 points ahead in most of the election campaign for the 2017 election, and look what happened to that."

Mrs May also said that the view on the doorstep was very different from how things felt in the lead-up to Sir Tony Blair's landslide victory in 1997, meaning Labour still had to put "a lot of work in on the ground" to get over the line.

Speaking to journalists in Westminster, she also warned against a pact between the Tories and Reform, as suggested by Sir Jacob-Rees Mogg, as she argued that Nigel Farage and Richard Tice were not Conservatives.

Mrs May was viewed as the definitive favourite going into the 2017 election but ended up losing her majority and relying on the Democratic Unionist Party to prop up her government.

Now, with Labour some 20 points ahead, the former leader suggested Mr Sunak could turn the tide and deliver a

shock result at the next election. When asked about Sir Jacob's suggestion that Mr Sunak should offer Mr Farage a role in a future Tory cabinet, she said: "I disagree with Jacob on that. Absolutely disagree with Jacob on that. I don't think Nigel Farage is a Conservative. I don't think Richard Tice is a Conservative. They're a different party, and that's it."

"As I look to the next election, I actually think the election is not a foregone conclusion. And I'm very happy to give you the reasons why I think it's not a foregone conclusion."

"First of all, on the doorsteps that I go on, Keir Starmer is not Tony Blair. The view on those doorsteps is different to the feel pre-1997."

"Secondly, actually, and I'm sure members of the Labour Party would accept this, winning the number of seats they need to win - it's a tough call. You've got to put a lot of work in on the ground to be able to do that. And

thirdly... we've seen one or two unexpected election results. I think I was probably 20 points ahead in most of the election campaign for the 2017 election, and look what happened to that."

Later, she said "there's every chance it could be Rishi" who wins the next general election.

Mrs May also argued that Britain should stay party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) as she warned that the Government had shown a willingness to "row back" on international law.

The former prime minister had previously expressed frustration with the ECHR and in 2016 suggested the UK should leave the treaty as it could "bind the hands of Parliament".

But when pressed yesterday as to whether she still thought the UK should look to leave or reform the convention, Mrs May said she now thought Britain should stay in.

NEWS BULLETIN

Peak rail fares on buffers for three more months

A scheme scrapping peak rail fares has been extended three more months, John Swinney has announced.

The trial was introduced in October last year and was recently extended to run until the end of June.

However, the Scottish Government has said the pilot will remain in place until the end of September.

The announcement means rush-hour commutes between Glasgow and Edinburgh will continue to be reduced almost half, from £28.90 to around £14.90.

The First Minister confirmed the extension during a visit to a Fife Expo at Edinburgh's Waverley Station, part of the Levenmouth rail link opening celebrations.

Trace of radiation found after 'dirty bomb' claims

Very small traces of "radiological material" were found at a Bedfordshire property during a counter-terrorism inquiry, the Metropolitan Police said.

A 31-year-old man from Bedfordshire, who was arrested on Tuesday on suspicion of a terrorism offence, is in custody and officers believe there is no risk to the public.

Commander Dominic Murphy, head of the Met's Counter Terrorism Command, said: "I want to reassure the local community and the wider public that, at this time, we have found no evidence that any form of 'dirty bomb' has been or was being constructed, nor any evidence that one was being planned."

Number of uninsured young drivers doubles

The number of young motorists punished for uninsured driving more than doubled in two years amid a spike in premiums, analysis shows.

IAM RoadSmart, a charity, said there could be "an epidemic of uninsured young motorists". It obtained figures suggesting 6,316 drivers aged 17-20 were convicted of driving without insurance last year. That is up from 2,902 in 2021 and 5,486 in 2022.

The figures relate to the number of IN10 endorsements added to driving records. These are given to motorists convicted of using a vehicle uninsured against third party risk. The charity said it coincided with a 25 per cent annual rise in motor insurance premiums.

Carrington masterpiece fetches record £22m

A painting by Lancashire-born artist Leonora Carrington has sold for more than £22 million.

Sotheby's says the sale of the surrealist's *Les Distractions de Dagobert*, described as her definitive masterpiece, makes her the most valuable British-born female artist. The work was bought for \$28.5 million (£22.48 million) after a 10-minute bidding battle, exceeding Carrington's record of \$3.3 million set in 2022.

The painting has been acquired by Eduardo F Costantini, the Argentinian businessman and founder of the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires, at the sale at Sotheby's modern auction in New York.

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Tending the light

A park in Zurich is the backdrop for a giant ephemeral artwork entitled *Bright Dreams* by Guillaume Legros aka "Saype". Made with eco-friendly paint, it shows a little girl surrounded by symbols evoking rescue at sea, in support of the sea rescue organisation SOS Mediterranée.



One train is cancelled every 90 seconds, figures reveal

By Gareth Corfield
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

A TRAIN is cancelled around every 90 seconds, Labour's shadow transport minister has said after analysing the latest official figures.

Around 87,000 trains out of 1.78 million scheduled services between September and December last year were

partially or fully cancelled, according to the Office of Road and Rail. This equates to one train cancellation every 91 seconds - the worst figure on record since 2016, when the current method for counting cancellations was introduced.

Part- and fully-cancelled trains are given a score by the ORR, with the scores added up to give an overall percentage of cancelled trains. In the final

three months of 2023 a total of 4.87 per cent of all trains were cancelled.

Analysis of the ORR figures was raised by Stephen Morgan MP, Labour's shadow transport minister in the House of Commons on Wednesday. He said: "Passenger services have gone from bad to worse. Does the [transport] minister understand why passengers have given up on this Government doing anything

to improve their rail experience?" Transport minister Huw Merriman replied "I just do not agree with that assertion" before adding: "The two biggest cancellation failures during March were one trespass, one suicide - the trespass alone caused 286 cancellations."

"There's more we need to do, but the team opposite would actually have a lot more credibility if they recognised the

performance indicators and what parts we need to deliver, rather than just chucking dogma about nationalisation, which is a tired, failed old policy."

Labour will nationalise the railways during its first term in government, it said, with each of the UK's 15 non-state-operated passenger franchises being brought under state control as their contracts expire.

Tory MPs wrong to act like guardians of Gibraltar's sovereignty, says chief minister

By Daniel Martin
DEPUTY POLITICAL EDITOR

GIBRALTAR'S chief minister has hit out at Tory MPs for claiming to defend the sovereignty of the Rock.

Fabian Picardo, who flew to Brussels for the latest round of talks on a post-Brexit deal for Gibraltar with the EU, told *The Telegraph* that it was "wrong" to suggest that the deal would "in any way affect British sovereignty, jurisdic-

tion or control over Gibraltar". It comes after Sir William Cash, the Eurosceptic chairman of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee, said he was concerned the deal would "erode UK sovereignty to the point of meaninglessness".

Mr Picardo praised Lord Cameron, the Foreign Secretary, saying he was "very concerned to ensure that he gets absolutely the best possible deal for Gibraltarians". In a warning to Sir William's committee, he said: "They need

to understand that this is a deal that needs to be done for Gibraltar, and it's the people of Gibraltar who will determine whether it is safe and secure."

"It would be wrong for anybody to pretend to set themselves up as a greater guardian of Gibraltar's sovereignty than the people of Gibraltar who have been there even in episodes in history where the Conservative Party hasn't exactly covered themselves in glory." Mr Picardo also said Brexit had

been a big blow for Gibraltar and that those who voted to leave the EU did not consider the impact on the territory "with sufficient weight".

"Discussions have been ongoing between the EU and Britain for months over the way Gibraltar's border with Spain will be managed now that Brexit has been finalised."

It is believed a deal is close, but MPs on the committee expressed concern this month when David Rutley, the Foreign Office minister, appeared before them and said European judges would be able to rule on disputes involving Gibraltar under the Brexit deal.

In a letter to Mr Rutley, Sir William wrote that the deal would allow "the pendulum to swing too far in the direc-

tion of the EU". Before his latest visit, Mr Ricardo said Sir William had not seen "any of the details" of the deal.

"The people of Gibraltar have been very hard hit by Brexit and we have not yet had the worst effects of a no-negotiated outcome on Gibraltar... In my view it is wrong to suggest that this deal in any way affects British sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over Gibraltar."

He added: "When the detail of the deal is understood, it will be easier to make the judgment that will demonstrate that British sovereignty over Gibraltar is wholly secured."

After the talks, Maros Sefcovic, the EU negotiator, said: "We all are reassured that an agreement is getting closer. We are progressing on all issues."

Coppola delivers a full-body sensory bath of a movie



Robbie Collin
CHIEF FILM CRITIC

Film
Megalopolis
Cannes Film Festival

★★★★★

IT TOOK Francis Ford Coppola 40 years to make *Megalopolis*, and while stumbling out of its first screening at Cannes yesterday I felt like it might take me a further 40 to work out what it is.

During the film's lengthy gestation, as the now-85-year-old Coppola scraped together the \$120m budget from the profits of his vineyards, *Megalopolis* reportedly shape-shifted a number of times. And the final result

does feel like something that has been stretched, wrung and kneaded to a degree where straightening the thing back out again would be impossible, and also largely beside the point.

There's a lot of story in it – it follows a muddled struggle for power among the elites of New Rome, a parallel version of modern-day New York City – but while a plot summary would be a novella, it also wouldn't explain much.

Like Coppola's 1982 neon-drenched musical *One From The Heart* – the previous film of his that *Megalopolis* most closely resembles, if it resembles anything at all – this is a full-body sensory bath movie, and what it means is indivisible from what it feels like to watch it.

Something clearer? OK, try this: imagine *Succession* crossed with *Batman Forever* crossed with a lava lamp.

The tumult in New Rome's high society orbits three main figures, the main one being Adam Driver's Cesar

Adam Driver, pictured with Nathalie Emmanuel, portrays a brilliant but arrogant architect who wields the power to stop time. Francis Ford Coppola, right, has spent 40 years crafting *Megalopolis* and financed the production himself

Catilina, a brilliant but arrogant architect who can psychically halt the flow of time, and has invented a versatile new building material that may or may not be infused with the soul of his dead wife.

Vying for power and influence with him are Giancarlo Esposito's Frank Cicero, the city's old-school (and increasingly unpopular) mayor, and Jon Voight's Hamilton Crassus, the senile head of a banking dynasty who controls the city's purse-strings.

As classicists will have twigged, these three are modified versions of their Roman namesakes – and Coppola's script draws countless more parallels between the ultimate fate of that ancient empire and America's present moment at history's crossroads.

Some are astute, others bonkers, most both.

Take the vestal virgins, Rome's celebrated priestesses of purity: these are brilliantly reimagined as Taylor

Swift – or rather Vesta Sweetwater (Grace VanderWaal), a blonde country-pop songstress who wows the crowds at the coliseum halftime show, before weathering a scandal involving a deepfaked sex tape.

Much of *Megalopolis* unfolds in this ripely wacky (but sometimes also stonily deadpan) register, and you can sense some of the cast struggling to work out how to match it.

But Aubrey Plaza, whose character is a trashy TV news personality called Wow Platinum, has the measure of the thing better than anyone bar Coppola himself: she's fantastic, both in her more conventionally dramatic scenes and the film's numerous psychedelic meltdowns, in which she often looms on the screen like a *Blade Runner* hologram.

She also shares an instantly

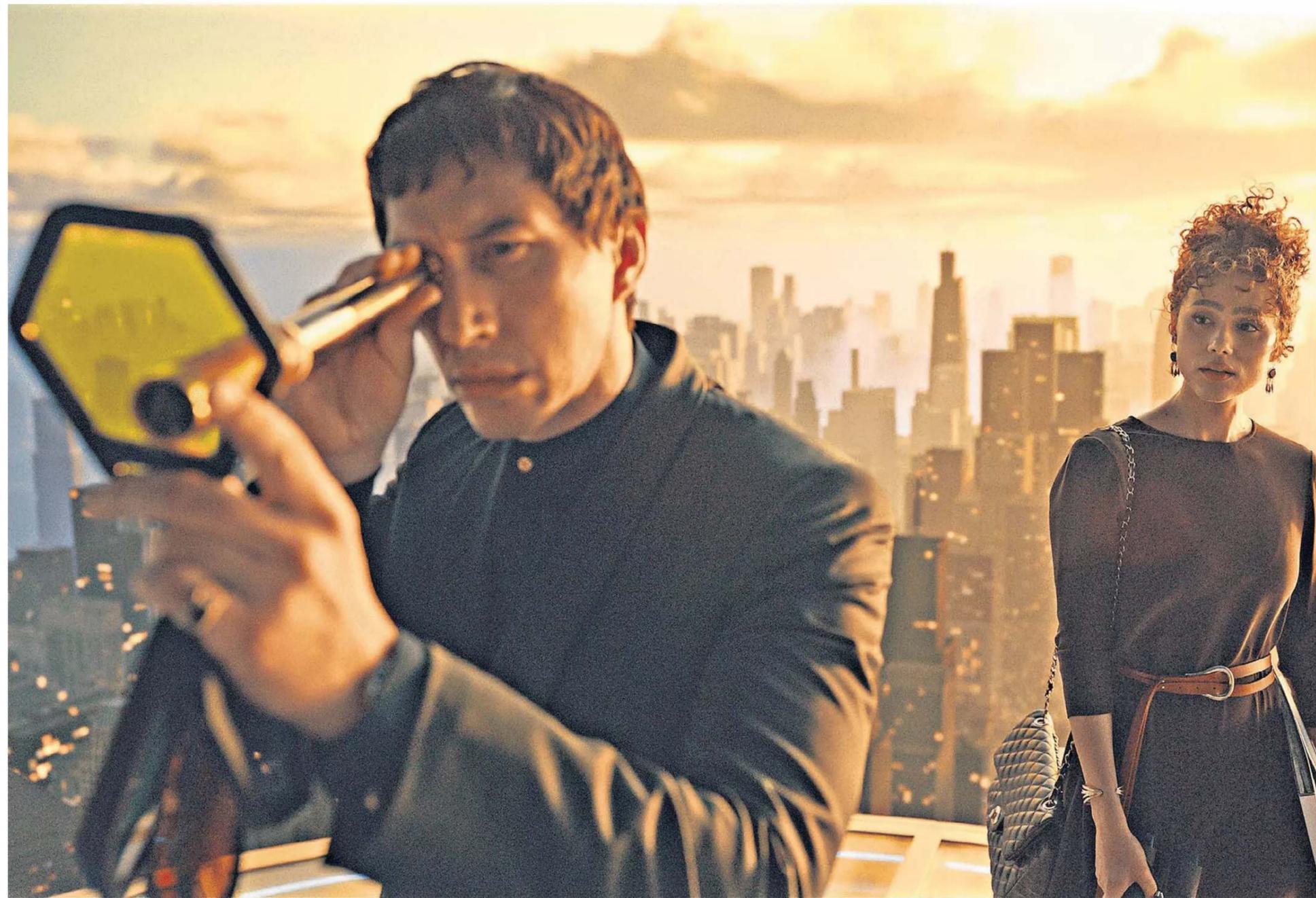


meme-able sex scene with (the also terrific) Shia LaBeouf's Clodio, a feckless banking scion looking to pivot to populist demagoguery, as well as an entertainingly mad bedroom encounter with Voight, played for laughs, shock, tragedy and everything else Coppola can squeeze from it.

Filing out afterwards, the Cannes audience mostly just looked bemused, but that feels like a reasonable gut

reaction: when was the last time any of us saw a film in which a line of dialogue is delivered by an actor planted in the audience? (Good luck with that bit, multiplexes.) Some grumbled that such a crackpot flourish for its own sake just wasn't necessary – and, well, of course it wasn't. But perhaps that's what *Megalopolis* is too.

UK release to be confirmed



Have I Got News For You goes all American with autumn relaunch in time for election

By Anita Singh
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

THE British show *Have I Got News For You* is to be remade for US audiences.

The US version will air in the autumn on CNN as part of its new Saturday night line-up. Hat Trick Productions, the company behind the long-running British original, will make it.

Mark Thompson, the former BBC director-general who is now the chief executive at CNN, announced plans to run HIGNFY in a double-bill with Bill Maher's *Real Time*. Both are very, very smart shows," he told *Ad Week*.

"The idea is: let's see what Saturday nights are like when we're sitting back and enjoying and laughing at what's happening in the world – as well as still exploring it."

The launch of the series is timed to coincide with the presidential election.



It is not confirmed if Ian Hislop and Paul Merton will transfer over to the US show

Previous attempts to translate HIGNFY for US viewers have fallen flat. Sam Seder, the comedian, hosted versions in 2009 and 2012, for NBC and TBS respectively, but neither made it past the pilot stage. Comedy panel

shows are not commonplace in the US, as they are in the UK.

Jimmy Mulville, the executive producer of the show and co-founder of Hat Trick, said: "To bring *Have I Got News For You* to such an iconic network as CNN is a great honour and career highlight for us all at Hat Trick. I just hope there will be something interesting going on in the fall for us to talk about!"

The show's host has not been announced.

Amy Entelis, the executive vice-president of talent for CNN Originals and creative development for CNN Worldwide, said: "We have been looking for innovative ways to explore new formats and expand the boundaries of CNN programming. The series is the standard-bearer of the genre and ripe for its American reincarnation as we revitalise Saturday nights on CNN."

'Oldest' live recording of cathedral choir from 1926 unearthed nearly 100 years later

By Albert Tait

AN almost 100-year-old recording of a choir has been unearthed and handed back to the cathedral which hosted the performance.

A recording of the Rochester Cathedral choir singing in 1926 has been preserved on a 12-inch shellac record for 98 years.

It is believed to be one of the oldest recordings of a live choir, with the technology of sound recording in its infancy at the time.

The recording has now been rediscovered by a sound expert and given back to the cathedral in Kent in a CD format.

The piece of history is believed to be the oldest surviving recording of a cathedral choir singing in their home venue.

While older recordings of choirs

exist, they were recorded inside a studio in front of a large sound horn instead. The audio of the Rochester choir was sent live by telephone lines to Columbia Studios in London where a record was made.

The eight revolutions-per-minute

'To hear the choir in such good heart and Percy Whitlock at the organ is just simply fantastic'

piece contains the choristers singing *Magnificat* in B flat and the Old Hundred hymn *All People that on earth do dwell* while being conducted by Director of Music Charles Hylton Steward.

The performance also features famed 20th century composer Percy Whitlock playing the organ in the choir he served

in various roles between 1911 and 1930. The recording was found by Michael Curling, of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society.

Alistair Taylor, owner of a specialist record shop in Rochester, then transferred the audio onto a CD to preserve it for future generations.

The recording will be played at a choral evensong service at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday.

Adrian Bawtree, director of music at Rochester Cathedral said: "We are delighted to be sharing this historic recording with you all."

"To hear the choir in such good heart back in 1926 and to hear the famous Percy Whitlock at the organ is just simply fantastic."

"We will do our best to continue to sing with the Spirit when we combine with our Old Chorister's on the 19th May."

Bridgerton edits out sex scenes so Catholic star's family can watch

By Ewan Somerville

A PG version of *Bridgerton* was made so that one of its stars could watch it with her Irish Catholic family.

Nicola Coughlan, who plays Penelope Featherington, said she requested a diluted version of the period drama, devoid of its many sex scenes.

The 37-year-old said Netflix chiefs agreed and "it's literally written into my contract".

"People think I'm saying it as a joke," she told *The Sun*. "I grew up Irish Catholic, that's just not how we vibe."

The newly released third series is

expected to continue the show's success, after the first was viewed by more than 82million households in its first four weeks and the second became Netflix's most popular English drama.

The romance between Coughlan's character and her close friend Colin Bridgerton progresses in the new instalment, catapulting her from the fringes of the storyline to the centre.

Having played a supporting character since the show launched in 2020, the *Derry Girls* actress is still coming to terms with her newfound starring role.

Coughlan said "it was definitely intimidating", given the show's large



Nicola Coughlan had a clause written into her contract that a PG version of the show must be available

audience, but "the sex scenes were one of the things I enjoyed most". Speaking of the more romantic scenes with Luke Newton, 31, who plays Colin Bridgerton, she said: "It's steamy. I was like, 'Oh wow, are we really doing that?'"

"There is one where I am very naked on camera and that was my idea, my choice, it just felt like the biggest 'f---you' to all the conversations surrounding my body," she added.

Earlier this year, Coughlan told *Harper's Bazaar* that some people assume that she views herself as "hideous" and therefore unsuitable as a choice to play a leading lady. While she said she was

"in disbelief" about the casting, she clarified that she is pleased with how she looks.

Coughlan grew up in the Catholic county of Galway in Ireland, which is predominantly opposed to sex outside of marriage. But she has branched out from her conservative upbringing to campaign for same-sex marriage and abortion rights in Ireland, as well as calling more recently for a ceasefire in Gaza.

"I think you have to be led by your moral compass," she told *The Irish Times* in April. "And I don't want that to sound worthy, but I do feel a massive weight of responsibility."

Starmmer 'no copycat' despite Blair-style pledges

Labour denies scaling back previous promises with fresh series of priorities ahead of general election

By Ben Riley-Smith and Genevieve Holl-Allen

SIR KEIR STARMER has insisted he is not a Blair "copycat" at the launch of his New Labour-style pledge card designed to appeal to centrist voters.

The Labour leader also rejected the idea he had scaled back his promises from ambitions outlined in previous years, insisting his vision can provide "hope" to the nation.

Speaking in Essex at what amounted to the launch of Labour's long general election campaign, Sir Keir tried to frame a vote for Labour as the only way to secure "change". But he also sought to make a merit of keeping his promises within spending constraints and what can be achieved, saying: "If we can't deliver it, I'm not going to say it."

The event saw a new six-point pledge card unveiled that distills the promises at the heart of Labour's election campaign. The idea of a so-called "pledge card" was pioneered by Sir Tony Blair in the run-up to New Labour's landslide election victory in 1997.

During Thursday's event, Sir Keir talked about "changed Labour", which has echoes of Sir Tony's "New Labour".

The Telegraph asked the Labour leader how he responded to the charge that he is a "copycat Blair", a claim sometimes thrown at him critically from the Left of his party.

Sir Keir said: "What Blair did in 1997 is what [Harold] Wilson did in 1964 and [Clement] Attlee did in 1945 which was to take the Labour Party from opposition into power. And the thing that unites them was the ability to glimpse the future and to persuade people to go on that journey to a changed future."

The Labour leader appeared on stage – sleeves rolled up, tieless and with no written notes – after speeches from the shadow cabinet ministers who head up the briefs for each of the six pledges.

"One card, six steps, in your hand – a plan to change the country. This is a message that we can take to every door-step across the country," Sir Keir said.

So, what are Labour's newly unveiled six policy priorities and how do they differ from previous promises?

Deliver economic stability

Sir Keir and Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, have sought to make Labour the party of sound money in the eyes of the electorate. Their watchword has become "economic stability", and it has become the headline of the first of Labour's six pledges. This promise to "restore economic stability" was last year part of Labour's broader headline mission of "getting Britain building again". But it appears that the emphasis has changed: there is no specific mention of house



Angela Rayner and Rachel Reeves, Labour shadow ministers, pose with two of the party's 'pledge cards' – similar to those issued by Sir Tony Blair ahead of the 1997 election

building on the pledge card, though the party's website says that the promise remains "part of Labour's mission to get Britain building again".

Cut NHS waiting times

"It is impossible to overstate the seriousness of this problem," Sir Keir said, as he attacked the Conservatives over growing wait times for appointments and surgeries. Sir Keir reiterated his promise that 40,000 extra NHS

appointments would be made available in evenings and weekdays each week.

Launch a Border Security Command

Sir Keir unveiled plans for a new Border Security Command – Labour's proposed answer to the small boats crisis – last week. By putting it as his third of his "first steps for change", the Labour leader hopes to send the message that national security is an important priority for him and the party.

Set up Great British Energy

Despite the £26 billion green deal about-turn, Labour has remained steadfast in its promise to deliver Great British Energy. The plan for the publicly owned energy company remains in the top pledges, which they say will be paid for by a wind-fall tax on oil and gas companies.

Crack down on antisocial behaviour

Sir Keir has kept antisocial behaviour and making neighbourhoods safer a priority.

He stated again his promise to deliver 13,000 new neighbourhood police officers, as he highlighted his experience as director of public prosecutions. He said: "If you feel that you can't open your door, your front door, at night and go out, if you can't walk down your own high street, be comfortable and safe in your own community – that is massive."

Recruit 6,500 new teachers

Labour plans to pay for thousands of

new teachers by putting VAT on private school fees. This pledge was previously part of the party's broader mission to "break down barriers to opportunity", along with the promises to employ mental health support staff in every school, and free breakfast clubs in all primary schools in England. These promises were not reiterated as part of the six pledges launch.

Fraser Nelson: Page 16

Full of leaflets and Leninist photo ops, this was the campaign launch of nightmares

Sketch

By Madeline Grant

WHAT'S worse than the Labour conference? Mini-Labour conference – or rather, a campaign launch that looked a lot like one. At least in the annual display of mass embarrassment you can have a drink and it's usually somewhere fun, like Brighton or

Liverpool. At 10am in Purfleet no one can hear you scream.

We'd had literature to prepare us for this nightmare – like Jehovah's Witnesses brandishing copies of *The Watchtower*, grinning Labour flunkies waved copies of Sir Keir's "My First Steps" leaflet at all and sundry. The title, of course, makes it sound like a potty-training scheme from Mothercare, and the stern black-and-white photo of Sir Keir made him look like a disgraced deputy headmaster in a local paper. None of this stopped Labour from going big on it; they'd

'The stern black-and-white photo of Starmmer made him look like a disgraced deputy headmaster'

even manufactured some credit-card sized versions to take away.

Before the speeches, the shadow cabinet assembled behind the main stage like some sort of dystopian school photo. It was faintly reminiscent of the Soviet politburo lining up beside Lenin's tomb, except this time it was David Lammy and Emily Thornberry perched on a piece of crudely adapted scaffolding. By the time they had finished, the line-up resembled the knock-off version of Guess Who? – but more difficult because, mercifully, you haven't heard

of most of these people (yet). Half the shadow cabinet had a stump speech, beginning with Angela Rayner, who earned a standing ovation before she'd even said anything. She credited the Blair government for all her opportunities as a struggling single mum. (Not a word, alas, for Mrs Thatcher and Right to Buy.)

The big beasts were interspersed with videos from a series of generic moaning heads – "new mum", "pensioner", "Oxygen user" etc – who flipped from detailing their personal woes to reading very obviously from an autocue about the minutiae of Labour's policy in that particular area.

Introducing Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, was Tito, an LSE student who spoke of her wonderful education at a non-selective state school. With grim inevitability, the Guido Fawkes blog revealed that she had also attended a private school

in Hampstead. Every. Single. Time.

Perhaps the richest embarrassment of all was found in Sir Keir's personal introduction video, featuring him in such obviously non-contrived settings as hugging nurses, squinting at some school children through a fence, and wandering through a town centre with Angela Rayner (who he definitely doesn't hate).

The speech was not without its surprises. For instance, Sir Keir informed us, placing hand on heart, that he had previously been director of public prosecutions. Groundbreaking.

Otherwise, it was dull going. The Westminster rumour mill had swirled about the possibility of another Tory defection to Labour – possibly from an Essex MP. In the end, none was forthcoming. Alas, this was one of those rare occasions where Mark Francois jumping out of a cake might actually have improved matters.

'The line-up resembled a knock-off Guess Who? – except you haven't heard of these people (yet)'

Devolved nations deserve more power in Westminster, says Gray

By Tim Sigsworth and Jordan Young

THE devolved nations should be given more power at Westminster, Sue Gray has said.

Sir Keir Starmmer's most senior aide made the comments as she gave evidence to the Covid Inquiry in Belfast, Northern Ireland, yesterday.

Ms Gray, who led the investigation into piggate, is the only senior civil servant to have worked in both Whitehall and Northern Ireland's devolved administration during the pandemic.

"I think there would be real benefit in Northern Ireland, and in fact the other devolved governments in Scotland and Wales, being involved in discussions that take place in Westminster from a very early stage," she said on the final day of the inquiry sitting in Northern Ireland.

"Sometimes, unfortunately, they are not brought in at the earliest stages of development and conversations happen a bit further down the road. And I think that's quite difficult for devolved governments sometimes who will not have the [same] capacity and resources as the Westminster government to be involved."

Ms Gray did not provide details of how handing more power to the devolved Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh governments would work in practice.

Ms Gray, as permanent secretary, was



Sue Gray, Sir Keir Starmmer's most senior aide, gave evidence to the Northern Irish Covid Inquiry yesterday

the most senior civil servant in Northern Ireland's department of finance between May 2018 and May 2021, when she transferred to the Cabinet Office in London.

She quit the civil service in March 2023 and became Sir Keir's chief of staff in September that year.

Ms Gray told the inquiry that the Civil Service has a "silo" culture, which is more pronounced in Northern Ireland

but is also found at Whitehall. She praised the 2010 to 2015 Conservative-Lib Dem coalition, saying Lord Cameron and Nick Clegg handled disagreement between them.

"I think they demonstrated great leadership in how they handled those issues, it didn't break down in trust because actually it was a very honest and open and frank process," she said.

Labour declines to commit to new sex education guidance

By Ben Riley-Smith POLITICAL EDITOR

LABOUR has declined to commit to keeping the new sex education guidance for schools.

Both Sir Keir Starmmer, the Labour leader, and Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, fell short of promising that the guidance, unveiled by the Education Secretary yesterday, would be retained if they were to win office.

The guidance urges schools not to teach contested gender ideology and says that sex education should not be taught earlier than the age of nine.

Labour has argued it needs time to look through the details of each proposal before committing to keep them.

However, Ms Phillipson, in an interview with *The Telegraph*, did stress the importance of age-appropriate teaching on sex education and the need for guidance to schools.

Ms Phillipson also emphasised the importance of providing different lavatory facilities based on biological sex, saying that the approach was legally underpinned in equality laws. She also said she wanted to approach the Education Department with the reforming zeal of Michael Gove, the former Tory education secretary who angered many in the sector with his policies.

Asked for an initial response to the sex education guidance and whether Labour would keep it, Ms Phillipson said: "I want to look carefully at what

the Government is setting out. It's a draft document that's there for consultation. I do think it's important that children have a wide understanding about their place in the world and understand that families come in different shapes and sizes, and understand issues around relationships. But of course that has to be done in a way that is age appropriate.

"Parents have to be involved and they should be able to see what their children are being taught and understand what's going on within school."

Sir Keir was also asked if he could

'Discussion about how we teach young people about trans issues has become political knockabout'

commit to keeping the guidance during a campaign event and said he wanted to take the time to read the details.

Asked if she agreed sex education should not be taught to those under nine, Ms Phillipson appeared to indicate that she backed the idea without giving it her explicit support. She said: "Of course it does have to be age appropriate. Absolutely.

"But it is important that as children grow older, they do have an understanding about issues such as sex education, about consent, and what healthy relationships look like."

On transgender issues and teaching

in schools, Ms Phillipson said: "It saddens me that so much of this discussion about how we teach our young people about trans issues more widely has become political knockabout and has become about would be Tory leadership contenders seeking to get headlines on that basis. This is about our children's wellbeing."

Both Ms Phillipson and Sir Keir were speaking just hours after the schools guidance had been published. They spent yesterday morning at a major campaign event in Essex, limiting time to read the document.

But the lack of an initial explicit commitment to keeping the guidance, which is going to consultation, in its current form leaves uncertainty about how it could change under Labour. The party's education pledge reads: "Recruit 6,500 new teachers in key subjects to prepare children for life, work and the future, paid for by ending tax breaks for private schools."

At the event, Ms Phillipson said: "This is a renewed 'education, education' for a new generation. I was a child growing up under those Labour governments and I saw the difference that they made to communities across our country and the difference that a reforming Labour government made to my life. And I'm determined if I'm education secretary in the next Labour government to bring that change, that drive and that determination once more."

Workers in Bogura, Bangladesh sort through a red sea made up of millions of chilli peppers, removing any rotten ones



JOY SAHAZUMA PRESS WIRE/EVENE

What's cooking?
Secrets of the spice rack

Oregano
Oregano is the most commonly adulterated herb, often mixed with olive leaves and myrtle leaves. A study by Which? in 2015 revealed that as much as 70 per cent of the dried Mediterranean seasoning being sold in packets and jars in the UK was fake.

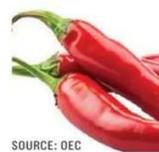
Black Pepper
Black pepper has been shown to be susceptible to food fraud, especially thanks to its high economic value in the spice market. Papaya seeds are often used as an adulterant for black pepper due to their high availability and low cost.

Chilli Powder
Chilli powder is often adulterated with brick powder, salt, talc powder and soapstone. It is also vulnerable to the use of chemical dyes, such as Sudan dyes, to enhance its red colour.

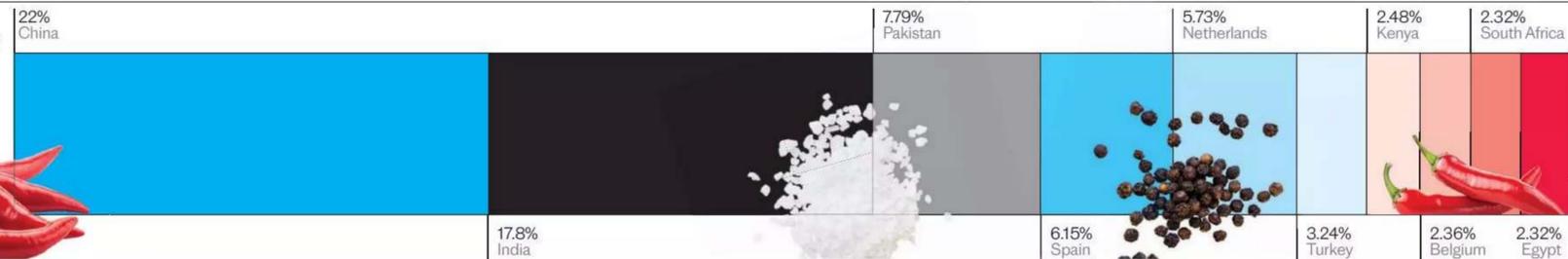
Saffron
Saffron, sometimes referred to as red gold, is regularly adulterated through the use of cheap synthetic colourants and natural adulterants, such as cheaper plants. An international investigation was launched in 2019 after the discovery of fake saffron in Sussex, which had been diluted with cheaper plant fibres.

Top 10 import origins of spices

These countries account for over 70% of UK spice imports



SOURCE: OEC



'Contaminated' spices for sale on UK shelves

Cancer-causing pesticide found in two brands, prompting FSA to apply for stricter import controls

By Blathnaid Corless
CONSUMER AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

SPICES from India on sale in British shops may be contaminated, the food standards watchdog has warned, amid growing concerns about a black market in the industry.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has applied for extra controls on all spices

imported from India because of safety concerns over cancer-causing pesticide residue in two brands.

Cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, cardamom, aniseed, fennel, coriander, ginger, saffron and turmeric are among the Indian herbs and spices that are now subject to a temporary increase of official border control scrutiny.

MDH and Everest – two of India's most popular spice brands – last month had sales of spice mixes halted by Singapore and Hong Kong over suspected elevated levels of ethylene oxide. *The Telegraph* found the brands for sale in independent shops in England, and they can also be purchased on Amazon

and eBay. Both brands have said their products are safe for consumption.

Natasha Smith, the deputy director of food policy at the FSA, said: "The use of ethylene oxide is not allowed here, and maximum residue levels are in place for herbs and spices. If there is any unsafe food on the market, the FSA will take rapid action to ensure consumers are protected."

The news comes amid growing concerns that criminals are mixing spices imported to the UK with cheaper substitutes to exploit the lucrative industry. Britain imports most of its spices from China (22 per cent), followed by India (17.8 per cent) and Pakistan (7.7 per cent).

Black pepper and oregano are the herbs most likely to be faked, followed by chilli powder, saffron, paprika and turmeric, according to an FSA-commissioned report published in February.

Oregano has previously been found to have been mixed with olive leaves and "mineral material", while chilli powder and paprika can be combined with brick dust and chemical dyes to enhance their colour. A common red dye known as Sudan I – used in polish, oils, solvents and waxes and banned in the UK and the rest of Europe – is one of the most prevalent.

The report, carried out by the FSA and Queen's University, found that

"authenticity testing" of herbs and spices is not being carried out at British ports as there is no statutory requirement.

Public analyst laboratories surveyed in the report also said they are receiving "very few samples" of herbs and spices as authenticity testing is "not a priority" for local authorities.

The FSA told *The Telegraph* that imported food not of animal origin, both from the EU and outside the EU, is not controlled at the border unless it is labelled "high risk".

Christopher Elliott, a food security professor who led the Government's response to the horse meat scandal, said

he believes it is a "glaring loophole" that spices are not subject to authenticity checks at the border.

"There is so much evidence that spices contain some dangerous pathogens and can also be subject to massive fraud," he told *The Telegraph*. "So I think it's a glaring loophole in the border model."

"There are a myriad of different issues about spices, particularly if they're being adulterated, because you just don't know what they're being adulterated with," Prof Elliott added.

"It could be chalk dust, it could be brick dust – anything really that criminals can get their hands on."

SNP announces 'emergency' release of up to 500 prisoners

By Simon Johnson
SCOTTISH POLITICAL EDITOR

SNP ministers have announced an "emergency" release of up to 500 criminals from Scotland's prisons to ease chronic overcrowding.

Angela Constance, the Scottish Justice Secretary, said that she would table proposals at Holyrood to free some inmates serving sentences of under four years. Criminals serving sentences under four years with 180 days or less left could be considered for emergency release, unless they had been jailed for sexual crimes or domestic abuse.

Prisoner governors will have a veto they can exercise if they consider an inmate who is eligible "will pose an immediate risk to a specific individual or group of individuals".

But the SNP government admitted between 300 and 500 criminals would be freed over a "phased period of time" if the plans are approved by MSPs, overriding the sentences imposed by Scotland's courts.

Ms Constance also unveiled plans to free criminals who are serving longer sentences earlier, raising concerns that automatic early release will be revived

after it was abolished. In a third major move to empty prison cells, she pledged to introduce legislation that would mean inmates could serve more of their sentences under curfew at home.

Scotland's prison population has surged by 400 in the past two months, to a near-record 8,348, and Ms Constance said there was a "critical risk to the continued safe and effective operation of the estate".

In a statement to MSPs, Ms Constance said that the "immediate cause" of the population increase remained unclear, but insisted that urgent measures were required "if our prisons are to remain functional and able to house the most dangerous offenders".

Sharon Dowey, the Scottish Tories' deputy justice spokeswoman, said: "Every prisoner is behind bars for good reason following a robust and independent judiciary process."

Phil Fairlie, the assistant secretary of the Prison Officers Association, said: "It is absolutely crucial that these steps are supported to give our prisons and prison officers the breathing space, and support they so badly need right now."

The SPS was approached for comment.



Stellar! The Scottish Ballet rehearses ahead of its performances of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Sadler's Wells theatre, in London, which runs from today until Sunday.

Minister broke rules by using public cash for campaigning

By Dominic Penna

THE pensions minister broke expenses rules by using taxpayer cash to promote the Conservatives and campaign for his re-election, a watchdog has ruled.

Paul Maynard has paid back more than £1,300 after Ipsa, the parliamentary expenses authority, found he used public money to produce "overtly political" content. Mr Maynard admitted using taxpayer-funded office equipment to print party political materials, including leaflets for his constituents in Blackpool North and Clevelleys.

All MPs could now face a ban on using their offices for party political reasons after the report identified the confusion that led to the minister's breach. Ipsa rules state that it will not reimburse "activities that could be construed as campaign expenditure".

The watchdog ordered Mr Maynard to pay back £1,257, 10 per cent of the total sum he had claimed for his taxpayer-funded printer.

Mr Maynard said: "I welcome [this] report, which makes no direct criticism of me or of my office, and accept the findings. I have implemented his recommendations and reimbursed Ipsa."

Home Office officials fear fewer than 10 migrants will be on first Rwanda flights

By Charles Hymas
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

HOME Office officials fear the number of migrants deported on the first Rwanda flight could be in single figures because of legal challenges.

The concerns are believed to be behind moves to expand the flagship scheme to include all failed asylum seekers on top of the initial cohort of

5,700 migrants so far earmarked for deportation.

Hundreds of migrants have been detained in the past two weeks ready for the first flight scheduled for the end of June or beginning of July.

Lawyers are preparing to mount legal challenges to individual migrants' deportation under the Safety of Rwanda Act even though the legislation was designed to restrict appeals. A source

close to the planning of the flights said: "We will do well to get to double figures on the first flight because of the attrition rate due to legal challenges."

Migrants can bring legal claims if they can provide "compelling evidence relating specifically to the person's particular circumstances" that Rwanda is not a safe country for them individually.

Legal challenges are expected to be based on articles two and three of the

European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which protect the right to life and guard against torture.

Campaigners suggested migrants would be able to challenge the removals on the basis of potential harm to their mental and physical health and that those with a history of protest will also have a strong case.

The first flight scheduled to depart for Rwanda in 2022 had just seven migrants on board before it was blocked by European judges.

The claim that the upcoming flight would have a small number of deportees on board is however disputed by official sources.

A Home Office spokesman: "The

Failed Bangladeshi asylum seekers to be deported from UK

Failed asylum seekers are to be deported back to Bangladesh under a fast-track returns deal after they became one of the biggest groups abusing the visa system. Nearly 11,000 Bangladeshis entered Britain on visas last year only to lodge asylum claims within 12 months to stay permanently. They came on international student, worker or visitor visas in the year to March 2023 in an attempt to exploit a "back door" to Britain by claiming asylum. Just 5 per cent of initial claims are successful.

deterrent within the Rwanda policy is simple and already showing signs of working. If you come to the UK illegally, and now if you are a failed asylum seeker with no right to be here, you will be removed. That was always the aim and is neither new nor rushed."

He added: "We do not recognise these claims and they do not reflect our current operational planning."

"Detentions for those in line for removal are continuing, and we are working at pace to get flights off the ground in July."

One said: "It's not about numbers on one plane but exactly as the Prime Minister laid out a regular rhythm of flights that just continue to remove people from the UK."

Ban rape-accused men from contacting victims 'even if not charged'

By Charles Hymas
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

MEN accused of rape should face bans on contacting their victims even if they are not charged, a minister has said. Speaking to *The Telegraph*, Laura Farris, the Home Office minister, said police should consider court orders to tackle the behaviour of suspected rapists whose victims did not want to go through with a prosecution. Ms Farris,

the victims and safeguarding minister, said she was concerned that up to 60 per cent of rape victims withdrew from investigations, often because they were or had been in a relationship with their alleged attacker. Because it was nearly impossible for police to prosecute without their support, Ms Farris said forces should consider applying for sexual risk orders that place tough restrictions on alleged rapists' contacts and movements with-

out the need to prove that they had committed the offence. A court only has to be satisfied that a single "act of a sexual nature" has been committed by the alleged offender "on the balance of probabilities" for an order to be imposed to protect the victim. Police can then seek to impose bans on contacting the victim, children or family, set geographical restrictions, bar them from taking any foreign travel and electronically tag them. Any breach

of the order carries a maximum sentence of five years in jail. Office for National Statistics data shows that 44 per cent of all rapes or sexual assaults are committed by partners or ex-partners of victims. Ms Farris said she and James Cleverly, the Home Secretary, were focusing on such orders as a way to protect women, particularly those who might be reluctant to bring a prosecution. "The category of victim who is the

most likely to withdraw is the person who is still in a relationship with their rapist," said Ms Farris. "Typically, that's because they have children with the person who has raped them and they don't want to put the father of their children behind bars... They want protection. That's why we're very interested in things like sexual risk orders, which are pre-charge protective orders, and sexual harm prevention orders, which is

the other side of that post-conviction. Sexual risk orders in particular create prohibitions on offenders' behaviour, who they can contact, where they can go. If it's breached, it could get five years in prison sometimes. The move comes after the Commons backed proposals that MPs arrested for serious sexual or violent offences should be excluded from Parliament rather than delay any action until after they were charged.

Labour's plan for school VAT raid has cost £22m already

Proposed tax on private education is pushing people away from the sector, figures suggest

By Henry Bodkin and Mattie Brignal

LABOUR'S proposed VAT raid on private schools may have already cost the taxpayer £22million, figures suggest. The Independent Schools Council (ISC) today reveals that nearly 3,000 fewer pupils started at private schools this academic year compared with 12 months earlier.

The vast majority will have gone to state schools instead, where the average price of educating one pupil for a year is £7,460 – according to government data – meaning a total cost of £21.9million.

The ISC said the drop in the number of new pupils indicated that "the spectre of VAT is looming large".

It comes amid an 8 per cent year-on-year increase in the cost of fees, with families now paying more than £6,000 a term on average, according to the ISC annual survey. Average fees for boarders went up nearly 9 per cent and now stand at a record £42,459, while the average fee for a day school is now more than £18,000 a year.

Sir Keir Starmer has made ending tax breaks for independent schools a key Labour policy, claiming it would generate as much as £1.7billion for publicly funded education. If it wins the election, Labour would immediately make private schools pay 20 per cent VAT, from which they are currently exempt, by removing their charitable status. However, this would leave parents facing a major increase in fees.

Julie Robinson, the ISC's chief executive, said: "Independent schools save the taxpayer nearly £4.5billion per year by educating students who would otherwise take up a place in the state sector. "We know from head teachers that the spectre of VAT is looming large in parents' minds – we are already seeing the impact on demand that has had."

It follows expert warnings that a quarter of families could withdraw their children from the independent

sector if Labour win power and fulfil their pledge. Labour has said that by taxing private schools they will ensure more spending on state education, and Sir Keir has already announced that the extra money for the state sector would mean "mental health staff in every school, more expert teachers in the classroom, more creativity, speaking skills [and] confidence".

Silas Edmonds, the headmaster of Ewell Castle School in Epsom, Surrey, said less wealthy parents were already struggling to afford private education and that Labour's tax raid would make the problem worse.

He said: "Rising fees are polarising private school education to become even more elite and unobtainable. At my school, we have a lot of aspirational working-class and lower-middle-class families who are making huge sacrifices to get their kids here.

"But about 18 per cent of our incoming Year 7 starters have pulled out

'We know from head teachers that the spectre of VAT is looming large in parents' minds'

because parents are worried about the VAT hit."

The proportion of pupils in private education in England has fallen from 7 per cent in 2013 to 6.6 per cent today, according to separate Department for Education data. There were 2,939 fewer pupils joining private schools in 2023 compared with 2022, a decrease of 2.7 per cent, the steepest fall since the education body started collecting data in 2011.

A government source suggested that the extra £22million it would cost to provide education for these students was the equivalent of paying 400 teachers.

A spokesman for Labour said: "Labour will invest in delivering a brilliant state education for all our children, funded by ending tax breaks for private schools.

"Independent schools have raised fees above inflation for well over a decade and do not have to pass Labour's proposed change on to parents."



Vince Jenkins, front, and David Bennett, back, measure the Wiltshire crater at 41 feet long, seven feet wide and eight inches deep

Pothole the size of double-decker bus plagues hamlet

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

AN ENORMOUS "crater" the length of a double-decker bus has appeared on a road in a Wiltshire hamlet.

The area in Charlton-All-Saints has been plagued with flooding issues since Oct 2023. But with the water eventually cleared after a winter of repeated freezing and thawing, a huge pothole was revealed. It is 41 feet long, seven feet wide and eight inches deep.

Residents of the village, which has only 60 dwellings and dates back to the 17th century, have described the pothole as the biggest for miles around, saying that small cars will be "grounded" if they try to tackle it and that drivers have had vehicles damaged when trying to negotiate it.

And they are "fed up" with the lack of progress, which has seen one of the two access roads to their homes put out of use.

Villagers have accused Wiltshire council of "papering over the cracks" with slatdash repairs.

David Bennett, 76, has lived in the area for 10 years but says the ever-growing hole on Warrens Lane is making life a misery. He said: "It's got to be one of the biggest around," adding that efforts from the council to fix the road with cold tar have been unsuccessful.

"When they use the cold tar it's not a permanent fix as they keep breaking up," he said. "Then the rain started and frost that followed. The hole stayed under water for seven months.

"Dog walkers, runners, cyclists would normally use that road to go to the bus but they couldn't use it."

Nick Holder, Wiltshire council's cabinet member for highways, said teams were heading out to the site to "carry out some temporary repairs".

"We have been aware of this issue, but as it has been under water for some time due to the unprecedented high groundwater levels, so unfortunately we have been unable to start any work to repair it," he said. "Water levels have now receded to a level that will enable works to be undertaken.

"While other councils around the county are cutting budgets, we are investing millions into the everyday things that matter to people, such as filling potholes and resurfacing roads; and that is on top of the tens of millions we already spend on these highways issues with Government grants.

"We have allocated an extra £10 million over the next two years to spend on filling potholes and a road resurfacing programme that will help to prevent potholes and other highways defects across all areas of the county."

Editorial Comment: Page 17

Teacher caught napping during lessons at Princes' prep school was unfairly dismissed

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

A TEACHER who was caught sleeping at Princes William and Harry's prep school was unfairly dismissed, a tribunal has ruled.

Jason Smith, the head of religious education at Wetherby Preparatory School for Boys, insisted he dozed off because he had eaten a "big lunch" and told bosses he was not asleep and was instead a "deep thinker" who "closed his eyes in order to think".

His 16-year career at Wetherby School was brought to an end after bosses said his absences and behaviour at school, including falling asleep, were having a "detrimental impact" on the £27,000-a-year establishment.

Mr Smith is now in line for compensation after successfully suing the prep school's owners, Alpha Plus, for disability discrimination and unfair dismissal.

The tribunal in central London heard Mr Smith began working at the Notting Hill school in September 2006.

Mr Smith was described as being "passionate about the well-being of the boys". But in January 2020 he suffered a "breakdown in his personal relationship" and was off sick intermittently for 18 days in the first three months of the year.

He was referred to occupational health and the teacher was found to have an underlying condition of anxiety and depression, and suffered from poor sleep. He was signed off work but returned to his job without notifying the school in September 2021.

The school said that on two occasions after this he was found "asleep". An occupational health report advised that Mr Smith was "not fit for full hours or

duties at present" and a phased return to work was recommended.

The teacher returned to work in January 2022 but the following month it was reported by two members of staff that he had fallen asleep in class.

When this was put to him, he said this was not true and that he was "only resting his eyes". The tribunal said Mr Smith gave "various excuses". "He said he was a deep thinker and closed his eyes in order to think... And he said he had a big lunch," the tribunal said.

In July 2022, Mr Smith was sacked on "grounds of ill health". But Employment Judge Tamara Lewis has ruled Mr Smith was "dismissed without being heard".

Mr Smith's claims of unfair dismissal and disability discrimination were upheld. Other claims were dismissed.

A remedy hearing to decide his compensation will be held later this year.

Hospitals offered cash to cut wait times as thousands of patients held for 12 hours

By Michael Searles
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

HOSPITALS will for the first time be offered cash incentives to cut "dehumanising" 12-hour A&E waits.

A record 430,000 patients were forced to wait on trolleys in emergency departments across England last year before being admitted to hospital, including almost 100,000 people aged 65 and over.

The NHS is now offering a pot of up to £150 million to hospitals that bring these times down, as well as bonuses for hitting four-hour wait and ambulance response time targets.

The health service used bonuses to incentivise hospitals to meet reduced four-hour waits in A&E during the last financial year. The reduced target of seeing 76 per cent of patients within

four hours – some way off the official 95 per cent target that was last met in July 2015 – has increased slightly to 78 per cent for the year ending March 2025.

A letter to NHS leaders sent yesterday by NHS England's emergency care directors also said there would be incentives for ambulance services that respond to category 2 callouts – the second most serious, including heart attack and stroke patients – within 30 minutes. It will for the first time include 12-hour waits, although the exact details on what the target will be and how the cash will be split is yet to be confirmed.

Dr Adrian Boyle, the president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said: "While we don't know how these incentives will work in detail, we welcome any focus on 12-hour stays as this is where the harm is.

"They are dehumanising, degrading

and dangerous. Last month more than one in 10 people waited more than 12 hours in [emergency departments], a situation which leads to overcrowding and so called 'corridor care'."

He said it was "an unacceptable situation" and said reducing the time people spend in emergency departments had "to be the priority".

The health service will also increase its use of virtual wards in an attempt to free up space in emergency departments. Hospitals will be encouraged to refer more patients to virtual wards, which allow patients to remain at home while receiving care from clinical staff.

Sir Julian Hartley, chief executive of NHS Providers, said: "Driving down long waiting times for patients rightly remains a top priority for leaders across hospital, mental health, ambulance and community services."

Sister sues brother after mother leaves him entire £500k fortune

By Daily Telegraph Reporters

A SISTER is suing her brother who she dubbed a "sicknote" after their mother left him her £500,000 fortune, a court heard.

Carol Scott, 77, left home at 19, building a career and family, but her brother John Jones, 75, lived with their mother Muriel Jones his whole life until her death in April 2017.

Muriel had lived close to all her children in Surrey until 2012 when she uprooted and moved to rural Wiltshire with Mr Jones and his wife Bronwen.

She subsequently drew up a new will, leaving everything to Mr Jones, a retired builder, and cutting the rest of the family out completely.

Now Ms Scott, backed by her other brother Peter, is suing Mr Jones as ben-

eficiary and executor of their mother's will. She claims her brother, who she called "a sicknote" who always had something wrong with him", isolated their mother and used a "drip drip" of influence over the years which resulted in him inheriting her entire estate.

Ms Scott also claims her mother did not properly understand the contents of the will she signed. Lawyers for Mr Jones say he and his wife cared for Muriel round the clock in her final years and that her last will reflected the fact that he was the only sibling who didn't own a property of his own.

Judge Simon Monty KC, at Central London County Court, heard that Muriel lived with her husband Ronald in Ripley, Surrey, close to Carol and Peter, until 2012. Mr Jones and his wife had shared his parents' home, the judge



John Jones and Carol Scott arrive separately at the Central London County Court

heard. After Ronald's death, it was decided that Muriel should sell her home, with Ms Scott believing she was planning to get a bungalow nearby.

Instead, two weeks before her house was sold, Muriel announced to her daughter that she was moving around 100 miles away to an "isolated" house down a farm track near Trowbridge, Wiltshire, with Mr Jones and his wife.

Ms Scott told the judge that she was shocked and "upset" by the move, which she put down to her brother's "influence" over their increasingly "frail" mother.

She said: "When she moved down to Wiltshire she was so remote, it was down a dirt track facing a field. It was down a long, narrow track. There was no way my mother could get out independently. They took her independence away."

She also criticised the lifestyle her mother had had with Mr Jones in Wiltshire where she lived in a granny annexe next to the main house.

"She didn't have any heating when we went down. She was sat in a blanket with no fire on," she said. "She was in bed every day until the afternoon, because the fire wasn't lit until [then]. She used to say it was dirty and not very nice."

Ms Scott wants to uphold a 2010 will, which gives Mr Jones a lifetime right to live in his mother's home, but then leaves it equally between Ms Scott, another sibling Carl Jones who is not part of the court claim, and Bronwen.

Peter did not receive anything under either will, having received a gift of money from his parents to set up a hair-dressing business.

The case continues.

Doctors call for NHS managers who targeted whistleblowers to be charged

Staff who claim they were victimised for raising the alarm demand creation of new criminal offence

By Gordon Rayner and Janet Eastham

DOCTORS want the Government to create a new criminal offence of causing detriment to whistleblowers after accusing NHS managers of targeting them for daring to speak up.

Medical staff have a professional obligation to report any concerns of patient safety and, like all whistleblowers, they are supposed to be protected by law from being unfairly treated as a consequence of raising the alarm.

But many whistleblowers say that the law lacks teeth and has failed to prevent them from being victimised by managers who they say are more concerned with protecting their reputations.

They believe that by creating a new criminal offence of causing detriment to those who speak up, there will be a dramatic reduction in cases of whistleblowers being forced out of their jobs, as reported by a *Telegraph* investigation this week.

Doctors also want the Department of Health and Social Care to require hospitals and other employers to bring in an independent medical expert to assess whether a whistleblower has a case.

If, for example, a doctor raises concerns about the safety of patients in a cardiology unit, they want a cardiologist with no connection to that hospital to assess the merits of the whistleblowing claim.

This, they say, would prevent hospitals from effectively marking their own homework by launching internal investigations into complaints about patient safety.

Justice for Doctors, the independent pressure group calling for the changes, also wants the Government to make it illegal to suspend or exclude doctors from work for speaking out about patient safety.

The law that is meant to protect whistleblowers is the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, under which workers have the right "not to be subjected to any detriment by any act... by his employer done on the ground that the worker has made a protected disclosure".

Anyone who believes that they have been targeted by their employer has the right to take their case to an employment tribunal.

However, many doctors believe this is an inadequate forum for raising complaints and some have taken their cases to the High Court instead.

Official tribunal statistics for 2020/21 show that only 3 per cent of Public Interest Disclosure Act claims issued

were successful if they went to a hearing, with another 33 per cent resolved through conciliation.

Dr Naru Narayanan, president of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA) union, which represents hospital doctors, said: "There needs to be a new criminal offence of causing detriment to people who have spoken up, so those who put reputation before patients are punished for it."

"The toxic culture of silencing those who speak up must be stamped out. Too many lives are ruined and patient safety is compromised as a result."

"It is clear the problem is endemic across the NHS and must now be dealt with externally."

"Doctors and other NHS employees need somewhere to go to report patient safety concerns without fear of backlash from their employers."

"HCSA is calling for the establishment of an independent statutory national whistleblowing body, outside of the NHS, to register protected disclosures and protect individuals against recriminations."

The General Medical Council (GMC), which regulates the profession, requires doctors to take prompt action if they think patient safety, dignity or comfort is being seriously compromised.

'Doctors need somewhere to go to report patient safety concerns without fear of backlash'

misled. If they do not do so they can be struck off.

NHS managers, however, are not regulated by a professional body, which makes it harder for whistleblowers to complain about their managers if they believe they are trying to cover up bad practice.

In its written guidance of good medical practice, the GMC tells doctors they "must promote and encourage a culture that allows all staff to raise concerns openly and safely".

The guidance adds that if a patient is not receiving basic care to meet their needs, "you must immediately tell someone who is in a position to act straight away".

Where doctors have "concerns that a colleague may not be fit to practise and may be putting patients at risk", they must ask for advice from a colleague or the GMC.

If they remain concerned, the GMC says "you must report this, in line with our guidance and your workplace policy, and make a record of the steps you have taken".

Failure to do so may amount to misconduct and a finding that a doctor's fitness to practise is impaired.

Good Medical Practice states that: "Serious or persistent failure to follow this guidance will put your registration at risk."



Health service 'protects' senior staff accused of persecuting medics who raised concerns

By Janet Eastham and Gordon Rayner

NHS managers accused of persecuting whistleblowers are "protected" in the health service, despite ignoring patient safety warnings, doctors have said.

Among these managers is Simon Holmes, who launched an investigation into consultant nephrologist Dr Jasna Macanovic in May 2017 after she raised concerns about a procedure called butnololing at Portsmouth University Hospitals NHS Trust. The decision to instigate a disciplinary investigation of Dr Macanovic was found by a judge to be a detrimental act under whistleblowing legislation.

Mr Holmes's position at Hampshire Hospitals means he is responsible for ensuring the trust maintains a "positive

and effective speaking up culture". Mr Holmes' former employer, Portsmouth University Hospitals, told *The Telegraph* he had their "full support" and that they were confident in his ability to practise, credibility and probity.

Tim Powell, the director responsible for HR policy when Portsmouth University Hospitals wrongly fired Dr Macanovic, is now the chief people officer at the neighbouring trust. The trust pointed out that Mr Powell went through an "extensive" recruitment process. The trust added that Mr Holmes came with years of experience and that both had passed "fit and proper persons" tests.

A spokesman said the victory against Mr Pitman at an employment tribunal confirmed what the Trust has consistently said: "Hampshire Hospitals has

Clockwise from top left; Kathryn Magson, Simon Holmes, Jacqueline Totterdell and Tim Powell

never – and would never – treat anyone negatively for raising safety concerns."

In another case, Kathryn Magson's treatment of Dr Rosalind Ranson after she raised patient safety concerns was condemned by an employment tribunal judge in 2022 as "vindictive" and "self-serving", and led Dr Ranson to be awarded almost £3.2 million in damages. Despite this, Ms Magson is currently employed by the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM) on a hospital building project.

SLAM said her appointment was "temporary" and that they "value the highest standards of professionalism...regardless

of their roles or backgrounds". In some instances, executives have managed to retain their positions. Jacqueline Totterdell continued in her role as group chief executive at Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals & St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GEST), despite the wrongful suspension of cardiac surgeon and whistleblower Prof Marjan Jahangiri in 2018.

A spokesman for St George's said: "The Trust took patient safety concerns raised very seriously, taking a number of actions to strengthen both outcomes for patients and working relationships."

Penny Emrit, chief executive at Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust said they support colleagues raising concerns and were "sorry" about the approach taken in Dr Macanovic's case.

Vennells's number blocked by IT boss after calls to avoid inquiry

By Fiona Parker

A FORMER Post Office IT boss blocked Paula Vennells' number after she sought help to avoid an independent inquiry.

Lesley Sewell detailed how ex-chief executive Ms Vennells tried to contact her four times between 2020 and 2021 – five years after Ms Sewell had left the Post Office.

In her witness statement to the Post Office Horizon IT inquiry, Ms Sewell wrote of how she blocked Ms Vennells' number after a final call because she

"did not feel comfortable with her contacting me". Ms Vennells resigned from her role as chief executive and left the Post Office in April 2019.

Ms Sewell, the Chief Information Officer, worked at the company until 2015. More than 900 sub-postmasters were wrongfully prosecuted as a result of the Horizon scandal, after shortfalls were incorrectly recorded on their branch accounts owing to the faulty computer system.

Ms Sewell's statement read: "To the best of my knowledge and research, Paula Vennells contacted me four times

in 2020 and 2021 via either email, telephone call or text message."

The IT executive said she had not spoken to Ms Vennells since leaving the Post Office in November 2015, when the ex-chief executive emailed her from a personal account. Her witness statement continued: "In that email, she asked if I could spare her some time for a call."

Ms Sewell said she had been asked at short notice to appear before a BETS Select Committee "on all things Horizon/Sparrow and need to plug some memory gaps". Ms Vennells' email con-

tinued: "My hope is this might help avoid an independent inquiry but to do so, I need to be well prepared."

The select committee, which was scheduled to be held on March 26 2020, would go on to be postponed due to Covid-19. Ms Sewell said that on another occasion, Ms Vennells rang her mobile in December 2020 but said she could not recall what they discussed and did not make notes.

The following year, Ms Vennells texted her in April 2021 to request a call. Her witness statement said that they "spoke for longer this time" and that

from her notes she could see there was reference to the Project Zebra Deloitte report – a document that the inquiry has seen before and reported that remote access to Post Office branches was possible.

She also referenced part of her notes that read "PV got jumpy" but said she did not know what this meant.

Ms Sewell blocked Ms Vennells after a fourth and final communication, however it is unclear whether this was the April 2021 incident or at a later date.

Ms Sewell was visibly tearful when she was sworn in to give evidence yes-

terday morning, ahead of being questioned by counsel to the inquiry Emma Price. She joined the Post Office in 2010 and held a number of roles before resigning in 2015.

Alan Bates has rejected a second offer of compensation in the Horizon scandal, as the former sub-postmaster said he was readying himself for an "ongoing uphill struggle". He turned down a "derisory" offer from the Government in January. He has since rejected a second offer, which he says is around 30 per cent of the sum for financial redress which he was seeking.

Welsh leader sacks minister after messages suggesting he misled Covid Inquiry leaked

By Tim Sigsworth

THE First Minister of Wales has sacked a member of his government who he claims leaked a message suggesting he had misled the Covid Inquiry.

Labour's Vaughan Gething, who became First Minister in March, said yesterday that he had "no alternative" but to dismiss Hannah Blythyn, the minister for social partnership.

Mr Gething told the Covid Inquiry in March that he did not intentionally delete pandemic WhatsApp messages – only for a leaked text to emerge this month suggesting he had done so.

Ms Blythyn denied responsibility for the leak, saying she was "deeply shocked" by the dismissal. "I am clear and have been clear that I did not, nor have I ever leaked anything," she said.



Before she was sacked, Hannah Blythyn served as minister for social partnership

Inquiry the messages were not deleted by him but by the Welsh Senedd's IT team during a security rebuild. But an iMessage leaked to news website Nation.Cymru earlier this month cast doubt on his version of events.

In a message posted to the ministerial group chat on Aug 17 2020, Mr Gething appears to have said: "I'm deleting the messages in this group. They can be captured in an FOI [Freedom of Information request] and I think we are in the right place on the choice being made."

He denied last week the message contradicted evidence he had given to the inquiry, claiming that it did not relate to pandemic decision-making but "comments that colleagues make to and about each other".

A spokesman for the Covid Inquiry previously confirmed it had been made aware of the leaked message and was considering whether Mr Gething needed to provide further information.

Telling lies at a statutory public inquiry amounts to perjury, which on conviction can lead to a prison sentence of up to seven years.

Oxford students who voiced concerns over anti-Semitism on campus 'told to leave'

By Gabriella Swerling
SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS EDITOR

STUDENTS who have raised concerns of anti-Semitism at Oxford University have been told they should leave, a letter from staff and students claims.

The letter, sent to Prof Irene Tracey, the university's vice-chancellor, as well as deans and proctors, claims there has been a lack of aid and sympathy for Jews, who face harassment and a hostile environment on campus.

The letter, whose signatories wish to remain anonymous, also accused the university of promoting "conspiratorial narratives" and a failure in reporting procedures in the past seven months.

They claim the university is becoming a "no-go area" for Jews and Israelis and that when some individuals raised concerns to their heads of programmes, they were "advised to leave Oxford".

The letter, seen by *The Telegraph*, states: "We have felt isolated, unsafe, targeted, stressed, disappointed, angry and hopeless. Many of us have faced all manners of anti-Semitic slurs."

It also details a list of 70 incidents alleged to have occurred since the Hamas terror attack on Israel on Oct 7.

The letter says a group of students told a Jewish student that "the Jews control the American government", "Jews are everywhere", and that they (the student) "have a Jewish nose".

In another incident, the signatories said: "In vigils for the [Israeli] hostages, university members, mainly students, shouted at us, told us we are kid murderers, that we are spreading conspiratorial theories and 'Zionist propaganda', and they vandalised our displays for the hostages. In fact, almost every time we did such a display, it was vandalised by organised groups from the university."

They also claim that calls for violence are constantly heard in Pro-Palestinian protests in Oxford, such as "Palestine from the river to the sea", "Israel is a terror state", "From Oxford to Gaza: long live the Intifada", "Israel, Oxford, USA, how many kids did you kill today?"

The letter, which was sent last week, states: "Those places at the university, sometimes during working hours, became a no-go area for most Israelis and Jewish for 7 months now."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Jewish student who is one of the letter's authors, said: "This has been an issue since October and the university has not addressed anything or given any resources to dealing with this."

Pro-Palestinian protests and camps are spreading across British universities in an attempt to replicate the occupations that have swept through US campuses in recent weeks.



GOOD

RIGHT NOW

With smooth vanilla soft cheese and zesty curd centre atop a crunchy digestive biscuit base, these Lemon & Lime Daisy Cheesecakes look almost too good to eat. Almost.

WAITROSE

food to feel good about

Teenagers to be train drivers from 18 amid staff shortage

By Gareth Corfield

TEENAGERS will be able to qualify to drive trains under government plans to ease a staffing shortage.

The Department for Transport (DfT) is proposing to reduce the minimum age for driving a train on Britain's railways from 20 to 18 as early as this summer.

It said the average age of a train driver was 48 and warned that the workforce was "projected to shrink", with many older employees expected to retire in the next five years. Lowering the minimum age to 18 would "build resilience" and enable school leavers to take up apprenticeships and train to join the profession, the DfT added.

Huw Merriman, the transport minister, said: "We want to open the door for young people considering transport as a career, and this proposal could give school leavers a clear path into the sector. By boosting age diversity in the sector and attracting more drivers, we can help support reliable services

'By boosting age diversity in the sector we can help support reliable services and create opportunities'

while creating opportunities for more young people."

Train services have been repeatedly disrupted owing to a near two-year dispute over pay. Mark Harper, the Transport Secretary, has repeatedly called for an end to operators relying on drivers working overtime and on rest days.

Mick Whelan, Aslef's general secretary, said: "Lowering the age drivers can begin their training will not only increase the number of drivers but we also believe that those at the pointy end of the train should reflect the communities they serve and that includes having young people in cabs."

A DfT consultation on the plan is seeking views on how the processes for selecting, training, monitoring and supervising drivers could be adapted to support the minimum age reduction.

Training to become a driver generally takes between one and two years. The Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents operators, says the average train driver salary is £60,055.



With a little help from my friends Olivia Harrison, David Furnish, Sir Paul McCartney, Stella McCartney, Sir Elton John and Mary McCartney attend a dinner to mark the launch of *Fragile Beauty: Photographs from the Sir Elton John and David Furnish Collection* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Devon water 'contaminated by animal waste'

Health Security Agency says 22 cases of illness caused by cryptosporidium confirmed in Brixham

By Emma Gatten and Alex Barton

ANIMAL waste may have been the cause of water contamination in Devon that resulted from a broken valve, the local MP has said.

Anthony Mangnall said South West Water (SWW) had discovered the source of contamination that has left at least 22 people sick was a damaged air valve along its network.

He said the valve may have allowed animal waste or contaminated ground water to enter the local supply.

SWW said on Tuesday that data from tests had shown treated water leaving its treatment works was not contaminated, but further tests taken overnight found small traces of cryptosporidium,

and it had issued the warning to boil water as a precaution.

Residents are being urged to boil water and let it cool before drinking it, preparing or cooking food or cleaning their teeth, though the company said water can continue to be used as normal for washing, bathing and flushing the toilet.

At least one school in Devon has been forced to close.

Mr Mangnall said he had been "very concerned about SWW's response to this situation, as they have been slow to act and communication with customers has been very poor."

He added that the company had agreed to pay an extra £100 compensation, but said he would "keep working with colleagues at Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs [Defra] to ensure SWW are held to account over this issue".

Pupils in the area have been told to stay at home. Eden Park Primary and Nursery School in Brixham said it had

"made the difficult decision" to close. A statement sent to parents on Wednesday said: "Eden Park Primary School were only informed this afternoon that the school was in an area where the tap

water should be boiled. The school has taken swift action to put safety plans in place and contact the appropriate authorities about providing safe drinking water.



South West Water hand out bottled water rations as local water remains undrinkable

"At the time of writing this update (7.30pm), and despite repeated calls to SWW about the urgency of the situation, the school has not received any bottled water or assurances of when water will be delivered. To enable parents and carers to make childcare plans for the morning, leaders have made the difficult decision to close the school tomorrow [Thursday]."

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said 22 cases of illness caused by cryptosporidium had been confirmed in Brixham.

Other reported cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in residents and visitors to the south coast town are being investigated with more confirmed cases are expected, the UKHSA said.

People who catch the disease have been told to stay off school or work for 48 hours after they stop being ill, and away from swimming pools for 14 days, it added.

The disease can be picked up directly from the faeces of another person or

animal, from swimming in or drinking contaminated water, or even by eating contaminated food such as unwashed vegetables.

SWW said the Hillhead reservoir and the wider Alston area were being investigated as a potential cause for the outbreak. The area supplies around 40,000 residents with water. Prof Paul Hunter, a specialist in microbiology and infectious disease, said the number of cases would continue to rise even after the source was found.

He told BBC: "It's difficult to know how big these outbreaks turn out to be and it depends on whether the contamination event is a very short lived thing."

"The difficulty here is that cryptosporidium can take up to about 10 days before you become ill, so even if they stop the infection today we'd still see new cases occurring for at least another week to 10 days."

Devon County Council and Eden Park Primary and Nursery School were contacted for comment.

Hero plumber 'faked' stories to raise funds

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

A TRADESMAN dubbed "Britain's kindest plumber" who reportedly once received a donation from Hugh Grant is alleged to have faked stories about helping the vulnerable to raise money.

James Anderson, 56, has accused "online trolls" and the BBC of trying to shut down his charitable company, which has raised £2 million to help fund repairs for the sick and elderly.

He said they had accused him of fabricating stories about vulnerable people to bring in money.

One of the allegations set out by the BBC suggested he had written a post about saving the life of a suicidal elderly woman, who had died years earlier.

Her daughter told the broadcaster that Mr Anderson, who has won a Pride of Britain award, had been using her mother as a "money-making machine".

The BBC also said Mr Anderson misrepresented a mother as a "thief" and claimed she was a "victim of domestic violence" in a post that had included pictures of her children. It was further



James Anderson said complaints against him were made by 'online criminal trolls'

suggested he had exposed the sexuality of a gay man in his 90s, who had told Mr Anderson he didn't want to be pictured because of his fears over discrimination.

The BBC also alleged Mr Anderson's company, Depher CIC, had purchased a home for £73,125, which was rented out to a member of his extended family.

One former employee told the broadcaster Mr Anderson had also used the enterprise's funds, which reached £1.2million in April 2023, to buy cars.

The Fundraising Regulator said yesterday that investigations into Depher CIC were "ongoing" after complaints.

Mr Anderson, from Burnley, claimed in a post on Facebook that the accusations against him had emerged through malicious "online criminal trolls".

He wrote: "The BBC News and online trolls are trying to shut Depher CIC community initiative down.

Concertgoer, 80, told to turn off hearing aid

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

AN ELDERLY music lover has said she felt "humiliated" when staff demanded she take out her hearing aids at a concert in an arts centre.

Susan Davies, 80, brought a discrimination claim against the Arts Centre at Aberystwyth University after she and other hearing aid users were told to take out or turn down their listening devices because they could affect the acoustics during a performance.

Ms Davies won a £4,000 payout and an apology after she and others were "shouted at" by "intimidating" staff members at last year's AberMusicFest, leaving her "humiliated and upset".

Ms Davies said that, after one performance, staff started "searching" for hearing aid users, saying their devices affected the sound for other attendees. After another performance, Ms

Davies said, one audience member stood up to tell people to turn down hearing aids.

Ms Davies said: "She shouted 'turn your hearing aids off' and one gentleman shouted: 'How on Earth can we hear if we are told to turn our hearing aids down?'"

On a third occasion, Ms Davies said, a member of staff claimed hearing aids were "causing an irritating noise nuisance to non-hearing aid users" and apparently laughed while she said it.

Ms Davies said: "I spoke to a technician there and I said: 'Are you aware there are problems with the acoustics in the Great Hall?' And he said that his view was that it's to do with the wiring under the extended seating that can be moved in and out."

"He said it's very unfair to blame hearing aid users for any acoustic interference that might happen," she added.

Ms Davies wrote to Aberystwyth University to voice her concerns but after several letters did not feel they had done enough to remedy her complaints.

She submitted a disability discrimination claim and received £4,000 which she donated to the Royal National Institute for Deaf People.

Ms Davies said: "The arts centre is an amazing venue, but I haven't been there since the incident because I am afraid of seeing staff that will remind me of that unpleasant experience."

"Unless little small people like me fight, how are we ever going to make it easier for people with disabilities?"

A spokesman for Aberystwyth University said: "A settlement was paid before any litigation was brought and it recognised the seriousness with which the University takes concerns of this nature. In addition, a full and sincere apology was provided to Ms Davies."

School dinners push children towards unhealthy, cheap meal deals

By Laura Donnelly
HEALTH EDITOR in Venice

CHILDREN are being forced into unhealthy food choices at school by companies pushing meal deals, researchers have said.

Healthy lunches in schools tended to cost more and have fewer options than unhealthy meals, according to a study carried out at seven schools in the UK.

The school dinners in the research also often failed to be filling, and the rush to get something quickly meant pupils often bought "grab and go" options such as pizza.

The research was conducted for Fix

our Food, which is part of a UK Research and Innovation project on transforming food systems. As part of the research, secondary school pupils were asked whether a free school meal allowance was sufficient to buy them a tasty, healthy and sustainable meal.

They were given a budget of between £2.15 and £2.70 daily for a week and were asked to keep a food diary.

The pupils often found they had restricted choices and frequently had to opt for meal deals, including a mains, a dessert and possibly a drink.

Non-meal deal items were typically found to be healthier but were too expensive, according to the findings,

which were presented at the European Congress on Obesity in Venice.

Sometimes fruit was not visible or easily accessible - with no fruit bought at all by students in three out of seven schools, the study found.

In most schools, the students were not able to access their school meal allowance during break time, meaning many could be hungry before lunch - while water fountains were often broken or not well maintained, leading many to buy a drink instead.

Dr Sundus Mahdi, a research associate at the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said: "Ultimately some of the main findings

were that the choices that young people had were restricted to meal deals.

"What we also found was, through discussions, that non-meal deal items were generally more expensive but they can also be healthier, which is also very relevant in terms of [what] we are seeing now with the cost of living and inflation, that healthier food just tends to be more expensive."

"Unfortunately, the portion sizes given to some pupils were not enough to sustain them during the school day."

"There was actually one participant ... [who] said that during the week that [they] actually brought a packed lunch with them in addition to ... [their] meal

allowance, because it just wasn't filling them up. There was also agreement that the free school meal allowance needed to be increased to [allow pupils to] be able to buy a more filling meal and to not go hungry throughout the day."

The researchers called for school food standard guidelines to be amended to include two portions of vegetables with every meal. They also said schools should ensure they have sufficient funding to provide access to free, clean and maintained drinking water, and to extend free school fruit and vegetable provision to all year groups.

Prof Maria Bryant, the chief investigator, said: "Poor meal choice [is] often

... [a] result of a lack of funding and often driven by contracts and procurement processes."

Prof Jason Halford, president of the European Association for the Study of Obesity, said nutrition played a vital role in learning.

He said: "You do need to give children the right to choose, but if the right to choose is undermining the healthy option then we are actually failing."

"The amount of money we invest per child in food in this country is probably lower than most of our European equivalents. But good nutrition is actually needed for the healthy physical and mental development of children."

More knife criminals than ever avoid prison

Even repeat offenders are not being incarcerated as judges are warned about overcrowding in jails

By Charles Hymas and Ben Butcher

RECORD numbers of knife offenders are avoiding jail as judges have been told to send fewer convicts to prison because of the overcrowding crisis.

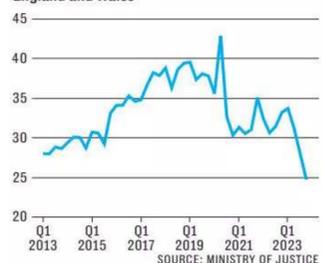
Fewer than one in four knife offenders (24.7 per cent) was sent to prison in the latest quarter of September to December last year, the lowest on record. It was down from 28 per cent in the previous quarter amid fears that jails in England and Wales could run out of space. It compares to a record 42.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2020.

The proportion of repeat knife offenders sent to jail also fell to a record low of 51.6 per cent in the quarter September to December despite a law that tells courts perpetrators should be immediately imprisoned. That compares with a high of 71.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2020.

It comes as knife crime has risen

Fewer knife offenders sent to jail

Proportion of knife possession and knife threat offenders sentenced to immediate custody, England and Wales



nationally by 7.2 per cent to nearly 50,000 offences, close to the past record high in 2019 of 51,200, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In London, which accounts for more than a third of all knife crime in England and Wales, it hit a record high of more than 14,500 offences last year.

There are fewer than 300 spaces left in men's prisons, which have an operational capacity of just over 84,000 despite measures introduced by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to tackle overcrowding. The MoJ data suggest courts are increasingly opting for suspended sentences, which enables offenders to avoid jail but with the prospect of being sent to prison if they breach the terms of their licence.

The shift follows an edict last year from Lord Justice Edis, the senior presiding judge of England and Wales, advising courts to jail fewer people because of the prison overcrowding crisis.

The Court of Appeal judge said courts should "have an awareness of the impact of current prison population levels" as he quashed a man's six-month jail term and replaced it with a suspended sentence.

Among those to have benefited is Jordan Axtell, 21, who avoided jail as a result of overcrowding after he was convicted of possession of a bladed article and supplying heroin and crack cocaine. Judge Ian Pringle KC imposed a suspended two year sentence after referencing the Lord Justice Edis's statement. Rory Geoghegan, the former Downing Street adviser and founder of the Public Safety Foundation, warned that softer sentences would only make knife crime worse.

A Ministry of Justice spokesman said: "While sentencing decisions are a matter for the independent judiciary, our decisive action to protect the public has meant that more knife-carrying criminals are being sent to jail and for longer than they were a decade ago."

The MoJ also cautioned over the use of quarterly data as it could include cases awaiting final sentence.



Hound and home Jourdan Dunn is the cover star of June's *Harper's Bazaar*, which was shot at the Castle of Mey, the Queen Mother's Scottish retreat. The supermodel spoke to the magazine, which is on sale now, about embracing her creativity and power.

Prince delivers rallying cry on global threat of superbugs

By Victoria Ward and Joe Pinkstone

THE Prince of Wales has warned that "urgent" action is needed to tackle the global threat of superbugs in order to protect future generations.

The Prince addressed experts and ministers at an antimicrobial resistance (AMR) conference at the Royal Society in central London, urging them to act for the sake of us all.

He said the world stood at a "critical juncture" in which the connections between drug resistance and climate change could not be ignored.

"Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) threatens our health, our environment, our livelihoods and our future," he said.

"It is indiscriminate - affecting all countries and all income levels... It makes infections harder to treat, increasing the risk of disease spreading, and making medical procedures and treatments much riskier. Unless we act now and together, the ripple effects of drug resistance will be felt across generations, jeopardising the wellbeing of our children and our grandchildren."

The conference, called the World Together Solving the Antibiotic Emergency, was hosted jointly by the Government and the Royal Society, bringing together global experts to celebrate and showcase latest research.

It came as the Government announced an £85 million package to support the global fight against the growing threat of AMR.

AMR, also known as superbugs, are bacterial infections which have evolved to be immune to the drugs used to treat them. Common infections include MRSA, tuberculosis, and pneumonia.

Bacteria develop this protection as a result of overexposure to drugs, which allows them to adapt. Infections which would previously have been easily treatable with antibiotics can become fatal if they develop a drug-resistant strain.

Antimicrobial infections kill as many people in Europe each year as flu, HIV and tuberculosis combined, European health officials found in a recent study. Estimates suggest 12,000 people die of AMR infections in the UK every year, with about 1.2 million fatalities globally.

Kensington Palace sources said the heir to the throne felt it was an issue everyone should care about but recognised that it was not currently widely understood. He hopes that by lending his name to the issue, it will help raise public awareness. His speech on Thursday marked the first time he has spoken publicly on the issue.

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Royal portrait exhibit to show that retouching photos is a fine art

Palace show says editing is 'important' despite row over Princess of Wales's Mothering Sunday image

By India McTaggart
ROYAL CORRESPONDENT

A BUCKINGHAM PALACE exhibition on royal portraits has included a section on the history of retouching Royal family photographs.

It follows the controversy over the Mothering Sunday family image released by the Princess of Wales in March that was withdrawn by picture agencies worldwide over fears that it was edited. The Princess later apologised for digitally manipulating the family picture, taken by the Prince of Wales in Windsor, explaining that "like many amateur photographers, I do occasionally experiment with editing."

Now, a section dedicated to retouching forms part of the Royal Collection Trust's (RCT) exhibition titled *Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography*.

Using historical examples of retouched pictures of the Royal family, the exhibition explores the theme in select photographs and letters on display in The King's Gallery.

Exhibition curator Alessandro Nasini explained that the process of retouching is a "very important part of the royal portraiture". He told *The Telegraph*: "The retouching has been around since photography was invented, but because portraiture is a creative process, retouching is very much part of it as one of the tools that the photographer has to use as a way of translating the vision they had in their mind."

"Retouching could be as simple as cropping an image to making a composite image by using different photographs to create one final single image."

The section includes a letter from photographer and husband of Princess Margaret, Lord Snowdon, stating that "something will have to be done about the halo of leaves round the top of Prince Philip's head" in a picture he took of the late Queen's young family.

The two separate photographs, one without the leaves and one with them circled with an annotation of "take out", are put on display beside the letter.

In a label explaining the "stages of a typical royal portrait commission", retouching is listed as number four of six stages. It reads: "While some photographers prefer to retouch before providing the first proofs, others only do so on the selected portraits. Retouch-

ing may also be requested by the sitter."

In another section of the exhibition, a label of Annie Leibovitz's 2007 portrait of the late Queen explains how the photographer superimposed her figure onto a background. "Using digital post-production, Leibovitz has superimposed the figure onto a digitally enhanced photograph of the Buckingham Palace gardens," it states.

The exhibition, which opens to the public today, includes portraits of the family taken by royal photographer Cecil Beaton, Dorothy Wilding, Leibovitz and David Bailey among others.

It also sees a previously unseen photograph which includes the late Queen and Princess Margaret, holding their newborns. The intimate picture was taken by Lord Snowdon as a token of thanks for Sir John Peel, the royal obstetrician who delivered four royal babies within two months.

A letter written by Princess Margaret addressed to "Darling Lilibet" is displayed next to the picture in which she suggests that her sister sign the portrait for the doctor.

It reads: "Here are the photographs - minus moles and spots of white - which Tony sends with his love ... Would you like to sign it and then I will catch Kate to do the same and send it to him as a souvenir of an extraordinary two months of delivery."

Taken at Kensington Palace, the picture shows Princess Alexandra holding James Ogilvy, the late Queen holding Prince Edward, Princess Margaret holding Lady Sarah Chatto and the Duchess of Kent holding Lady Helen Windsor.

Among the other highlights of the new exhibition are the Queen Mother's personal copy of her daughter's Coronation portrait and the earliest surviving colour photographic print of a member of the Royal family.

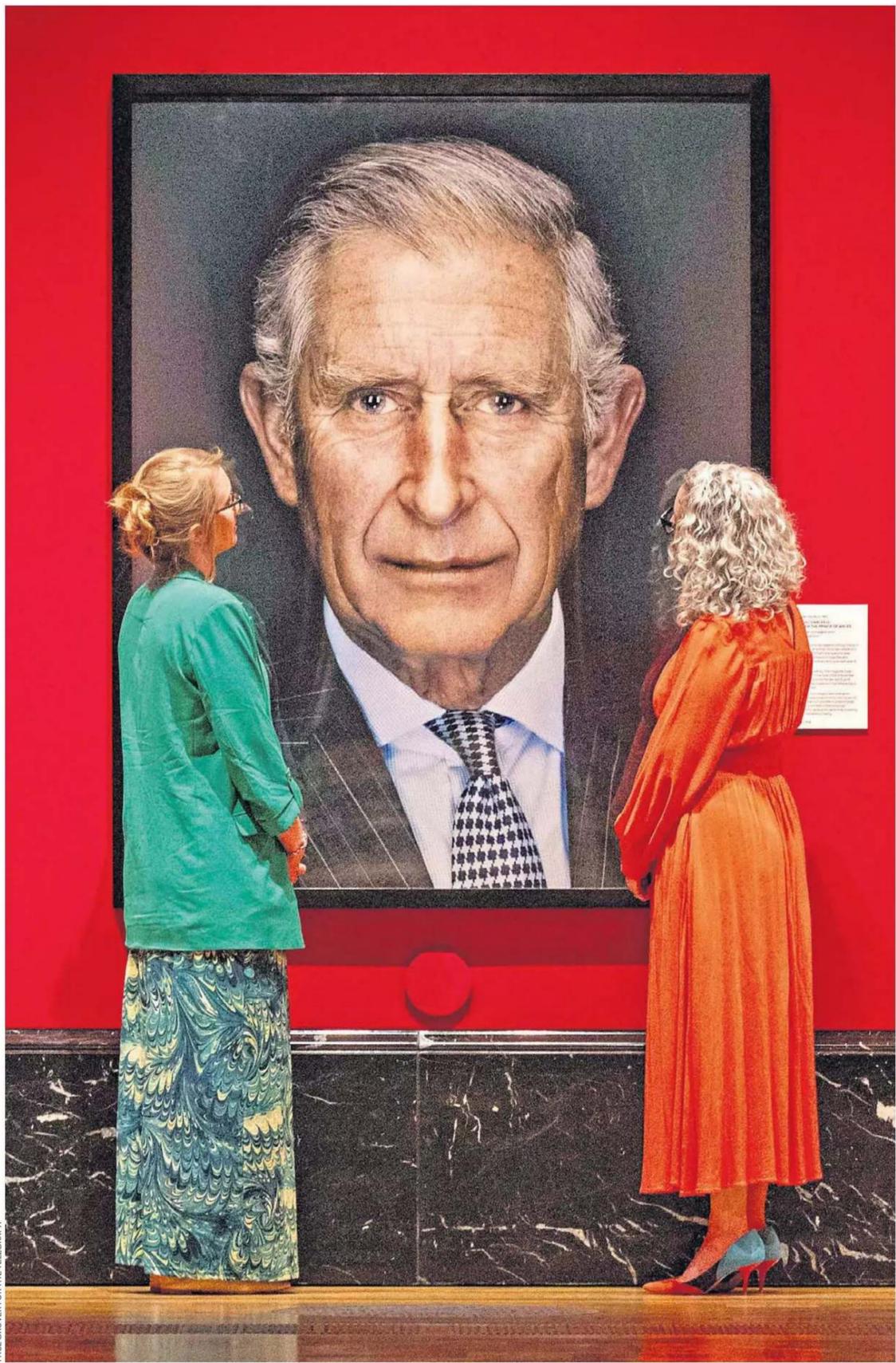
The exhibition includes just over 150 items from the RCT and Royal Archives.

The selection of the images is an independent process by the curator but *The Telegraph* understands the King was made aware of it.

As former chairman of the RCT and now patron, the monarch "is very much interested in what we do, including what we present in the King's Gallery," Alessandro Nasini, the exhibition curator, said.

The exhibition will run from May 17 to Oct 6 in the King's Gallery and tickets will cost £19 for adults, £12 for a young person and £9.50 for a child or disabled person. A new £1 ticket is available from May 17 to July 8 to those receiving Universal Credit and other benefits.

Retouching is very much a tool used by the creator to translate the vision they had in their mind



An image of the King, taken when he was Prince of Wales, forms part of the new Palace exhibition *Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography*

Royal images of the century The best photographs on display at the exhibition



A previously unseen photo by Lord Snowdon titled 'Group of Royal Mothers with their Babies' (1964) features Elizabeth II, Princess Margaret, Princess Alexandra and the Duchess of Kent all holding their babies born in the same two months.



The earliest surviving photographic print of a member of the Royal family produced in colour by Madame Yvonne of Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, on her wedding day in 1935.



Unreleased wartime images by Cecil Beaton will go on display for the first time, including George VI and Elizabeth inspecting bomb damage at Buckingham Palace in 1940.



A previously unseen contact sheet by Norman Parkinson shows the late Queen and Princess Margaret laughing and talking together during a sitting to mark their mother's 80th birthday.

Hour of social media a day doubles child's risk of smoking or vaping

By Michael Searles
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

JUST an hour of social media a day doubles a young person's chance of smoking or vaping, a *BMJ* study has found.

Researchers found that the longer children and young people were exposed to social media, the greater the chance of them smoking or vaping was.

Those who used platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) for less than an hour a day were

95 per cent more likely to smoke than those who did not use social media at all. Similarly, children and young people who used social media sites for between one and three hours a day were 92 per cent more likely to vape than those who did not use it.

Only 1 per cent of those aged 10 to 25 who did not use social media smoked or vaped, compared with 2 per cent if they used it for around an hour a day.

This trend only increased with the amount of time a person spent interact-

ing with friends online, the researchers from Imperial College London found.

More than 10,800 people in the UK aged between 10 and 25 years old had their social media use and smoking or vaping habits analysed. In total, 8.6 per cent of the participants smoked cigarettes, 2.5 per cent used vapes, and 1 per cent used both.

The researchers found that children and young people who spent seven hours or more on social media on a weekday were three times more likely

to vape, and three and a half times more likely to smoke, compared with non-users. The number of people who used a mixture of both vapes and cigarettes rose fivefold among those who spent seven-plus hours on social media compared with those who spent none.

Dr Nick Hopkinson, the professor of respiratory medicine at Imperial College and first author of the paper, suggested that advertisements, paid influencers presenting vapes and cigarettes as fashionable, and the addictive

nature of social media, could all be behind the trends.

"There is evidence that the corporations behind cigarette smoking and vaping make use of social media to advertise and promote their products," his paper said. "This includes direct advertising which is algorithmically targeted and the use of paid social media influencers who present smoking and vaping as a fashionable and desirable activity."

The authors said that the longer young people spent on social media the

greater their exposure to these will be. The study was observational and so could not draw any conclusions about the cause of the trends seen.

When researchers tried to break down the patterns they had uncovered by social factors such as sex, age and household income, there was no discernible difference among those who smoked.

The study was conducted by Imperial College and the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. It was published in the journal *Thorax*.

King would be getting better if he behaved, Queen jokes

By Victoria Ward
DEPUTY ROYAL EDITOR

THE Queen revealed that the King is "getting better" before joking: "Well, he would be if he behaved himself."

Camilla, 76, was chatting to guests at a garden party at Lamb House in Rye, East Sussex, where she was treated to a performance by actors Timothy West, 89, and Hayley Mills, 78, while sat alongside Prunella Scales, 91.

She said her husband, the King, was "quite cross" not to be there, revealing that he was a big fan of author EF Benson, who used to live at the property.

The King has recently returned to public duties following his cancer diagnosis and the Queen has made no secret of her frustration that he is working too hard. During a tour of the house, the

Queen was shown a first edition copy of *Miss Mapp*, by Benson, joking: "I might make off with that in my pocket."

On arrival, the Queen was given a short tour of the National Trust property, also once home to novelists Henry James, and Rumer Godden.

Shown into the Oak Room on the ground floor, where a game of bridge was laid out on a card table, she was told Benson was never a fan of the room.

"What was his problem?" Camilla asked. The Queen marvelled at a 1930s song book on her way through to the Telephone Parlour before being shown upstairs to the Green Parlour.

Earlier in the day, the Queen attended the Charleston Festival, on the Firle Estate, where she spoke at the opening of the arts and paintings event.



The Queen, patron of the Charleston Trust, viewed the Charleston House studio yesterday

Diabetes is worse for men than women, study suggests

By Michael Searles
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

DIABETES is much more dangerous for men than it is for women, a study has suggested.

Experts found that the rates of heart disease, leg, foot and kidney complications, as well as the sight-threatening eye disease diabetic retinopathy, were all higher in men with diabetes.

Men are known to be at greater risk of heart disease or be more overweight than women, but researchers wanted to find out what the effect of a diabetes diagnosis was. Researchers from the University of Sydney analysed 25,713 people over the age of 45, all of whom had either type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Over an average of 10 years, they

found that 44 per cent of the men included in the study had complications associated with the heart, compared with 31 per cent of women.

A quarter of men had problems with their legs or feet, which can include nerve damage and poor blood circulation leading to amputation, while the figure for women was 18 per cent.

The researchers concluded that men were 51 per cent more likely to develop heart disease than women, 55 per cent more likely to have issues with their kidneys, and 47 per cent more likely to have lower limb complications.

Researchers said the findings - published in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* - highlighted "differences in baseline characteristics" between men and women.

Baby girl dies after being hit by Land Rover in church car park

By Daniel Sanderson and Alex Barton

A ONE-YEAR-OLD girl who died after being hit by a Land Rover in a church car park has been named as Ivy Mae Ross, with her family paying tribute to their "beautiful daughter".

The girl, of Whitecairns, was taken to the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary following the incident, which took place at the

Plymouth Brethren meeting hall in Balmadie, Aberdeenshire at around 7:45pm on Wednesday evening, but was pronounced dead a short time later.

The 40-year-old man driving the car was uninjured, according to police.

Ivy Mae's parents said: "We can confirm that our beautiful daughter passed away following a tragic accident after our regular church gathering. We are

absolutely devastated and ask that our privacy is respected at this challenging time.

"We value the prayers and messages of sympathy and support we have received from the local community. The emergency services tireless work and support is appreciated."

Insp Scott Deans, of Roads Policing, said: "At this time our thoughts are with

the family of the deceased, along with everyone else affected by this tragic incident. Our investigation is ongoing.

"Anyone with information should contact police on 101, quoting incident 3390 of May 15 2024."

The Balmadie Congregational Church is part of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church. Paul McKeown, the minister of the nearby Belhelvie

Church, said: "We are all in shock, and our hearts go out to them. They are part of the exclusive Brethren Church which is also known as the Plymouth Church. "They are a closed group and have a strong community. They meet regularly in the evenings for worship."

A Plymouth Brethren Christian Church spokesman said: "I would like to thank the emergency first respond-

ers, who have been very professional and compassionate in their response."

The church gates were locked yesterday, with two bouquets of flowers left in tribute. Belhelvie council, which covers Balmadie, said the community had been left distraught by the death of the baby.

"We would like to express our condolences to the family in particular and the wider Brethren community."

Boy, 5, dies after falling from 15th floor window

Family of Alam Makial claim mother repeatedly complained to council of safety latch in flat block

By Alex Barton

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD boy died after falling from the 15th floor of a block of flats in east London, as his family claim his mother repeatedly complained to the council over a window safety latch.

The child, named locally as Alam Makial, is said to have fallen more than 150ft from a window on the 15th floor of Jacobs House, in New City Road, Plaistow, shortly before 6am yesterday. His family said his mother had repeatedly complained to the local council over the safety latch on the window.

London Ambulance Service said it was called to New City Road following reports that a child had "fallen from height".

A spokesman said: "We sent resources to the scene, including ambulance crews, a paramedic in a fast response car and an incident response officer. We also dispatched a trauma team in a car from London's Air Ambulance. Our first paramedics arrived on scene in approximately four minutes. Very sadly, a child was pronounced dead at the scene."

Maryan Hadaflow, Alam's aunt, said he had died after getting up early for school. His family was asleep when he

fell out of the window. Ms Hadaflow, who was accompanied by the boy's grandmother, told *The Sun*: "He went into the kitchen and opened the window. He got up early to go to school. He was a lovely boy."

"His mother has complained to Newham council about that window. She sent five emails about how they open, and said they were not safe for her kids - but no one did anything."

Residents of the 16-storey building are demanding answers about how the tragedy could have happened. One, a 28-year-old mother of two who knows the family, said: "We are in shock. It was an accident. No one knows how it happened. People are looking for answers."

Alam attended the nearby New City Primary School, and three teachers laid a bouquet of flowers on a bench near the tower block.

A Metropolitan Police spokesman said: "Police were called at 5.58am on Thursday, May 16, to reports of a child having fallen from height at New City Road, E13. The death is being treated as unexpected, and inquiries are under way to establish the full circumstances. Our thoughts are with the child's family at this time. There were no arrests. A cordon remains in place."

A Newham council spokesman said: "The council is continuing to establish the facts regarding this tragic incident. "Until we have further information, we're unable to make any further comment. Our priority is to support the family at this devastating time."



Alam Makial fell from Jacobs House, in New City Road, east London, yesterday morning. Flowers were left in tribute to the five-year-old

Fresh search for Muriel McKay's remains 55 years after kidnap

By Martin Evans CRIME EDITOR

DETECTIVES investigating the 1969 kidnap and murder of Muriel McKay will carry out fresh searches at a Hertfordshire farm.

Mrs McKay, the Australian born wife of a newspaper executive, was kidnapped from her home in Wimbledon 55 years ago after being mistaken for

the wife of Rupert Murdoch. Two men were convicted of her murder in 1970 but her remains have never been found.

Police searched at Stocking Farm in Stocking Pelham, Hertfordshire in 2022 but nothing was recovered.

Scotland Yard said recent inquiries had identified other areas at the site which it was believed would be worth searching. Her family have been

informed. Mrs McKay was the wife of Alick McKay, an executive at News Limited and deputy to Rupert Murdoch.

She and her family had moved to the UK from their native Australia in 1958 and had settled in the Wimbledon area.

On Dec 29 1969 she was abducted from her home while her husband was at work, with the kidnapers later demanding a £1 million ransom. In 1970

two brothers, Arthur and Nizamodeen Hosein, were arrested on suspicion of kidnap, blackmail and murder. They were convicted and jailed for life in September 1970.

Arthur died in prison in 2009, but Nizamodeen was released after 20 years and was deported back to Trinidad.

While it was long believed Mrs McKay's remains had been buried at the

farm, they have never been located. In 2023 Hosein provided fresh information about the potential whereabouts of the body and police travelled to Trinidad to interview him.

Commander Steve Clayman said: "The main area is where a manure heap once stood - we know now this was probably larger than we previously thought and therefore that area was not

entirely searched in 2022. The owners of the farm are fully aware and supportive and we thank them for their continuing help and cooperation. We all share a hope and desire to find Muriel's remains and bring some closure to her family after all these years."

The current owners of the farm said they have always supported the decisions of the police and continue to do so.

Pyramid mystery solved: Stones brought by Nile branch that dried up 4,000 years ago

By Joe Pinkstone SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT

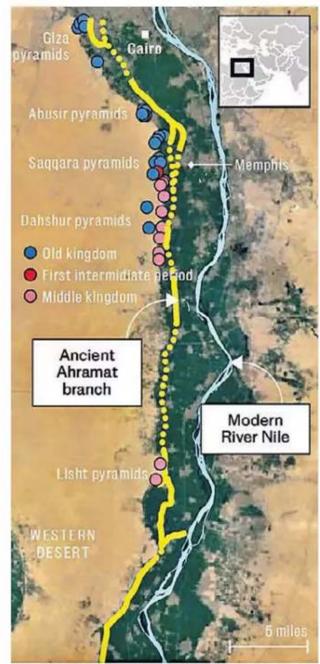
A LOST branch of the River Nile was used by ancient Egyptians to transport the enormous stones of the Great Pyramid at Giza, a study suggests.

Egypt's largest pyramid, one of the ancient wonders of the world and the tallest building on Earth for almost 4,000 years, sits among the largest cluster of pyramids in the African country on a narrow strip of desert. It has long been a mystery as to how millions of tonnes of rock were transported to the site to build the pyramids and the sphinx on the Giza plateau.

Scientists have now discovered a 40-mile long branch of the River Nile which existed during the time of pharaohs but has subsequently been buried beneath farmland and desert.

The Great Pyramid was built around 2,500 BC by Khufu, a fourth dynasty pharaoh, and the river disappeared some three centuries later, about 4,200 years ago. The former Nile branch was found using satellite imagery, geophysical surveys and rock samples. Analysis revealed it ran along the foothills of the Western Desert Plateau, close to the pyramid fields.

The scientists, led by the University of North Carolina Wilmington, named the arm of the river the "Ahramat Nile



Branch". Ahramat means "pyramids" in Arabic.

"We suggest that the Ahramat Branch played a role in the monuments' construction and that it was simultaneously active and used as a transportation waterway for workmen and building materials to the pyramids' sites," the scientists write in their paper.

Many of the pyramids have causeways connected to the extinct branch and it is likely there was a string of harbours along the bank, where building materials were unloaded.

Analysis suggests that the Ahramat branch was pivotal to construction and trade in the Old Kingdom, as five temples (the Bent Pyramid, the Pyramid of Khafre, the Pyramid of Menkaure, the Pyramid of Sahure and the Pyramid of Pepi II) were "positioned adjacent to the riverbank of the Ahramat Branch".

The study in the journal *Communications Earth & Environment*, published by Nature, suggests the Ahramat branch ran close to the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis. It is thought it was turned barren by a 30-year-long drought 4,200 years ago, leaving the arid riverbed under ten feet of sand.

"[This] strongly implies that this river branch was contemporaneously functioning during the Old Kingdom, at the time of pyramid construction," the team wrote.

Woman boasted on TikTok about stabbing man to death after he let her dog escape

By Albert Tait

A WOMAN killed a man who let her pet Pomeranian escape before boasting on TikTok about the murder, a court has heard.

Winter Swan-Miller, 37, is accused of stabbing 62-year-old Stuart Crocker 26 times after her therapy dog, Oblivion, escaped from her home in Hampshire.

Mr Crocker's body was found surrounded by notes which read "take my f---ing dog you wh---e. This is why I've done this haha" and "taking my dog, are you real?"

In TikTok videos posted after his death, Swan-Miller boasted about how she had "been a bad girl" and said "I don't feel like I've done a bad thing at all".

Opening the trial at Winchester Crown Court, prosecutors said she had hoped to achieve "fame and notoriety" by posting about the murder online.

Crocker's death, which police believe occurred on the morning of June 23, came after he let the small and fluffy white dog escape from the home that he shared with Swan-Miller near Andover, the court heard.

The dog was stolen but had returned to Swan-Miller by June 21, according to a video on her TikTok account, which



Winter Swan-Miller, 37, is accused of murdering Stuart Crocker, 62, at her home

remains online. Nicola Shannon KC, prosecuting, said Swan-Miller murdered Crocker, whose body was found five days after his death when a neighbour reported a foul smell to police which he compared to a "damp carpet".

The body was surrounded by notes, which Ms Shannon KC said were part of

"a trail she (Swan-Miller) left for pigs, in her words, to follow". After Crocker's death, the court heard, Swan-Miller travelled to a McDonald's in Andover town centre and ate a sausage and egg McMuffin, before fleeing to Birmingham where she was arrested on June 30.

In the days between her arrest and Crocker's death, Swan-Miller posted several videos on TikTok which were shown to the court.

In one video, titled "Part Two", she can be heard saying: "Taking my dog from me, the only thing in the entire world that I've got."

"I did do what I did and I did it because I had no choice. They took away the only thing in my life that I have got, and that's my dog Oblivion."

She added: "You took away my dog, you all did this."

And in another, she said: "I swore if anyone hurt my dog I would never let it go. I did it as a f---ing statement my morals let me do it."

Swan-Miller has pleaded not guilty to murder and two counts of fraud. Edward Jones, 44, who is accused of letting Swan-Miller stay with him in Birmingham, has pleaded not guilty to assisting an offender, and to one count of fraud.

The trial, due to last five weeks, continues.

Teacher took own life at Swiss clinic without family knowing

By Albert Tait

A TEACHER with no diagnosed illness took his own life at a Swiss suicide clinic without the knowledge of his family.

Alastair Hamilton, 47, died by lethal injection at the Pegasos clinic in Basel after telling his parents that he was visiting a friend in Paris.

His mother Judith, 81, has visited the clinic for an ITV documentary after it apologised for failings around the case.

She told ITV: "We weren't given that chance to be with him or in my case, drag him home, tooth and nail."

Pegasos, which is run by activist Ruedi Habegger, does not require people to be ill to have their death request approved, unlike Dignitas.

Mr Hamilton, a chemistry teacher from Hampton, South West London, had been battling with low moods before he flew out to the clinic.

He had given up working full time and moved back in with his parents as he began to lose weight and feel increasingly tired. Doctors were unable to diagnose him with any condition, despite several private health checks.

His brother Toby, 52, told the *Mail on Sunday* that he had started mentioning suicide "like he was talking about going for a pint down the pub".

Mr Hamilton flew to Switzerland on August 10. His father Edward, 85, drove him to Gatwick Airport, believing that his son was meeting a friend in France.

Mrs Hamilton said that her son "put his arms around me and gave me a big kiss" the last time he saw her. He told her: "Always remember Mum that I love you very much, I always have, I always will, no matter what".

While abroad, Mr Hamilton stopped responding to his family's calls and texts. They soon phoned the police to report him as a missing person.

The Metropolitan Police traced Mr Hamilton to Pegasos through his bank details and were told by the clinic that he had died. The clinic refused to provide police with the date of his death or any other information.

In emails to Mr Hamilton's family, a Met Police sergeant criticised Pegasos for its "lack of compassion and lack of transparency".

The family were not sent his ashes until October and have still not received his personal items or letters which the clinic said he had left for them. Pegasos has since apologised and promised to inform families in the future about their relatives' deaths, according to ITV.

Swiss law has allowed assisted suicide since 1942, while it is against the law in the UK and punishable by up to 14 years in prison. Between 2016 and 2022, 405 UK residents had assisted deaths in Switzerland.

Putin and Xi hail 'deepening' military ties

Leaders of increasingly isolated nations agree to hold more joint army drills following visit to Beijing

By Nicola Smith ASIA CORRESPONDENT

VLADIMIR PUTIN and Xi Jinping agreed to deepen their co-operation on defence and hold more joint military drills after the Russian president arrived in Beijing for an opulent state visit.

Putin was met by his Chinese counterpart with full military honours, a band playing Soviet songs and cheering children in a grand ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing yesterday.

The visit cemented the bond that has grown between the two autocratic leaders as China provides goods to prop up Russia's war machine amid the conflict in Ukraine.

Since declaring a "no-limits" relationship in 2022, both men have made clear their determination to work together to reshape the US-led democratic order.

As he met his Russian counterpart, Xi underscored that the two nations were thriving as "good neighbours, good friends [and] good partners", while Putin said he chose China for his first trip abroad after being inaugurated to a fifth term in office to stress the "unprecedented" depth of their ties.

Condemning what they cast as increasingly aggressive US behaviour against their countries' interests, they signed a 7,000-word joint statement on "the deepening of the comprehensive partnership and strategic co-operation entering a new era".

The agreement covered co-operation on a wide range of issues, from economics and space to foreign policy positions on Ukraine and Taiwan.

"The parties reiterate their serious concern over the attempts of the United States to disrupt the strategic security balance in the region," a Russian version of the document said, highlighting concerns about US missile defence capabilities.

It also specified how Russian-Chinese co-operation would improve regional and global security, committing to the expansion of joint military drills that have become a staple of their bilateral relationship.

Combined war games, including naval drills and patrols by long-range bombers over the Sea of Japan, and ground force exercises on each other's territory have alarmed the US, prompting the Pentagon to begin redrawing its own defence strategy in the potentially volatile Indo-Pacific region.

US defence officials have warned the US Senate Armed Services Committee over Chinese and Russian joint military drills in the East China Sea near Taiwan.

In what appears to be a quid pro quo



Vladimir Putin takes tea with Xi Jinping as he is welcomed to China

for Xi's political support since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Putin has repeatedly embraced China's territorial claims over democratic Taiwan, which Beijing has threatened to seize by force if necessary.

In a press conference on Thursday afternoon, and before they attended a celebratory concert to mark the 75th anniversary of formal China-Russia relations followed by an informal dinner, Putin said he was "grateful" for China's efforts in trying to find a solution to the war in Ukraine.

Xi doubled down on Beijing's support for Moscow, stating the "hard-earned" relationship should be cherished and that China was ready to "jointly achieve

the development and rejuvenation of our respective countries, and work together to uphold fairness and justice in the world."

In doing so, he indicated he would resist pressure from the West to downgrade China's ties with Russia.

In April, the US accused Beijing of being the "top supplier" to Moscow of machine tools, microelectronics, nitrocellulose and other items it considered to be of "dual use" for civilian and military purposes.

According to data compiled by *The Economist*, China's export to Russia of ball bearings, which are used in the manufacture of tanks, surged by nearly

'Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China's support'

170 per cent last year compared to the same period in 2021.

"Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China's support," Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, said during a visit to Beijing in April, where he cautioned that the US would take action if China did not curb the flow of goods.

Western capitals have also objected to China throwing an economic lifeline to the Kremlin, undermining tough international sanctions in response to the Ukraine war.

Last year, two-way trade hit a record \$240.1 billion (£189 billion), growing by 64 per cent since 2021, with Beijing

becoming a key exporter of cars, clothing and other raw materials to Russia.

China is also a major importer of energy supplies that keep the Kremlin's coffers full.

The attendance of Alexander Novak, a top official for Russian oil and gas, raised expectations that Putin would broach the issue of the Power of Siberia 2, a natural gas pipeline designed to connect Russia and China via Mongolia. The Russian president has long sought to cement an agreement on the project which would divert 50 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year to northern China - redirecting a supply that once went to Europe.

Slovakian PM escaped death by a hair as 'lone wolf' charged

By Peter Madro and James Rothwell

A SUSPECTED "lone wolf" gunman has been charged with the attempted murder of the prime minister of Slovakia, who was described as only escaping death "by a hair".

Juraj Cintula, 71, was arrested at the scene after Mr Fico, a pro-Russian populist, was shot five times as he greeted a crowd in the western town of Handlova. The attack has been blamed on deep divides in Slovakian society between pro-Western and pro-Russian sides, but Matus Sutaj Estok, the interior minister, said Mr Cintula was a "lone wolf" and did not belong to any political groups.

Mr Fico spent hours fighting for his life and underwent emergency surgery to his stomach after being airlifted to hospital. His condition was described as stable yesterday morning, but Tomas Taraba, his deputy, has warned that he is "not out of the woods yet". It was reported that Mr Fico had regained consciousness after surgery.

Mr Taraba told the BBC late on Wednesday: "I was very shocked... fortunately, as far as I know the operation went well, and I guess in the end he will survive."

"He's not in a life threatening situation at this moment."

Zuzana Caputova, the Slovakian pres-



Juraj Cintula was arrested at the scene of the shooting on Wednesday morning

ident, said the heads of all political parties would meet to seek "calm" after the shooting. He added that Mr Fico had escaped death "by a hair".

Mr Cintula is a 71-year-old poet from the town of Levice, who has publicly expressed his dislike for Mr Fico and anger at Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

On Wednesday, Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, sent a telegram to Ms Caputova after the shooting. He wrote: "I know Robert Fico as a courageous and strong-minded man. I very much hope that these qualities will

help him to survive this difficult situation."

Russian politicians have claimed the gunman was a contract killer. Leonid Slutsky, chairman of the Duma's foreign committee, said: "There is a high probability that they wanted to kill Fico because of his political views, which do not fit into the stereotypes of the hegemony of the collective West."

Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president, condemned the attack as "appalling", saying: "We sincerely hope Robert Fico recovers soon."

Russia expels British military attache in tit-for-tat move as Cold War tensions rise

By James Rothwell in Berlin

RUSSIA has ordered the expulsion of the UK's military attache after a similar move by British authorities last week, as Cold War-style tensions rise between London and Moscow.

In a statement yesterday, the Russian foreign ministry ordered Captain Adrian Coghill to leave the country.

"The defence attache at the British Embassy in Moscow, AT Coghill, has been declared persona non grata. He must leave the territory of the Russian Federation within a week," it said.

It comes a week after Britain ejected Colonel Maxim Elovik, a Russian military attache, following his identification as a spy.

James Cleverly, the Home Secretary, took the decision after a series of "malign" espionage incidents in the

UK and in EU countries, including an apparent arson attack on a Ukrainian-owned warehouse in east London.

Five people were charged over the warehouse fire in Leyton, which UK officials said was orchestrated by the Kremlin.

'AT Coghill is persona non grata. He must leave the territory of the Russian Federation within a week'

Mr Cleverly said that Col Elovik was an "undeclared military intelligence officer" and that his expulsion was part of a fresh campaign to "target and dismantle Russian intelligence-gathering". Russia had indicated it would respond in kind to the expulsion, which was

understood to be the first since 2018, when Theresa May, as prime minister, kicked out 23 diplomats over the poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia.

Col Elovik had been stationed in the UK for more than a decade and would frequently attend events linked to Russian military interests. Last June, he attended a special reception celebrating Russia Day at the Russian ambassador's residence in Kensington Palace Gardens.

Grant Shapps, the Defence Secretary, called the expulsion of Capt Coghill a "desperate move".

Mr Shapps said: "Whilst Russia's DA in the UK was acting as a spy, Putin's only issue with ours was that they personified the UK's unwavering support for Ukraine in the face of his illegal and barbaric invasion."

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The race to save Ukraine – What does Putin really want from Russia’s summer offensive?

Special report

By Roland Oliphant and Joe Barnes

The Kremlin has gambled by spreading the front line, but struggling forces may force it to show its hand

The attack came in the early hours of Friday morning last week, about 15 miles north-east of the Kharkiv city ring road. But neither the time nor the place were a surprise.

For weeks, Ukrainian officials had been warning of a new Russian offensive. Russian propagandists, Ukrainian military analysts, and even armchair observers publicly predicted an assault on Kharkiv. We even knew the units involved.

Last week, the Centre for Defence Strategies (CDS), a Ukrainian defence think tank, forecast Russian “tactical raids in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblast involving elements of the 11th and 44th Army Corps and possibly the 138th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade of the 6th Army”.

But what is the intention of the Russian offensive? And is this the main effort or a diversion?

Russia’s new offensive was first reported exactly a week ago, when the Ukrainian military said it had engaged a Russian “diversionary reconnaissance group”, Soviet military jargon for a commando raid, trying to cross the border north-east of Kharkiv.

By Monday morning, the Russians had developed two salients, each a few miles deep: one towards the town of Vovchansk and another towards the village of Lypstsi.

Yuri Butusov, a Ukrainian journalist who is in the area, said the eastern attack had been fought to a standstill on the outskirts of Vovchansk around the city’s meat processing plant. The western advance – on the Russians’ right and the Ukrainians’ left – appeared to be well short of Lypstsi, with fighting ongoing for the village of Hlyboke.

The new salients are tiny, but three miles in three days is a more rapid advance than either Russia or Ukraine has achieved in the best part of a year.

Much will now depend on whether Ukraine can muster enough troops and build sufficient defensive lines to hold up the Russian assault.

Russia’s plan
The Russian battle plan is not yet clear, but it appears to be guided partly by the landscape. The eastern salient straddles the Siverski Donets river, the main watercourse running through the eastern battlefields. The right flank of the drive towards Lypstsi is protected by the Kharkiv reservoir.

It is possible that the ultimate intention is to cut the Ukrainian lines of communication between Kharkiv and Kupiansk, the ridgetop town that Russian forces in the east have been fighting towards for months. This may not be the last cross-border assault.

If Russia launched another attack further west they could threaten to cut Kharkiv’s main supply road from Kyiv and further stretch the Ukrainian defenders, a prerequisite for besieging the city itself.

The CDS think tank said in its report predicting the attack: “Their goal is to distract the Ukrainian Defence Forces command and prevent the use of reserves, especially strategic ones, in more critical areas.”

Actually assaulting Kharkiv – Ukraine’s second-largest city, which has already withstood one siege and has been effectively turned into a fortress – would be massively ambitious.

Russia failed to even surround the city during its first attempt to capture it in April and March 2022. Fighting street-to-street, as in Mariupol or Bakhmut, would take months and require a vast commitment of men, equipment and ammunition.

Speaking in the days and weeks before Russia’s attack on Vovchansk, Western officials and well-connected Ukrainian and foreign military analysts unanimously insisted no Russian reserve of that size exists.

So, if Kharkiv is a diversion, where is the real prize?

The battle of Donbas
The Kazeny Torets is a slow-moving, overgrown river that joins the Siverski Donets about 100 miles downstream of the border. Strung along its valley are the road and rail junctions of Kostiantynivka and Druzhkivka; the provisional regional capital of Kramatorsk, which is also the largest town in Ukrainian-held Donbas, and Sloviansk.

The potholed H20 motorway and a parallel arterial railway follow the river’s eastern bank, linking the cities into a single, sleepy agglomeration.

Together, these towns and their transport links make up the economic and strategic heart of the Ukrainian-held Donbas region. If the valley falls, Donbas falls. And Russia has made no secret of its ambition to capture it.

“The Russian military strategy has been fairly consistent, their operations are focused on taking Donetsk first, and expanding territorial control in Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia,” said Mr Kofman.

Serhii Kuzan, chairman of the Ukrainian Security and Cooperation



Centre, concurs: “I believe they will use the reserves they have to strengthen the groups in the Donetsk region and to continue their forward movement in this area, not to make new groups. That makes it important for us to counteract them now because it will make them less threatening for further movements.”

Graveyard of armies
Vladimir Putin has been trying to conquer the Donbas, the region comprising the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, for 10 years.

His first attempt was in April 2014, when a few dozen mercenaries and thugs led by the former FSB officer Igor “Strelkov” Girkin seized control of Sloviansk. Ten months later, a ceasefire left Russia in control of the regional capitals of Donetsk and Luhansk, but less than half of either region’s territory.

The second serious attempt came in the spring and summer of 2022, when Putin responded to defeat outside Kyiv by reverting to the more limited war aim of completing that conquest. By the time that battle petered out in September, the Russians had made a breakthrough at Popasna and captured Lysichansk and Severodonetsk, but were still well short of their goals of the Donetsk region border. The Russians never gave up on their goal. They spent tens of thousands of lives over nine months to capture Bakhmut, the city controlling the next river valley to the east of the Torets, last year.

And this February, after five-months

of costly fighting, they captured Avdiivka, creating a major breach in the old fortified line built between 2015 and 2022. Those developments set the stage for what may become Russia’s main effort this summer.

Russia’s plan
The outline of Russia’s Donbas battle plan is already visible. “Their [the Russians’] strategy is aimed at seizing the main transit hubs and population centres of the region,” said Mr Kofman.

He added: “They are advancing in a predictable straight line right now from Avdiivka towards the main roads that flow from Pokrovsk, and to Chasiv Yar from Bakhmut, in order to threaten Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.”

At the time of writing, the Russians have already pushed several miles beyond Avdiivka, but are still at least 17 miles from Pokrovsk itself. But they are within six miles of the T0504 road linking Pokrovsk and Kostiantynivka, a critical Ukrainian supply route.

From the Bakhmut direction, they are advancing on Chasiv Yar, a tiny town perched on the upland between the Bakhmutka and Kazeny Torets valleys. Capturing it would provide a foothold on the plateau, putting Russian field artillery in range of the Torets valley towns and giving their FPV drones free range to terrorise the H20. They would have to fight only a few more miles along the ridges before they were looking directly down into Kostiantynivka and Druzhkivka. Occupying the high ground and

cutting the T0504 could lead to the isolation or complete capture of Kostiantynivka. That, in turn, would “significantly impair the defence forces’ ability to maintain the front line in the southern part of Donetsk oblast”, the CDS forecast said.

The storm has come
Russia is testing Ukraine along the entire length of the 800-mile front line. In the extreme south, a tiny Ukrainian bridgehead on the left bank of the Dnipro river continues to hold out against Russian efforts to crush it.

In the Zaporizhzhia region, villages already flattened during Ukraine’s counter-offensive last summer are in danger of falling into Russian hands again. Although unlikely, a breakthrough here could threaten supply lines into Donbas.

Assaults also continue against the Ukrainian front around Kupiansk in eastern Kharkiv region. Advances here could open the way to Kharkiv city and allow Russia to threaten the Kramatorsk-Sloviansk agglomeration from the north.

Battlefield difficulties
Russia’s strategy and goals are likely to be subject to adjustment and adaptation. If the operation in Kharkiv makes more progress than expected, they may reinforce it and go for the ambitious goal of Kharkiv itself.

In Donbas, Chasiv Yar is defended by a steep incline and a canal, and the Ukrainians have rushed in reinforcements. The Russians may be willing to bypass the town, provided they can gain the heights.

There is also a likelihood that Russian commanders will seek to encircle the Torets area between Avdiivka and Bakhmut rather than push on westwards. Russia’s Operational Group Centre is believed to have been tasked with preparing for such a move.

In the southern corner of the front, Russia’s Operational Group South is attempting to break through to the town of Kurakhove.

But drawing arrows on maps is easy. In reality, both sides will face grave challenges in this summer’s fighting.

Observation drones, satellites, and electronic eavesdropping mean the battlefield is almost entirely transparent. Massing troops for a major attack is risky. Achieving surprise is impossible, as the accurate prediction of a May attack on Kharkiv makes clear.

Russia has so far been able to replace losses in men and equipment and has an advantage in ammunition. But it has struggled to operate above company

‘Drones, satellites, and electronic warfare have made a surprise attack impossible’

level and has never managed to turn incremental advances into real strategic breakthroughs.

Speaking last week, Mr Kuzan claimed the Russians were suffering 1,000 casualties a day in their efforts to make progress towards Pokrovsk before new American ammunition arrived for Ukrainian troops.

Russia adapts
Nonetheless, the Russians have made significant and dangerous adaptations to the battlefield, said Justin Crump, the chief executive of Sibylline, an intelligence consultancy.

Glide bombs – ordinary air-dropped bombs fitted with simple wings and guidance systems that allow them to be launched from safety – were decisive in Avdiivka and have become a significant part of Russia’s overall fire advantage.

Secondly, says Mr Crump: “The Russians have improved their sensor-shooter loop for support. The time from identifying a target to striking it is now much shorter than earlier in the war.”

In March, the Russians in separate incidents achieved their first destructions of a HIMARS launcher and a Patriot missile battery. Both vehicles were destroyed near Pokrovsk after drone operators quickly fed targeting coordinates to ballistic missile batteries.

Russia is also beginning to see results, albeit patchily, from electronic warfare against Ukrainian drones.

Lastly, a number of *Mad Max*-esque vehicles have appeared on the battlefield since the start of the year.

“Russian vehicle modifications can look ludicrous but have often worked well for the specific problem they have encountered – for example the ‘turtle tank’ or ‘tank barn,’” said Mr Crump.

Lack of shells, trenches and troops
The biggest questions hang over Ukraine and its allies. The six-month hiatus in US arms supplies, a delay in mobilising more men and a lack of urgency in digging defence lines have resulted in a moment of crisis the Russians are now trying to exploit.

Congress passed the \$60 billion (£48 billion) assistance bill last month, and shells should be reaching the front line already. But that alone will not change the trajectory of the war.

The most basic problem, said Andriy Zagorodnyuk, a former defence minister and chairman of the CDS think tank, is the easiest to address.

“The way they attack is this: they send a group of 10 or 15 or 20 people, with three or five or six armoured vehicles and tanks,” he explained.

“The idea is they attack in one location usually early in the morning. So they pull the tanks up in a staging area then during the night they throw them closer to the front. They select the weakest link in the line using UAVs [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles], then they attack. Usually we see that through our own UAVs, and send UAVs and artillery to destroy them.”

But where shells are tightly rationed, or where there is more than one attack in a day, the Ukrainian gunners quickly run out of ammo. The Russians overrun a village or treeline, consolidate, and the process begins again.

Mr Zagorodnyuk added of recent Russian advances in Donbas: “I spoke to guys from the front yesterday who said if we had enough ammo all of those attacks would be unsuccessful.”

The resumption of US ammunition supplies is not expected to give Ukraine shell parity with the Russians, but it will make a critical difference to breaking up those small attacks.

Then there is the belated approach to digging defensive trenches. Mr Butusov reported on Monday that the Ukrainians in the Kharkiv region were having to dig new positions on high ground because the initial defensive lines had not been created at naturally advantageous positions.

One angry officer told the BBC that the Russians were able to simply walk across the border near Vovchansk because no one had laid minefields. Building such defences while simultaneously fighting to hold up the Russian offensives will be a major challenge.

But most critical of all is the troop shortage. “They have not been replacing their losses since the offensive of 2023, which over time led to a deficit of manpower at the front line, especially infantry,” said Mr Kofman.

Anyone who has visited the front or spoken to soldiers serving there is familiar with the result: under-strength units trying to hold broader sections of front with fewer soldiers of poorer quality. The most effective brigades are reliant on a dwindling hardcore of experienced and motivated fighters to maintain combat effectiveness, many of whom are exhausted after two years of constant fighting.

Ukraine’s government last month approved new laws lowering the conscription age from 27 to 25 and tightening punishments for draft dodgers, but the move is belated and it is likely to take months to recruit, train, and deploy enough men to stabilise the situation.

There are other issues to address, too. There is still a shortage of UAVs, air defences are badly stretched, and issues are emerging around the maintenance of the diverse assortment of equipment Ukraine’s allies transferred in the first two years of the war.

Russia’s attack on Kharkiv is designed to exploit those weaknesses. The outcome of the battle will depend on how effectively Ukraine and its allies address them.

Residential buildings in Vovchansk were heavily damaged by Russian shelling ahead of their advance



SIMON TOWNSEND FOR THE TELEGRAPH

Azerbaijan stirs up riots in our Pacific territory, France claims

By Henry Samuel in Paris

FRANCE accused Azerbaijan of meddling in riot-wracked New Caledonia, amid warnings Russia and China are seeking to exploit chaos in the French Pacific territory.

Five people have died, including two gendarmes, since riots erupted three days ago in response to a French parliamentary bill. Pro-independence groups say a proposed law discriminates against the indigenous Kanak population.

New Caledonia, located between Australia and Fiji, has the world's second-largest nickel reserves, but its processing plants are on the verge of collapse, owing to competition from Indonesia and Chinese overproduction. Prices have tumbled despite the metal being a key component of electric car batteries.

Emmanuel Macron has called a state of emergency. Gabriel Attal, France's prime minister, yesterday dispatched 1,000 police reinforcements – bringing the total to 2,700, along with soldiers and elite units – to quell the unrest.

French officials have long expressed concern about Azerbaijan's interest in French overseas territories, including New Caledonia, located 9,000 miles away, and in their struggle against "colonial rule".

"This isn't a fantasy. It's a reality," Gérard Darmanin, the interior minister, told France 2 TV when asked if Azerbaijan, China and Russia were interfering in New Caledonia. "I regret that some of the Caledonian pro-independence leaders have made a deal with Azerbaijan. It's indisputable," he said. Azerbaijan denied the allegations as "baseless".

Hundreds of people, including 64 police, have been wounded in the riots. Around 100,000 of the island's 270,000 residents have firearms.



A trip back in time George Russell, the Mercedes F1 driver, takes a vintage Mercedes for a spin around the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari circuit in Italy to mark 100 years since the carmaker won the Targa Florio, which was founded in 1906 – making it the oldest sportscar racing event.

Biden blocks release of tapes showing 'poor memory'

White House lawyer claims files are only wanted to spur on politically motivated investigation into president

By Tony Diver US EDITOR in Washington

JOE BIDEN has blocked the release of interview tapes in which he showed "poor memory" and behaved like a "well-meaning, elderly man".

The US president used his powers of executive privilege to stop audio files

from an interview with a federal prosecutor from being released to Congress.

Mr Biden, 81, was interviewed last year by Robert Hur, a special prosecutor appointed to investigate claims he had illegally stored classified documents in his garage after serving as vice president from 2009 to 2017.

Mr Hur raised concerns about Mr Biden's memory, suggesting he had forgotten the dates he had served in Barack Obama's administration and the year of his son's death.

In February, Mr Hur recommended that Mr Biden not be prosecuted because a jury would find him to be a

"sympathetic, well-meaning elderly man with a poor memory".

The justice department told Congress yesterday that the Biden administration would not comply with a subpoena for the tapes, issued by the House judiciary committee and the House committee on oversight and accountability.

The committees are investigating the matter after some Republicans accused Mr Hur of deliberately overlooking Mr Biden's alleged wrongdoing for political reasons. Mr Hur denies that claim.

In a letter to the Republican leaders of the committees, the White House's

top lawyer said the tapes had been requested to fuel a politically-motivated investigation into Mr Biden, and that their release could jeopardise future investigations.

"The absence of a legitimate need for the audio recordings lays bare your likely goal – to chop them up, distort them, and use them for partisan political purposes," Ed Siskel, the White House's chief counsel, wrote.

"Demanding such sensitive and constitutionally-protected law enforcement materials from the Executive Branch because you want to manipulate them for potential political gain is

inappropriate." Carlos Uriarte, head of the justice department's office of legislative affairs, said the government had a "responsibility to safeguard the confidentiality of law enforcement files where disclosure would jeopardise future investigations".

The decision to block the tapes was taken on the advice of Merrick Garland, the US attorney general, who advised Mr Biden that they could make White House officials less likely to cooperate with future investigations.

Mr Hur's report, which ran to more than 300 pages, raised fresh questions about Mr Biden's mental acuity, follow-

ing months of reports of his public verbal slip-ups and "senior moments".

In a fiery conference after the report, Mr Biden said his interviews had been mischaracterised by Mr Hur – before committing another gaffe by confusing the presidents of Mexico and Egypt.

He said that the interviews had been conducted shortly after the Hamas terror attacks on Israel on Oct 7, and that he had been working long hours to deal with the fallout of the incident.

Mr Biden's age has become a talking point in the 2024 election campaign, with a majority of voters believing he is too old to serve a second term.

Cohen admits lying under oath as Trump's lawyers go on the attack

By Benedict Smith US REPORTER

MICHAEL COHEN admitted to lying under oath as Donald Trump's lawyers sought to paint him as a serial liar out for revenge after being turned down for a White House job.

Cohen is a prosecution witness in the former president's "hush money" trial, but suffers from credibility issues as a felon who has been vocal about his hatred for Mr Trump, for whom he spent 10 years working as a "fixer".

As his second day of cross-examination began yesterday at a court in New York, he was repeatedly accused of lying by Todd Blanche, Mr Trump's normally soft-spoken lawyer.

In an exchange that could prove critical in the former president's criminal trial, Mr Blanche claimed a phone call, in which Cohen said he had finalised a hush money payment to a porn star with Mr Trump, was made to discuss a totally unrelated matter. Mr Trump is accused of falsifying business records

to conceal payments to Stormy Daniels, an adult film star, to prevent stories of their alleged affair emerging before the 2016 election. Prosecutors claim Cohen was at the centre of a "criminal conspiracy", paying her \$130,000 from his own pocket before being reimbursed.

Mr Blanche repeatedly pressed Cohen on whether he had been pressured into pleading guilty to campaign finance violations and tax evasion in 2018 by the authorities.

Cohen confirmed this, saying that prosecutors had threatened to bring an 80-page indictment against his wife if he did not accept the plea deal within 48 hours. Mr Blanche noted that Cohen had testified in his criminal trial that he had not been pressured or induced to accept the plea deal. "That was a lie?" he asked.

"That was not true, correct," Cohen answered, eventually clarifying – after further questioning – that it was a "lie".

Mr Blanche's questioning grew steadily more aggressive until, on the verge of shouting, he accused Cohen of lying

about a phone call in 2016. Cohen claimed the call was made "to discuss the Stormy Daniels matter" with Donald Trump when he testified on Monday.

However, text messages presented to the court showed Cohen had texted Mr Trump's bodyguard, Keith Schiller, for advice on how to deal with prank calls.

"That was a lie," Mr Blanche told the witness. "You were actually talking to Mr Schiller that you were getting harassing phone calls from a 14-year-old."

"I believed," Cohen began to answer at one point, before Mr Blanche went on the attack. "We are not asking about your belief," he said.

Cohen claimed that his phone conversation with Mr Trump, which lasted just over a minute and a half, had turned to Ms Daniels. The exchange may have been as short as, "Everything's been taken care of", he said.

Mr Trump seemed to approve of Mr Blanche's performance, giving a thumbs-up outside the courtroom when asked how his lawyer was doing.

Snitches and satellites to police Greek sun loungers

By Giovanni Legorano

GREECE will use artificial intelligence and satellite imagery to curb the proliferation of sun loungers on beaches, while also urging the public to inform on rental firms that break the rules.

With the tourist season approaching, the country's government is to start monitoring the position of sunbeds, umbrellas and chairs on its coastlines.

It comes after a law introducing stricter rules was passed on Wednesday amid growing concerns over overcrowding and the illegal use of public space on beaches.

The system, which will be tested in June, will monitor almost 8,000 beaches in Greece. Satellite photographs will be screened using AI to catch firms that take up too much space with rental sunbathing spots.

The government hopes it will be able to issue fines to more offenders and reduce the money it spends on physical inspections of beaches.

Ministers hope the measures will also help in the tendering of beaches to private companies, while protecting public access to free beaches.



High horse A horse had to be rescued through the window of a third-floor flat using a zipwire on Tuesday after it became trapped inside a flooded building in Brazil.

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Time is running out for Ukraine to snatch victory from Putin's jaws

LISA HASELDINE



Over the past few months, while America dragged its heels over passing its latest \$60 billion aid package to Ukraine, president Volodymyr Zelensky warned repeatedly that every day of delay would have real-life consequences on the battlefield. Now, with tragic timing, the Ukrainian president's prediction is coming true.

A week ago today, Russia launched a renewed offensive on Kharkiv in the north-east of the country. Ukraine had been predicting for months that this incursion would come; Western intelligence and even Russian state media had arrived at the same conclusion. Over the past week, Russian troops have seized several border towns along the offensive strip, forcing Ukrainian troops to withdraw and regroup around the town of Vovchansk; approximately 8,000 civilians have been forced to flee the area. The fact that Putin's troops have been able to advance more than four miles in a matter of days shows how, despite the many warnings it was coming, Ukraine was woefully ill-equipped to fend off the attack.

This isn't the first time Kyiv and Moscow have fought over the area: in the early days of the war, Russian troops managed to occupy parts of the Kharkiv region for six months, until Ukraine liberated it. In response to this new crisis, Zelensky cancelled all foreign trips abroad for the near future.

Reports suggest that the Russian advance has now slowed but is far from reversed. On Thursday, Zelensky insisted that the situation was "generally under control" but remained "extremely difficult". The president has asked for Patriot systems to defend the skies over Kharkiv from the drones, glide bombs and artillery fire Russia is launching.

After four days of Russia's fresh incursion into the

Kharkiv region, US secretary of state Anthony Blinken arrived in Kyiv for what was meant to be a morale-boosting surprise visit. A mood of panic appeared to overtake the trip, however, with Blinken on Wednesday pledging another \$2 billion towards Ukraine's military efforts. Weapons, including artillery air defence systems and long range ATACMS missiles were, he said, already arriving on the Ukrainian front line. But it is no secret that it will still take time, possibly months, for Ukraine to feel the benefit of the weapons now coming from across the Atlantic.

Simply put, over the past year, the West has failed to adequately supply Ukraine with the equipment it needs to fend off Russia. Kyiv has been forced to ration ammunition and missiles while it waits, while a ban on using American-made weapons to target Russian supply lines on Russian territory means that Ukraine can do little to stymie Putin's troops. Some in the Ukrainian army fear this could be "another Bakhmut".

Russia has sniffed out these weaknesses and is now taking full advantage before the rest of America's aid arrives. Their assault on Kharkiv has two aims: first to split the thinned Ukrainian defences and weaken them; second is to provide a "buffer" for the Russian city of Belgorod over the border, which Ukraine has successfully been targeting for more than a year.

The loss of Kharkiv would be a serious set back for Ukraine, one it may struggle to ever fully recover from. The West will be hoping this new US aid isn't too little too late. But it is getting harder to deny that the strategy of giving Ukraine enough to fight but not to win was a terrible miscalculation.

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Keir Starmer's plan for government is vanishing before the voters' eyes

It's infuriating for the Tory party, but Labour is likely to get away with promising nothing but bromides

FRASER NELSON



The strange thing about Keir Starmer's policy ideas is that they tend to evaporate as the years go on. He ran for Labour leader with clear, radical pledges: to abolish the House of Lords, waive all university tuition fees and more. Over time, such promises were downgraded then, dropped altogether. Yesterday, it seemed his policy vanishing act was complete. Amid great fanfare in an Essex film studio, the Shadow Cabinet gathered to reveal the latest strategy: to promise, in effect, almost nothing at all.

It's deliberately minimalist, said Angela Rayner. Labour won't be promising the earth – or promising anything, as it turned out. The pledge to stick to "tough spending rules" leaves Starmer with the option of defining the word "tough" any way he wants.

"Cutting NHS waiting times" will happen anyway, given that the post-lockdown patient pileup has peaked. Setting up a "border security command" overlooks the small fact that such coordination happens already. This is rebranding, not revolution.

Promising 13,000 more police is hardly radical following a Tory government that promised (and recruited) 20,000 more. Only one of

yesterday's pledges had a firm figure: "to recruit 6,500 more teachers" over five years, paid for by imposing VAT on private school fees. Even if implemented tomorrow, this would mean upping the teacher headcount by 1.3 per cent. An improvement, to be sure, but one unlikely to lead to a school revolution.

My hunch is that Labour is more likely to oversee a great educational recession and end up closing schools every year – as befits a country whose declining birth rate will mean almost 10 per cent fewer pupils by the end of the decade.

No teacher needs to be fired: you just replace fewer of the 40,000 who leave or retire every year. Labour's only aim is to do better at hitting the teachers' quota (the Tories fall about 1 per cent short) but the overall headcount will probably decline. In this way, a pledge of "more teachers" will probably come to mean "fewer teachers".

This is how the words game is played. "Political language", wrote Orwell, "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." This sums up political pledges: they always end up as verbal illusions. You work out what's going to happen anyway (the halving of inflation, waiting lists falling), then promise to make it happen. Both of these examples, of course, are not from Starmer but from the five pledges that Rishi Sunak made last year.

Starmer is now engaged in pledge deflation. Last year, he was promising an economy with the "highest sustained growth in the G7". Now, he simply says he'll "grow our economy": about as low an economic ambition as you can imagine. There was no

Blair-style pledge on freezing income tax: no firm pledge on tax at all, in fact. Nor was there anything concrete on defence spending, or any response to Sunak's recent idea of slowly raising it over the next five years.

This launch was about mood music, to assure voters that Labour's aspirations are decent and unscary. To keep the streets safe, keep the bills down and not much more. An ex-Tory voter was paraded, to announce his conversion to a cheering crowd. Neil Basu, a former Metropolitan Police counter-terrorism chief, appeared by videolink to deliver his benediction. We heard from a man who says a gang tried to steal his car. And a pensioner, to talk about the costs of heating – and living.

Fuel poverty is a serious business – but the country has less of it under the Conservatives than ever before. And the elderly? The vastly expensive triple-lock pledge has pushed pensioner poverty to the lowest level in history: quite the achievement. Theft? There's less of it than any time since records began in 1981. But for various reasons, the voter perception is of a country where everything's falling apart – and of a government that deserves to be booted out. Seeing this, Labour's strategy is to do or say nothing.

Only one barnacle remains on Starmer's boat. We were reminded of it when Ed Miliband came on stage like a Shakespearean comedy interlude character, to talk about a net-zero domestic energy sector by the end of the decade. British renewables are cheaper, he intoned – and more secure. This is nonsense, as even the Tony Blair Institute admits. An all-out dash for renewables, it concluded in a report only yesterday, "could increase energy costs or

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reduce energy security, with major economic and social consequences for the country." Quite.

So Miliband's plan would be a disaster, but one that's unlikely to be ever attempted because it would quickly dissolve on contact with reality. Gary Smith, head of the GMB union, once told me that he doesn't bother worrying about Miliband's plan because it's so obviously impossible. So why is the policy still there? Perhaps because Labour fears the Greens (who may run them close in Bristol) and needs to keep some delusions going. But the £28 billion-a-year green spending plan, for years the signature Miliband policy, is now abolished – so it may seem cruel to take away what little there is left.

Normally, Oppositions start by mouthing generalities and slowly build up to a solid, policy-rich manifesto platform. Starmer is doing things the other way around. But as he heads into the summer of an election year 20 points ahead in the polls, this does make sense. The fuzziest his agenda becomes, the stronger his opinion poll lead. Why offer hostages to fortune if he doesn't have to? His strategy is to look dull, not risky. To present as small a target as possible.

The Conservatives will understandably fume over this. Where are his better ideas? How can he get away with silence on welfare and NHS reform, and the other problems so vast that they seem to be crushing the Government? Can Starmer really win a general election on a nothingburger of a manifesto, his main claim being that he's not a Tory? From what we saw (and didn't learn) yesterday, that's precisely his plan. The question, now, is whether the Tories can make voters a better offer.

This launch was about mood music, to assure voters that Labour's aspirations are decent and unscary

The NHS cares more about PR than patients

Time and again this monstrous bureaucracy has put its own reputation before the public's safety

KAROL SIKORA



The Mafia-like NHS management style continues to endanger countless patients. Organisational and personal reputations are far too often placed far ahead of good practice and safe patient care by the use of skilled but expensive PR.

As has been reported this week, whistleblowers – those who highlight errors and problems – are treated like criminals. They are hounded and bullied out of jobs, with their financial and professional futures ruined by bureaucrats who rarely have any actual medical experience.

Defusing, and then covering up the story, becomes the priority instead of addressing the root cause. This stop-gap approach saves the day in most cases but eventually disasters leak

out. Regulatory bodies such as the General Medical Council (GMC) for doctors and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) are weaponised to silence doctors and nurses, with so-called heretics flogged in front of the baying mob. This sets an extremely effective deterrent.

I've seen it myself as an expert witness at a GMC tribunal of a leading oncologist. I, and the only other defence expert, are both now under investigation. I'm too old to worry about it, but kangaroo courts for offending NHS staff are common, with patient safety far too often right at the bottom of the agenda.

Many medical professionals, no matter how senior, find the whole process of raising concerns extremely intimidating and incredibly stressful. NHS management have designed it to be that way, and want all involved to know it. It's a toxic environment, with poison pumped in from the very centre at NHS England.

Swarms of overpaid and over-promoted PR managers seem to care little for patient outcomes, viewing them as secondary to the reputation of their hospitals. They thrive on "crisis management" as a way to justify their own positions. Having submitted a subject access request to NHS England late last year, I

finally received the answer one week ago. Hundreds and hundreds of pages detailing lengthy correspondence between NHS "communication" specialists about some of my statements in this very paper. The amount of time and resource that has been poured into dealing with my concerns is astonishing and surely indicative of a much wider problem.

It's not only patient wellbeing that is put at risk, but that of the staff making these complaints. It can drag on for months, or even years, with all manner of threats and abuse being felt by those who put their heads above the parapet. Is it a surprise that so many professionals are leaving?

When I worked in the NHS as clinical director of cancer medicine at Hammersmith Hospital, I was in charge. I took responsibility for what happened under my watch, and the buck stopped with me. That is exactly how it should be. Now? There are layers and layers of bureaucracy and bureaucrats, many of whom contribute nothing productive to providing timely and efficient care for patients.

It's a mess, and eventually all bloated systems break down – as we've tragically seen with Mid Staffs, Morecambe Bay and so on. Returning responsibility and power

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to health professionals is vital. Without it, the NHS bureaucratic machine will grow stronger and even more untouchable. And, as public attitudes towards the flawed system sour, with surveys revealing satisfaction is already at an all-time low, senior managers will go to ever greater extremes to silence dissent. Doctors and nurses within the system who raise legitimate and important concerns will not stand a chance.

Where is the accountability for those in charge? The Chair and CEO of NHS England wield far more power than the politicians. NHS leadership should be hauled in front of Parliament on a weekly basis and subjected to intense questioning on the poor quality of patient care – that is, or at least should be, the overarching objective of everything that the health service does.

Whistleblowers deserve to be protected and celebrated, not persecuted and harassed. The whole system is designed to safeguard and enhance the existing establishment. A radical overhaul of how we deliver care is required – does the political courage exist to deliver that even with a new government?

Professor Karol Sikora is a leading cancer specialist

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ESTABLISHED 1855

Sir Keir has shown he is not ready to rule

The unveiling of Sir Keir's election pledges was meant to be a defining moment of this electoral campaign. Appearing at a rally in Essex, mimicking Tony Blair's totemic pledge cards in 1997, the Labour leader was supposed to give the British people their first real glimpse of what a Labour government would look like.

We are still waiting to find out. In area after area, from economics to border control, Sir Keir promised to meet vague and ill-defined goals, or to set up new government bodies with no mention of the intended outcome.

The only target voters could reasonably hold Sir Keir to account on was the pledge to hire 6,500 extra teachers. If this is the extent of the Labour party's ambition, then Britain's governance is in a dire state.

In many ways, Sir Keir's speech was more notable for what was absent. His promise to keep taxes "as low as possible" was so vague as to be compatible with everything from a Javier Milei-style slashing of the state to a Corbynite nationalisation of industry.

It is all too easy to imagine a Starmer government declaring that it was no longer "possible" to fuel its ambitions without higher taxes on "the rich", their incomes and their assets. He is already targeting the oil and gas industry with a "proper windfall tax" and aspirational parents with VAT on school fees. It is not hard to imagine the party dropping its promise to avoid a wealth tax once in power.

One of the few consistent things about Sir Keir is his inconsistency. He has backtracked on his £28 billion "green prosperity plan", his pledge to abolish tuition fees, and many of his commitments to renationalisation.

Nowhere is the contrast between the Sir Keir of 2020, and the Sir Keir of 2024 more marked than on the matter of immigration. The leader who pledged to "defend migrants' rights" and "free movement" after Brexit is now promising "a new Border Security Command".

Some of these policies deserved to be dropped, but it is notable that Sir Keir publicly committed to them before noticing the problems. How would this work if Labour were already in office? Would we find ourselves subject to repeated half-thought through attempts to remake the country, dropped only once their disastrous consequences had been made painfully clear?

It is a bad sign that some of the few commitments Sir Keir has been consistent about are among his most damaging, such as his plan to decarbonise Britain's grid at an impossibly fast pace. This would deal a heavy blow to successful British businesses, and significantly raise the costs facing families.

Away from these ideas, however, Sir Keir has seemed incapable of making a decision and sticking to it. The hesitance and backtracking that results would be a dangerous liability in office.

Think, for a moment, about the scale of the crises the Government has handled over the past five years, from the Covid pandemic, to the war in Ukraine, to Iran's assault upon Israel. How would Sir Keir, a man who tried to put Jeremy Corbyn in Downing Street, have handled them?

The prospect does not bear close examination; the Labour leader is a natural ditherer, a man whose instincts scream at him to do nothing and hope it works out for the best – instincts that would be disastrous for the security of this country.

It is understandable that many Conservative voters do not feel enthused at present. The local election results showed that many are fed up, and unwilling to turn up and cast their vote for the Government. They should not let this apathy put Sir Keir in Downing Street.

The Government is now listening to their concerns, delivering significant cuts to immigration and overseeing a strong recovery in the economy. Entrusting Sir Keir at this point would be a dangerous gamble. He would be handed a mandate to reshape the country as he saw fit, without once having set out how he would use it.

As the election draws near, we are left searching for any substance to the Starmer project. The more Sir Keir reveals about his policies, the vaguer they become until eventually they dissipate into a cloud of platitudes and expectation management.

Sir Keir's pledges are meant to show us what he and his Labour party are. We have yet to see any evidence that this is a party that is ready for government, or a leader who is fit for power.

Prize pothole

Soon many a marrow-grower will be slipping a tape-measure around a prize specimen as it is fattened up for the village show. At Charlton-All-Saints, Wiltshire, though, villagers have been measuring up their own contender, for the biggest pothole in the land. It is a strongly contested field. At Charlton you can't miss the pothole, which takes up half the surface of Warrens Lane, unless you make a diversion via Church Lane, which requires local knowledge. Delivery drivers often feel they have strayed into the nearby Avon, for the 40ft pothole is full of water for more than half the year. Could the deeps of the Charlton pothole conceal life unknown to science? Almost certainly not. But it represents an annoying, perhaps dangerous, phenomenon of modern living for which no one wants a rosette for the worst example.



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NHS whistleblowers and Britain's pernicious culture of closing ranks

SIR – Your report ("NHS turns on doctors who blow whistle over safety", May 16) fills me with despair. Dedicated workers, looking after the welfare of their patients, are being hounded by overpaid managers desperate to protect their positions.

I can't help being reminded of the Post Office. When will the Government learn?

Norman Taylor
Walsall, Staffordshire

SIR – Professor Phil Banfield (Commentary, May 16) is right that doctors must continue to speak up – but managers need to learn how to listen up, take concerns seriously and not shoot the messenger.

Better regulation of NHS management is long overdue.
Dr David Whitaker
Manchester

SIR – Your report on how the NHS deals with whistleblowers did not come as a surprise, as this has been going on for

years. Back in the 1990s Steve Bolsin, a cardiothoracic anaesthetist, blew the whistle on the excess deaths among children undergoing cardiac surgery in Bristol, and spoke out about the quality of surgical care there. His life was made hell and he had to emigrate.

This was widely reported at the time, but it's 30 years on and nothing has changed. The blame should not be placed solely on "managers", however, when the person with the most influence in handling cases will be the medical director. We need to deal with a culture in which those doctors who have the closest relationships with the medical director can become beyond criticism. The farce that constitutes revalidation has shown itself to be unfit for purpose, and the profession must put its house in order before others have to.

Dr Jenny Jessop
Doncaster, South Yorkshire

SIR – The NHS might benefit from adopting the methods used by the

aviation industry to create a safety-oriented culture in which those reporting concerns or human errors are encouraged and protected.

Several highly secure, scaleable, web-based safety management systems are readily available, and would allow NHS staff to report concerns via a smartphone app. Those who wished to remain anonymous could choose to do so – to the point that even the system administrators could not identify them.

Such a system would empower front-line staff by making an indelible record of each report filed, along with any management response, while at the same time building an informed analysis of organisational risks.

Will Curtis
Raydon, Suffolk

SIR – Might we hear the views of Amanda Pritchard, chief executive of the NHS, on this serious subject?

Martin Price
Christchurch, Dorset

Welby's knighthood

SIR – Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been knighted (report, May 15) – yet he has led the faith of which the King is "defender" into terminal decline. Parish churches are closing, congregations are voting with their feet, priests are overworked and diocesan management is top-heavy.

Sir Justin was absent during the pandemic. His leadership of the Church of England has been woeful. However, he turned out to be the man on whom the highest honour for someone in his position fell – officiating at a monarch's funeral and coronation. These duties he carried off well, but his reward should be nothing more than the humble satisfaction of having got something right. His knighthood reinforces the widely held belief that the honours system too often rewards people for simply doing the job they are paid to do.

Dr Michael A Fopp
Soulbury, Buckinghamshire

Cutting data red tape

SIR – I was pleased to see you examine the role that data plays in all of our lives with your article. "How one man and a bottle of wine exposed the problem with GDPR" (telegraph.co.uk, May 13). However, it was disappointing that there was no mention of the concrete steps this Government is taking to liberate ordinary people from unnecessary GDPR-related red tape.

Our Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, which is passing through the Lords now, will simplify the rules, reduce the burdens on small businesses and ultimately help us grow the economy via better access to data.

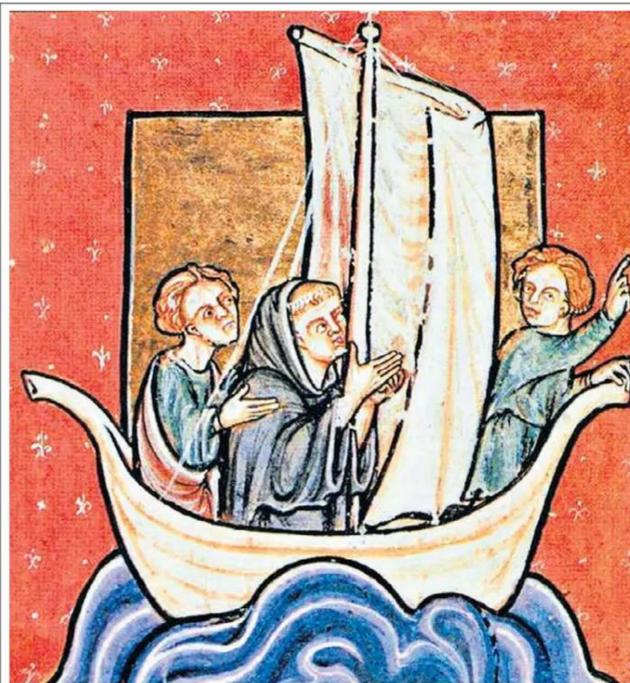
Eighty-five per cent of British businesses handle some form of digital data. We know we need to get this right, so they can propel our economy forward. The Bill is our plan to do just that – applying common sense to Britain's already high standards of data protection and privacy in order to cut out unnecessary paperwork and free people and businesses up to do what they're best at.

Viscount Camrose (Con)
Minister for AI and intellectual property
London, SW1

Cashless cricket

SIR – I went to watch a cricket match involving my grandson, who was captaining his side. When I asked him if he'd won the toss, he replied: "Both umpires forgot to bring a coin, so we played rock, paper, scissors." Could this catch on in first-class cricket?

Paul A James
Harpenden, Hertfordshire



An illustration from a 12th-century version of *The Life of St Cuthbert (720)* by Bede

The misguided cancelling of the Anglo-Saxons

SIR – With regard to David Abulafia's article on the importance of Anglo-Saxon culture to England's history ("'Anglo-Saxon' isn't racist. It's a source of English pride", Comment, May 11), some years ago my GP practice was updating its records, which meant asking my ethnicity

out of a long list which included Welsh, Scottish and Irish, but no English.

Indignant, I said I was native Anglo-Saxon, which the typist entered as "British mixed-race".
Alan Mordey
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

How to encourage more responsible cycling

SIR – Sir Iain Duncan Smith's move to punish "killer cyclists" (report, May 15) may sound fine, but it is putting the cart before the horse. Attempts to control the catalogue of transgressions by cyclists may be neglected because "we now convict killer cyclists – problem solved".

There is an urgent need for cyclists to be required to have speedometers fitted, carry simple identification and be insured. If such measures were introduced, encouraging observance of the rules of the road and categorising pedal cyclists along with drivers, this would bring sanity to the vexed relationship between road users, with all cyclists becoming legally responsible for their actions.

Peter Ellis
Motttram St Andrew, Cheshire

SIR – There has been a lot of negative publicity about cycling recently, including calls from some for bicycle-riders to pay road tax. I am a cyclist but also have two motor vehicles on which I pay this tax.

When I am riding a bicycle rather than driving a car, I am not wearing out the road. It would therefore seem reasonable to be paid to ride a bicycle. This could be achieved by increasing road tax for cars and having a negative road tax for bicycles, whereby you are paid annually for each bicycle registered.

Registering and testing a bicycle to ensure it is roadworthy – something similar to an MOT – could be a good idea, however.

Rob Rawlinson
Matlock, Derbyshire

Don't ignore the real threat of the WHO pandemic treaty

It won't force lockdowns on to the public, but it will impose new international law obligations on Britain

DAVID FROST



The crunch is coming. Later this month, global health ministers will decide in Geneva whether to endorse the proposed new World Health Organisation (WHO) pandemic treaty. This treaty actually stems from a British initiative by the then-prime minister Boris Johnson in March 2021. In a joint article with other leaders, he argued that the world needed a more coordinated approach to managing pandemics in future.

Sadly, since then the Government has never set out its actual negotiating objectives. This was a mistake. When I was leading the Brexit negotiations, despite the chaos of the first wave of Covid, we still made sure that we published, in a public document, clear aims for our talks, because we knew that this would help sustain confidence when difficult moments arrived.

The failure to do this on the pandemic treaty has unfortunately created suspicion about what the Government is really trying to do and what it is willing to defend – all the

more so as the conclusion approaches. That's why the lead minister, Andrew Stephenson MP, was reluctantly forced to the House of Commons on Tuesday.

So are we right to be concerned? Yes – but not always for the reasons you will hear if you follow the debate on the treaty. Some commentary is too alarmist. There isn't a plot to impose vaccines and compel lockdowns. Indeed, the current draft makes clear that the WHO has no authority to alter domestic laws or "ban or accept travellers, impose vaccination mandates or therapeutic or diagnostic measures, or implement lockdowns".

That is welcome. But it is also exactly why it is not reassuring when ministers say, as Stephenson did this week, that "this Government will only sign up to measures that respect our national sovereignty". That's not really in doubt. The risk lies elsewhere.

It lies in the actual point of the treaty: the creation of a new system of pandemic management under the WHO authority and binding under international law. The director general of the WHO, Dr Tedros, can declare the existence of a pandemic. Member states take on an obligation to cooperate with the WHO "to the fullest extent possible", to share information and "pandemic-related health products", to establish a supply chain network, and much more – and of course to fund it. This is all new.

Now it is true that agreeing to this in a treaty does not give away British sovereignty. That's because in our constitutional system treaties cannot

change our domestic law unless Parliament specifically agrees – as it did on the EU exit treaties. Parliament can always refuse to implement an international legal obligation, and governments can always act contrary to international law.

How easy that is in practice – that is, not easy at all – we have discovered in the past few years. First with the UK Internal Market Bill, then the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, and now with the Rwanda saga, the Government has either shied away from breaking international law or been blocked from doing so by its own backbenchers.

And that is the problem with this treaty, too. Our sovereignty is not formally affected, but we are taking on an international law obligation to work with the WHO system. When the next pandemic comes, government lawyers, MPs, and commentators will say "you must do what the WHO says, or you are breaking international law". A robust government can ignore this, but only if it doesn't mind being called a "rogue state". Consider all the opprobrium poured on Sweden during the pandemic. Can we really be confident that our ministers, of any party, would be as tough as they were?

This would matter less if we could be confident of the neutrality and competence of the WHO. In fact we can be confident of no such thing: it has a track record of incompetence, poor decision-making, and politicised conduct, not surprising considering the extent of China's influence. Giving it a blank cheque is highly risky.

Labour's pledges

SIR – Can we all agree that promises made by any political party without an explanation of how success can be measured are meaningless ("I'm no Blair 'copycat'" insists Starmer as he unveils election pledges", report, telegraph.co.uk, May 16)?

The interview with Pat McFadden, the shadow chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, on the *Today* programme yesterday morning revealed in stark terms the absence of rigorous planning in favour of soundbites.

Chris Davies
Woking, Surrey

SIR – Sir Keir Starmer promises that he will keep taxes "as low as possible". This statement is meaningless because it doesn't say that he won't increase taxes. He may put them up and repeat that they are now "as low as possible".

Dr Paul Veale
Bath, Somerset

SIR – We have been here before: vote Labour for a glimpse of paradise and end up bankrupt. Promises, promises – even worse than the current Tories.

Remember the Thatcher era, with Reagan and Gorbachev and a more stable and peaceful world? The self-serving unions were put in their place, and prosperity ruled. Those were the days. Labour would also like to put the clock back – but to the 1970s.

What does the future hold, with two incompetent parties striving to take over? What is the sane alternative?

Michael Samson
Worthing, West Sussex

Solar farming

SIR – Tom Lancaster (Letters, May 16) attempts to reassure us that solar farms pose little threat as they will only cover 0.5 per cent of English farmland. Yet what matters is the quality of the land on which these farms are being built.

I understand why landowners are attracted to the huge rents offered by solar companies, as farming gets little support from the Government.

Mr Lancaster goes on to link food production, wetter winters and climate change, saying that renewable energy is the answer. Does he seriously believe that 70 gigawatts of solar capacity will prevent wet winters?

David Watson
Beccles, Suffolk

SIR – The Government must surely understand that only the worst land, which cannot be profitably farmed, should be permitted to house solar panels. We can help combat global warming by growing trees on the bad land, but not on the roofs of buildings, where the panels ought to be.

Gillian Courage
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Courteous call

SIR – This week, when speaking to a call-handler for a large company, I was somewhat baffled to be addressed as "sir" (Letters, May 16). He was such a helpful young man, however, that I hadn't the heart to disabuse him. Even when I had given him my Christian name, I remained "sir".

Courtesy of a kind, I suppose.

Jane Moth
Stone, Staffordshire

SIR – I have twice recently been upbraided in French, first by a female supermarket employee and again by a male bus driver in Paris. Each time I had failed to greet them with "Bonjour" when asking for assistance.

With knuckles rapped, apologies made, advice received, profuse thanks given, all followed by a cordial farewell – using *monsieur* and *madame* where necessary – civility was restored.

Simeon Hudson-Evans
Weston-sub-Edge, Gloucestershire

That is why we need the Government to show caution. Andrew Stephenson rightly said in Parliament that "the current text is not acceptable to us. Therefore, unless the current text is changed and refined, we will not be signing up to it".

That current text is public. So, if the UK signs up anyway, we will be able to see what changed, and the Government can then come to Parliament and explain why it improved it. It must also provide a proper vote in Parliament, a point on which it was very evasive this week.

But no foreseeable alterations will change the fact that we are taking on an open-ended international law obligation to work with the WHO. If it signs up, the Government must explain to Parliament how it intends to manage this. That won't be straightforward – and in any case it is in all likelihood leaving these arrangements to a Labour administration, which will have very different concerns.

So it's surely best to be cautious. This treaty has been rushed. Any text will be cobbled together and not properly thought through. Nothing requires us to sign it and nothing will happen if we don't. Pause for thought, argue for a wider delay, think it through properly. And don't sign till it's right.



FOLLOW David Frost on Twitter @DavidGHFrost; READ MORE at telegraph.co.uk/opinion

Puzzles, Mind Games & Telegraph Toughie



KAKURO

To solve kakuro you must enter a number between 1 and 9 in the empty squares without repeating a digit. The clues are the numbers on the black squares and are the sum of the solution numbers. The clue pointers indicate the direction of the answers. A block of two squares with a clue of 3 will solve as 2,1 and a 5 will produce 4,1 or 2,3. A 4 can only be 1,3, never 2,2. *Solution on Monday.*

DIABOLICAL NO 5023

CODEWORDS

Numbers are substituted for letters in this crossword grid. Use the letters already supplied in the key grid as clues, which will let you work out more letters. *Solution for the first Codewords tomorrow and the second on Monday.*

For today's right-hand codewords solutions call 0905 757 0131. For up to five extra letter clues call 0905 757 0130 or text DTCCODE (leaving no spaces) to 64343. Calls cost £1 per minute, plus network access charge, texts cost £1, plus network access charge. You must be 18 or over and have the bill payer's permission. Services open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. Helpline 0333 202 3390.

Notes

NO 3272
ELGAR

- Across**
- Much grandfatherly love, Ruby, from Fred Xx (10)
 - Castles on king's side, capturing pawns, mate (4)
 - Bachelor grandpa and the like a potential source of upset (6,4)
 - Domestic servant at last provided folio (4)
 - All lines might be hosiery were grand to be invested (5-2-5)
 - Songs by Mendelssohn one conducts in the auditorium (6)
 - Ringing the chap with the map? (8)
 - Slip by so easily, perhaps (8)
 - My work was on war and the point of writing about that in verse (6)
 - Enchanting chap takes auxiliary diplomat on first trip (6,6)
 - Something for carrying money up to work (4)
 - Another helping of dessert here? I'd be unwise... (4,4,2)
 - ...here's trolley, there's trifle (or tart) and beware staff carrying others... (4)
 - ...that one adult's leaving to eat 80 per cent of fruit dessert (10)
- Down**
- Gold in reserve rarely in spherical form (4)
 - Aussie can bar northern youngster (4)
 - Drafted in by musical group, axeman is still in the dark (4,3,5)
 - Wretched individual now a cult figure? (6)
 - Outside of Brian, this Python could be incredible (4,4)
 - Busy loo in which a supporter joins end of queue (7,3)
 - Bored Elgar is maybe making an effort (10)
 - Requirement of jilted bride at altar what crowded church affords? (8-4)
 - Hand-measuring device a complete disaster, finally scrapped (10)
 - Palace so short, not entirely short of canvas (10)
 - Fancy lovely securing mariner's heart after Bluto's exit? (5,3)
 - Parson visiting Big Apple with rampant dragon (6)
 - A small way to promote energy and verve (4)
 - Repost egotist's favourite online image (4)

KILLER SUDOKU

Your clues are the caged numbers that represent the sum of the numbers within the cage. As in standard sudoku, each 3 x 3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9. *Solution on Monday.*

DIABOLICAL

SUDOKU

To solve this puzzle each 3 x 3 box, each row and also each column must contain all the numbers from 1 to 9. There are numerous strategies to help you solve sudoku. *Regular solution tomorrow. Tough solution on Sunday.*

REGULAR NO 6593

9	2	7		3				
		4		2				
8	6			1	2			
6					7	3		
			3	8				
5	3					6		
	9	7			4	1		
		1			8			
			8	5	7	3		

TOUGH NO 6593

		7	9			1	5	
6	9			7				
	3							8
	7		6	1	2			
5								7
			5	4	7		2	
3							1	
				2				
5	8			3	7			

Sudoku Solution For today's tough sudoku solution call 0905 757 0136. Calls cost £1 per minute, plus network access charge. You must be 18 or over and have the bill payer's permission. Services open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. Helpline 0333 202 3390.

PANAGRAM

Create words of four letters or more, always using the centre letter. Proper nouns and plurals are not allowed, and you can only use each letter once per word. Can you find the nine-letter Panagram? *Solution on Monday.*

Up to 5 words - Word Finder, 6 - Wordsmith, 12 - Word Wizard, 19 - Word Master, 25 - Word Genius, 32 - Word Perfect

Toughie No 3271

Help with clues
Single clues 0905 757 0126. All Across/Down clues 0905 757 0127. Calls cost £1/minute, plus network access charge. You must be 18 or over and have the bill payer's permission. Service open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. Helpline 0333 2023390.

ANAGRAMS

Each of the anagrams below spells out the name of a baked item. *Solution on Monday.*

- FOCAL SUIT** -----
OSCAR'S TIN -----
BADGER REIGN -----

MIND GYM

NO 4325

Start on the left with the given number and work your way across following the instructions in each cell. Target time: 30 seconds. *Solution below.*

54	+9	x7.5	TRIPLE IT	-51	3/4 OF THIS	+7	X BY ITSELF	+73	HALVE IT	ANSWER
78	12/13 OF THIS	4/9 OF THIS	x6.75	+8	+94	√	x17	TRIPLE IT	-175	ANSWER
14	x11	TRIPLE IT	-228	+13	X BY ITSELF	7/12 OF THIS	+387	√	2/3 OF THIS	ANSWER

TRAIN TRACKS

Lay down tracks to allow a train to travel from A to B. Only use straight and curved rails and the track cannot cross itself. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each column and row. *Solution on Monday.*

MINI SUDOKU

Fill in the grid in such a way that every row and column and every 2 x 3 box contains the numbers 1-6. *Solution on Monday.*

TOUGH NO 4092

2					
		3		2	
		6			3
5			1		
	6		2		
					4

PLUSWORD

NO 726

Solve the crossword, then use letters in the shaded squares to complete the additional PlusWord. A letter in a green square appears in the same column in the PlusWord as it does in the crossword; a letter in a yellow square appears in the PlusWord, but in a different column than it does in the crossword. There is only one possible answer for the PlusWord; it may be that the PlusWord contains letters that aren't found in the crossword, but it can always be worked out logically without guessing. *Solution on Monday.*

Across

- Church topper
- Close, but no ___
- Absolutely shattered
- Pharmacy chain
- Animal of the weasel family

Down

- Signs of healing?
- Test TV episode
- Ice house
- Indian accompaniment
- ___ & Young, accountancy company

Play PlusWord for free online at telegraph.co.uk/pw or scan the QR code

WORD LADDER

Change just one letter to go from the top word to the bottom word. Each step must be a valid word and you cannot change the order of the letters. There are clues below for each rung, but they are not in order. For an extra challenge, try to complete the puzzle without using the clues. *Solution on Monday.*

- HEW, RING, TOUCH, DEAD, NOTIFY, DEED

The Telegraph PUZZLES

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THE SOLUTIONS

Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku Regular and Tough No 6592

4	7	9	1	8	5	2	6	3
8	2	1	3	6	4	9	7	5
6	3	5	7	9	2	1	8	4
3	4	2	9	7	8	5	1	6
5	6	8	4	1	3	7	9	2
9	1	7	2	5	6	4	3	8
7	5	3	6	2	1	8	4	9
1	8	4	5	3	9	6	2	7
2	9	6	8	4	7	3	5	1

PlusWord No 725

S	T	R	A	P
L	I	E	G	E
E	A	G	E	R
D	R	A	N	K
S	A	L	T	Y

Killer Sudoku

9	7	6	1	5	2	8	4	3
1	3	5	8	4	6	2	9	7
4	8	2	7	3	9	5	1	6
2	1	7	4	6	8	3	5	9
8	5	9	3	7	1	6	2	4
6	4	3	2	9	5	1	7	8
5	9	1	6	8	7	4	3	2
3	2	8	9	1	4	7	6	5
7	6	4	5	2	3	9	8	1

Mini Sudoku No 4091

6	5	2	3	1	4
1	4	3	2	6	5
4	2	1	6	5	3
5	3	6	1	4	2
2	1	5	4	3	6
3	6	4	5	2	1

Word Ladder: Bath, path, pate, pale, pall, wall, well.

Anagrams: 1. Suitcase 2. Canister 3. Tea caddy.

Panagram: Aubergine, eugenia, beguine, auberge, urbane, unbar, ruing, nubia, inure, enure, burin, buran, begun, auger, argue, urge, uraa, rung, rune, ruin, gurn, guar, guan, grub, genu, gaur, burn, burg, bung, buna, beau, ague.

Today's Mind Gym
Beginner: 77 Intermediate: 386 Advanced: 16

Codewords 1 and 2

O	K	T	P	E	A	N	X	H	Y	V	C		
R	W	Z	L	D	U	B	I	F	G	S	M		
Y	Z	F	W	U	S	B	J	R	P	C	O	X	
K	I	M	D	T	L	O	H	N	I	V	A	E	G

Kakuro No 5022

	1	2	8	4	3		2	9	
2	7	1	4	3	6		1	2	
1	3					2	1	5	4
6	9		2	1			9	5	7
			5	3		9	8		
1	9	6		5	8		9	5	
4	5	2	3	1			8	9	
9	7		7	3	9	5	6	8	
3	8		1	2	6	3	5		

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Business



MARKETS		CURRENCIES		COMMODITIES											
FTSE 100 8438.65 -7.15 (-0.08pc)	BIGGEST RISER BT Group 132½sp +19½ (+17.19pc)	BIGGEST FALLER Sage Group 1084½p -113 (-9.44pc)	DOW JONES 39869.38 -38.62 (-0.10pc)	FTSE 250 20822.84 +47.21 (+0.23pc)	FTSE All Share 4594.70 -2.01 (-0.04pc)	FTSE All Share Yield 3.52 -0.02	FTSE Eurotop 100 4116.62 -15.10 (-0.37pc)	Nikkei 225 38920.26 +534.53 (+1.39pc)	EURO STOXX 50 5072.45 -28.45 (-0.56pc)	S&P 500 5297.10 -11.05 (-0.21pc)	Nasdaq 16698.32 -44.07 (-0.26pc)	£\$ Rate 1.2669 Change +0.20c	£€ Rate 1.1655 Change +0.03c	GOLD \$2377.38 (£1877) -9.79 (-0.41pc)	BRENT CRUDE \$83.27 (July) +0.52 (+0.63pc)
Page 24				Page 24		Page 24		Page 24		Page 24		Page 24		Page 24	

US oil giant to quit North Sea after 55 years

Chevron says departure is not linked to Chancellor's refusal to scrap windfall tax on industry profits

By Jonathan Leake

THE US oil giant Chevron has announced it will quit the North Sea after 55 years, the day after Jeremy Hunt turned down industry pleas for support at a private meeting.

Chevron said that it had decided to leave the region following a review of global operations to determine "whether assets are strategic and competitive for future capital". The company insisted this was not connected to Britain's tax regime.

It came a day after Mr Hunt rejected calls for respite from a windfall levy that has driven up the tax on oil profits to 75pc. Industry leaders told Mr Hunt there was "one last chance" to halt a "catastrophic" decline in investment in UK waters that risks reducing oil and gas output by at least 50pc by 2030.

However, the Chancellor is understood to have made no promises to change tack - claiming that Labour's threats to increase the windfall tax by another 3pc and to cut investment allowances should it win the election were the key deterrent to investors.

The meeting was attended by most of the North Sea's major operators, including Shell, BP, Harbour Energy and Ithaca Energy. Chevron was not in the room, but was briefed on the outcome by industry body Offshore Energies UK.

The company claimed the timing was coincidental. A spokesman said: "Chevron's announcement is not related to recent announcements relating to the UK windfall tax. The announcement relates to assessing a global portfolio that provides best shareholder return."

Chevron is the world's third largest oil company and is one of the last major players still in the North Sea. Exxon left in 2021 and others, such as Shell and BP, have sold off many of their assets.

The company is to sell its 19.4pc stake in the Clair Field, which is 50 miles off the coast of Shetland and is the largest in UK waters with an estimated 8bn barrels of oil. It will also dispose of associated assets including interests in the

Sullom Voe terminal, the Ninian pipeline and the Shetland Island regional gas export pipeline.

The deal is expected to raise between \$800m (£630m) and \$1bn once a buyer is found. Chevron was among the first oil companies to drill in the North Sea in the 1960s, but has since pulled out of exploration and production after off-loading its drilling assets in 2019.

Analysts said that the North Sea's output is already in decline because the biggest oil and gas fields have been drained - so finding and extracting what remains is already becoming more expensive. They warn that burdening the industry with extra taxes is bound to be a deterrent to further investment, pointing to a similar cutback by Harbour Energy, the UK's biggest oil and gas producer, which has halted all North Sea investment.

Chris Wheaton, an analyst at Stifel, published a new analysis of the North Sea's prospects on Wednesday, entitled "Will the last energy company to leave the North Sea please turn off the lights".

It warned that windfall taxes risk accelerating the decline of North Sea oil and gas production so fast that output will fall by up to 70pc by 2030, leaving the nation reliant on imports.

Criticising the windfall tax, and Labour's plans to increase it, he said: "Loss of investment means loss of jobs and skills for the energy transition."

Mr Wheaton suggested 100,000 of the 200,000 jobs linked to the industry were at risk of disappearing by 2029, with the UK importing 80pc of its gas before the decade is out.

It coincides with warnings that wildfires in Alberta, Canada, are so close to the region's key oil sands that they could halt production of 2m barrels of oil a day. That would equate to 2.6pc of global oil production - enough to have an immediate effect on world oil prices.

A government spokesman said: "No one is backing the oil and gas industry more than the government. Our annual licensing rounds are supporting around 200,000 jobs, giving them certainty to invest and unlocking billions in tax for our own transition to clean energy."

"The temporary windfall tax on oil and gas firms encourages investment to create jobs and grow the economy - the more investment they make the less tax they will pay."



Dale Vince has said using taxpayers' money to fund Hinkley Point C is wrong because nuclear technology is 'hugely expensive'

Labour donor joins campaign to stop Hinkley nuclear plant

By Jonathan Leake

MILLIONAIRE Labour donor Dale Vince has joined a campaign to block Britain's biggest nuclear power station project.

The entrepreneur, who founded green energy company Ecotricity, has emerged as a patron of Stop Hinkley after accusing the Government of wasting billions of pounds.

He said the decision to use taxpayer money to fund Hinkley Point C, which is under construction in Somerset, was flawed because nuclear technology is "hugely expensive and slow to develop".

His comments will be sure to raise questions for Ed Miliband, Labour's shadow energy secretary who has vowed to invest in nuclear energy.

The Opposition has accepted around £1.5m in donations over the past decade from Mr Vince, who severed ties with Just Stop Oil last year as part of his commitment to Labour.

The costs surrounding Hinkley have already risen to £46bn, compared to £18bn when it was commissioned a decade ago, making it one of the UK's most expensive infrastructure projects ever.

Mr Vince said: "I'm really pleased to be a patron of the Stop Hinkley campaign which is working to stop the Government wasting billions of taxpayers' money on a technology which is hugely expensive and slow to develop."

The significance of a key green industrialist joining a campaign against nuclear, which the Government has promoted as a green technology, will not be lost on ministers or Mr Miliband.

Mr Vince founded Ecotricity in 1996, to supply customers with 100pc renewable electricity, excluding nuclear.

In 2004, he was awarded an OBE for services to the environment and was appointed the UN Ambassador for Climate Change in 2019.

Mr Vince has argued that nuclear power "soaks up huge amounts of investment which could be better spent on renewable solutions".

He has also warned that nuclear power stations will face a fuel crisis because global demand for uranium is growing faster than supplies: "The UK has no sources of uranium [fuel] and by 2050 there will be a global shortage."

However, Mr Vince has come under increasing scrutiny in recent months. Richard Holden, Conservative Party chairman, said last week: "With Just Stop Oil's backer helping to shape Sir Keir's energy policy, it is terrifying to think this is his guiding philosophy."

BT enjoys best day since dotcom boom

By James Warrington

BT ENJOYED its best day on the stock market since the dotcom boom after its first woman boss pledged to cut £3bn of costs and reduce heavy investment in broadband upgrades.

Allison Kirkby, who took over as chief executive in February, vowed to make extra savings by the end of 2029 after the company hit a previous target a year ahead of schedule.

BT had reached an "inflection point", she said, as it crests the peak of multibillion-pound annual spending on its new full-fibre broadband network. The burden - expected to total £15bn - has weighed heavily on its shares, which have traded close to pandemic lows in

recent weeks. Following Ms Kirkby's maiden full-year results yesterday, which also included a dividend boost, the shares surged as much as 18pc. It was the biggest intra-day rise since the height of the dotcom mania in 2000.

The upswing was a blow to short sellers, who have placed substantial bets against BT in the belief that Ms Kirkby will struggle to tackle a

long-standing malaise in its business divisions and face damaging market share losses in broadband as rivals build their own networks.

This week it emerged that several major investors, including hedge funds AKO Capital and Kintbury Capital as well as Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and BlackRock Investment Management, have placed a record £300m in positions that would profit from falls in BT's share price.

Ms Kirkby, a 56-year-old Glaswegian who entered the telecoms sector after 20 years at Procter & Gamble, hit back with plans to double the company's cash flow to £3bn by the end of the decade and raised the full year payout to shareholders by 3.9pc to 8p per share.

Badenoch to meet Royal Mail suitor

By James Warrington

KEMI BADENOCH is to meet the Czech billionaire plotting a £3.5bn takeover of Royal Mail as she seeks assurances over the sale of a key British asset to a foreign investor.

The Business Secretary will call a meeting with Daniel Kretinsky to set out her expectations should he make a firm offer. Mr Kretinsky, nicknamed the "Czech sphinx", has put forward a possible £3.5bn bid for the 500-year-old postal service, in which he is already the largest shareholder.

The board of parent company International Distributions Services (IDS), which rejected an earlier approach, has said it is minded to accept the improved

offer. Mr Kretinsky now has until 5pm on May 29 to make a firm bid.

However, any deal will be subject to undertakings from Mr Kretinsky to both Royal Mail and ministers.

The tycoon has agreed to maintain Saturday deliveries for first-class letters and keep the one-price-goes-anywhere service. He has also vowed to maintain employees' current rights, protect the Royal Mail brand and keep the company's headquarters and tax base in the UK.

Ministers may call for guarantees that the Czech sphinx will not break up the business. His swoop has sparked speculation he could split off the profitable GLS parcels business from the struggling letters division and

merge it with PostNL, in which he also owns a major stake.

Mr Seidenberg is also understood to have lobbied for reform of Royal Mail's universal service obligation (USO).

The company has submitted proposals that would see second class letters delivered just three times a week, while the six-day service would be maintained for first class post.

Ofcom is due to provide an update on its USO consultation in the summer.

The offer from Mr Kretinsky's EP Group valued IDS at 370p per share and is an increase of almost 16pc on its previous 320p per share approach, which was rejected.

Royal Mail's board said it will continue discussions with EP Group.

EY manager 'sacked for honeymoon'

By Adam Mawardi

EY IS being sued by a former employee who claims he was sacked by the "big four" accountant after taking a holiday after his wedding.

Konrad Jeczewski, a former EY business consulting manager, has filed a legal claim against the company's Australian arm after allegedly being made redundant two days after returning from his honeymoon. The

Melbourne-based accountant also claimed he was let go after complaining about 80-hour working weeks and going off sick with the flu.

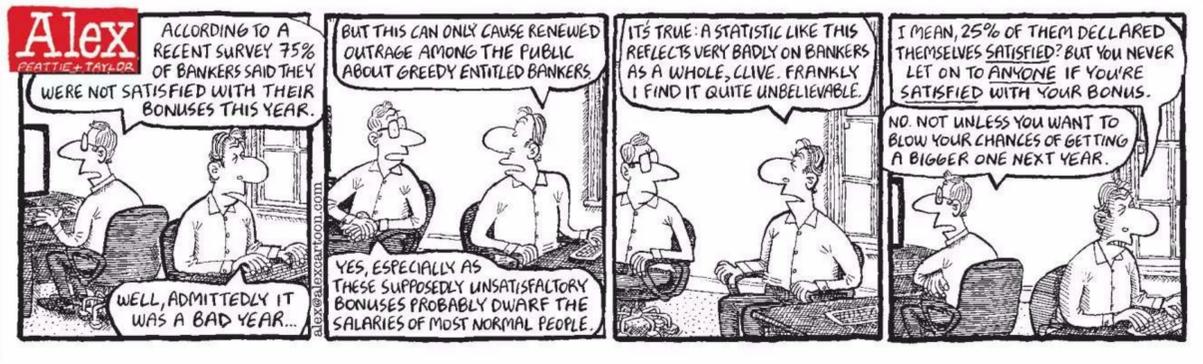
EY, which operates as a global network of independent member firms, has denied any wrongdoing.

The former employee was among the 230 redundancies made across EY Oceania last November in response to a slowdown in the consulting sector. An EY spokesman

told the *Australian Financial Review*: "These difficult decisions were managed in a structured, comprehensive process that ensured fair, equitable and procedurally correct outcomes."

However, Mr Jeczewski has since complained that he was the only selected from six managers in EY's finance consulting team in Melbourne.

An EY spokesman said: "EY refutes all allegations."



All aboard in race to build new Eurostar trains

Alstom and Siemens face off in battle to win £2bn rolling stock contract, reports *Christopher Jasper*

Rival train makers Alstom and Siemens are expected to be the frontrunners as bidding opens for a £2bn order from Eurostar in a rerun of a battle that ended in legal action more than a decade ago.

The cross-border operator has announced plans to issue a tender for 50 trains as it seeks to satisfy increasing demand on its existing Channel routes and services to the French Riviera and Alpine ski resorts – and launch others within a network that links London, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne.

The contract for more than 700 rail cars will be one of the biggest this decade for high-speed trains and is expected to draw interest from manufacturers such as CAF, of Spain, and Japan's Hitachi, a bullet-train manufacturer that has its main European train plant at Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham. It has said it will look at the tender when it is issued.

At the heart of the contest, though, will be the renewed confrontation between Paris-based Alstom and Germany's Siemens. Alstom provided Eurostar's original fleet, which was based on France's TGV intercity high-speed rail service, when services through the Channel Tunnel began 30 years ago.

However, the French company lost out to Siemens' Velaro rolling stock for 2010's follow-on contract. The decision by Eurostar – part of French state rail operator SNCF – represented a setback for Alstom as it allowed its German rival to break into the French high-speed market for the first time.

Alstom responded with legal action, arguing that the Velaro's power system, which uses motors installed under the carriages, breaches safety rules for operations in the tunnel. It argued that a requirement to be able to evacuate passengers through either end of the train in the event of fire could be met only by trains hauled by locomotive, such as its TGV.

The initial case was thrown out and though Alstom sought to pursue its claim, it dropped the action in 2012.

Eurostar plans to retain all of its Siemens trains in the coming years while retiring the last of its Alstom models. It means the German manufacturer may have an advantage when it bids for the new contract, though an industry insider said a second award to a foreign firm would be tough for France to swallow.

A Eurostar spokesman said the company was "very open to pitches and in multiple discussions". The company is also keen to purchase



trains that can operate across its entire network. This was expanded last year after a merger with Thalys, also owned by SNCF, which added services between Paris and Brussels and beyond into Germany. That may open the tender up to further bidders.

A formal request for proposals will be issued later this year and a manufacturer selected towards the end of 2025, Eurostar said.

Alstom, which builds TGV trains at a plant in La Rochelle, declined to comment, while Munich-based Siemens said it intends to bid.

A spokesman for Siemens Mobility said: "We welcome this announcement given how much passengers love our Velaro e320 trains, and we are eager to put in a competitive offer to build the next generation of these iconic trains."

Eurostar is making the commitment to expand its fleet as it seeks to attract

more than 30m passengers a year by the end of the decade, 50pc more than it transported in 2023.

Following the Thalys merger, dubbed Project Green Speed, Eurostar is aiming to expand operations to capture increased demand for train travel as airlines come under pressure to scrap short European routes.

The expansion will help Eurostar defend itself against new entrants, with five companies, including Virgin Group, reportedly interested in launching Channel Tunnel services. Getlink, which operates the tunnel, says its infrastructure could accommodate double the number of trains that run through it each day.

Eurostar's investment will increase the company's overall fleet by 30pc, or 16 trains, to 67, when older models are retired. The first trains from the new order are expected to enter service in

the early 2030s. Gwendoline Cazenave, Eurostar's chief executive, said: "Investing in up to 50 new trains will provide more capacity and give customers something really special, offering a cutting-edge experience in terms of comfort, accessibility and sustainability."

'Investing in up to 50 new trains will provide more capacity, giving customers something really special'

The company expects to appoint a designer to create a new cabin interior this year and will select an option in 2026. Customers and staff will be consulted as part of that process.

The new trains will also be required to use less energy than the current

fleet. Eurostar set out its plans yesterday after revealing that annual revenue surpassed £2bn (£1.7bn) for the first time last year as earnings increased 8pc to £423m. The company also refinanced €964m of debt last month.

News of the Eurostar tender comes a day after Southeastern, a UK train operator, said it expected to order up to 640 electric rail cars, holding out the prospect of new work for Alstom's Derby plant, which had been threatened with closure because of a dearth of new work.

Should the contract go to Alstom, the future of its Litchurch Lane site would be guaranteed into next decade. However, Siemens, which would build the trains at its new plant in Goole, East Yorkshire, is also interested.

Litchurch Lane's immediate future is expected to be safeguarded by a

On track
Cross-border service

50

New trains Eurostar plans to order

£2bn

Value of the contract, with Alstom, Siemens, Hitachi and CAF all expected to be interested

30m

Passengers Eurostar hopes to carry each year by the end of the decade, 50pc more than today

5

Rivals seeking to launch competing services through the Channel tunnel, including Virgin Group

£2bn

Eurostar's revenues last year

A Eurostar train arriving at Rotterdam Central Station. The operator is looking to expand its routes

90-carriage deal to supply trains for London's Elizabeth Line, formerly the Crossrail project, until work to build trains for the High Speed 2 line begins in 2026.

Negotiations with the Department for Transport and Transport for London are in their final stages and the contract is expected to be signed by the end of this month.

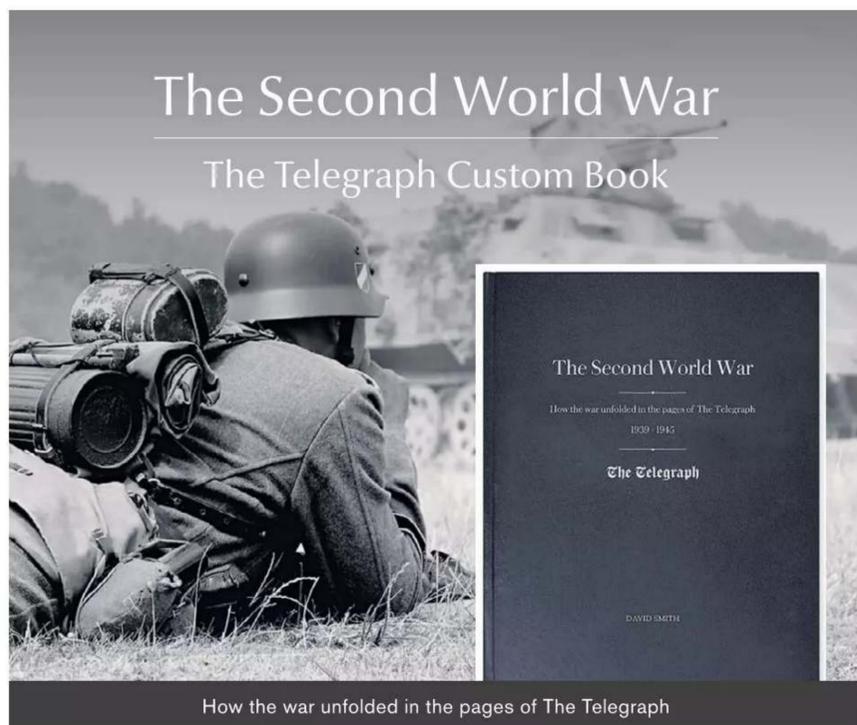
Alstom completed existing orders in Derby in March and had been planning to open redundancy talks.

The DfT said separately yesterday that a consultation was under way to lower the minimum age requirement for UK train drivers to 18 from 20 as early as this summer amid fears that a wave of retirements create a shortage that would impact services.

The average age of train drivers is 48 and many are planning to retire within the next five years.

READER SOLUTIONS BY TELEGRAPH MEDIA GROUP

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At 11.15am on September 3, 1939, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Germany. So began the deadliest conflict in history. The Daily Telegraph reported on the Second World War with typical tenacity, as you will see from the pages of the newspaper reproduced in this book. Covering all the major events from 1939 to 1945, the book offers a blow by blow account as observed at the time.

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Stonewall to review list of top LGBT employers after backlash

By Adam Mawardi and Lucy Burton

STONEWALL is to review how it compiles its ranking of top LGBT employers, amid a backlash over the organisation's trans lobbying.

The LGBT+ charity is planning to review its Workplace Equality Index, which scores organisations based on Stonewall's opinion of their diversity and inclusion policies.

The index review is understood to be a routine procedure that happens every three years. However, Stonewall could face pressure to re-examine its scoring system after becoming embroiled in a toxic row over trans rights.

Stonewall's guidance on trans issues has faced intense scrutiny after last month's Cass Review warned there was a lack of established medical evidence for the use of puberty blockers to treat children who identified as trans.

The charity was a strong advocate for the use of puberty blockers in children, with Baroness Hunt of Bethnal Green,

Stonewall's former chief executive, previously advising schools to "shred" a research pack highlighting the dangers of the treatment. More than 10,000 people have signed a petition calling for Lady Hunt to lose her peerage since the publication of the Cass Review.

Companies wanting to be included

10,000

Signatures on a petition calling for Baroness Hunt, Stonewall's former chief executive, to lose her peerage

on Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index need to answer various questions about their inclusivity policies, which have in the past included whether private health insurance covers transition-related treatments.

Stonewall has come under fire over some of the advice it has given to organ-

isations eager for a place on the index, such as calling for them to replace the word mother with "parent who has given birth" to help boost their ranking.

The Welsh government, which appeared high on the list in 2020, deleted the term mother from its maternity policy in 2019.

Stonewall was meant to release its 2024 index as early as February, but has decided to delay the scores until the summer to coincide with Pride celebrations. The charity has told organisations that it will not open entries for the next LGBT league table until early 2025, with the next diversity index expected to be announced as late as 2026.

Set up in 1989 to fight a ban preventing the "promotion" of homosexuality by local authorities, Stonewall has been pivotal in lobbying Parliament and businesses on LGBT matters and equal rights. However, concern has been growing about its influence over HR policies amid doubts over the scientific basis for its guidance on trans issues.

It is too soon to cut interest rates, says Bank policymaker

By Tim Wallace

IT IS too soon to cut interest rates without more evidence that pay growth and inflation are under control, a Bank of England policymaker has warned.

Megan Greene, a member of the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), said unemployment has been surprisingly low for an economy that has just suffered a recession, while pay growth is still unusually high.

"There is a lot of uncertainty about how much inflation persistence is still in the system versus how much we have already squeezed out with our restrictive monetary policy stance," she said.

"For me, I would need to see more evidence of inflation persistence waning in line with my own expectations to think that a cut and a less restrictive policy stance would be warranted."

The MPC, led by Andrew Bailey, the Governor, raised interest rates from 0.1pc in December 2021 to 5.25pc last September, as they battled to bring down inflation. Economists expect inflation data for April, published next week, to show that consumer prices inflation has fallen back to around the 2pc target, down from its peak of 11.1pc

in October 2022. But Ms Greene, who joined the MPC last August, said that falling inflation was largely a result of declining energy prices.

These are in large part determined by international markets, which means it is not necessarily evidence that underlying inflationary pressures in the UK economy are back under control. Ms Greene said that unemployment has



Megan Greene said unemployment has been surprisingly low for an economy that has just suffered a recession

remained low despite the recession, and pay has kept rising in part because of "labour hoarding", as employers hold on to staff even when sales are low.

It came as the Dow Jones Industrial Average hit a record 40,000 yesterday.

It represented the blue-chip index's fastest 10,000-point climb, powered by strong quarterly results and rising bets of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve.

Britain 'turns from a country of spenders to nation of savers'

By Tim Wallace

THE cost of living crisis has shocked British families into saving an extra £54bn per year, according to economists at the Resolution Foundation.

Households are saving 6pc of their disposable incomes, a rate not seen for 30 years, aside from during the pandemic lockdowns.

This is four times the 1.5pc typically saved pre-Covid, the think tank said.

Prices have risen faster than wages since the start of the pandemic, but families have cut back spending hard in response, allowing them to put more away for a rainy day.

Energy use is down 11pc and food purchases are down 7pc, while the amount of household goods bought, such as appliances and crockery, has been slashed by almost one fifth.

James Smith, at the Resolution Foundation, said the experience of the past three years "has turned us from a nation of spenders to a nation of savers".

Over the same period families have cut their debts by £48bn, or £1,700 per household, the think tank said. However, more saving threatens to harm economic growth in the short term.

Succession drama grips Gucci owner as sales fail to make the cut

Investors are becoming fidgety as François-Henri Pinault's empire crumbles, writes *Hannah Boland*

As a stream of A-list celebrities took their seats in the basement of Tate Modern earlier this week for Gucci's latest cruise collection, executives appeared relaxed.

Seated next to his wife, Salma Hayek, François-Henri Pinault, the chief executive of Gucci owner Kering, "beamed confidently", the *Telegraph's* Lisa Armstrong wrote after the show.

Pinault and Gucci's 600 other guests, who included singers Debbie Harry and Dua Lipa and actress Demi Moore, had gathered to see the latest collection by Sabato De Sarno, the luxury brand's new creative director, in his first show outside of Milan.

After years of declining sales at Gucci, De Sarno has his work cut out in winning back customers. Last year, Kering revealed Gucci's revenue had slipped another 6pc to €9.9bn (£8.5bn). It recently said that it was expecting profits across its business to fall as much as 45pc in the first six months of the year, placing the lion's share of the blame at Gucci's door.

Increasingly, the poor performance is causing frustration among investors, who have seen the value of Pinault's empire crumble. Shares in Kering are down 57pc since their peak in August 2021, giving it a market value of €41bn.

It is a bitter pill for Pinault to swallow after Kering's biggest rival, LVMH, had a record year in 2023, propelling its valuation to almost €398bn and placing it only behind Novo Nordisk, the maker of the diabetes drug Ozempic, which is also used off-label for weight loss.

Pinault once said that Gucci might have "the same potential as Louis Vuitton over time." His reasoning? "Why not?" However, six years later, such confidence appears misplaced.

Some investors are even asking whether Pinault should pass the baton at his luxury empire and bring in fresh blood. "Performance at Kering has been lacklustre," says Neil Saunders of GlobalData. "As the latest quarterly numbers show there

Models present creations by Gucci during the Cruise Collection Fashion Show at Tate Modern in London this week, right; François-Henri Pinault, the chief executive of Gucci owner Kering, with his daughter Mathilde and son François Jr, below

are few signs of improvement. This does raise the question as to whether new leadership is needed."

Pinault inherited the luxury empire two decades ago after his father retired aged 64. Today, aged 61, he is chairman and chief executive of Kering, as well as president of its ultimate parent company Groupe Artémis.

Together, the Pinault family has a 42pc stake in Kering and control 59pc of its voting rights.

While Pinault has been adamant that he has not been training his children to succeed him, last month, he moved to bring the next generation into the fold, appointing François Jr, his 26-year-old son, as a director on the board of auctioneer Christie's.

The younger Pinault replaced his grandfather and Kering founder on the Christie's board. He is the eldest of Pinault's four children. For some time, he has been earmarked as the natural heir, appearing alongside his father and grandfather in 2016 when they announced the creation of the Bourse de Commerce in 2016.

Experts say he is still too young for the top job, but his appointment at Christie's was viewed as the first step towards his ascension.

Insiders say the problems within the luxury conglomerate have stemmed from how the dozens of brands within the Kering empire are managed.

"The Pinault family was very removed from the daily management of the brands," says one former director.

"All the various Kering brands' chief executives have an uncommon freedom of actions."

This is in stark contrast to LVMH, which the former director said is "continuously controlled by the Arnault family and their immediate trusted top executives".

Some observers claim this hands-off approach has led to a lack of focus within many of Kering's brands – not least within Gucci which has been hit by a series of designer and management changes.

Pinault said in 2014 that focusing on quantity over quality at Gucci "would be the greatest danger to the brand". Yet, Gucci sought a sales boost by targeting younger,



more aspirational US and Chinese shoppers, which experts say has eroded the exclusivity of the label.

It has come amid confusion over leadership after star designer Alessandro Michele left in 2022.

"Investors were left hanging before they announced a replacement," says HSB's Erwan Rambourg. Mr De Sarno was named as its new creative director last year.

The shake-up went further last year when Gucci's then chief executive Marco Bizzarri left after eight years. It appointed number-cruncher Jean-François Palus as a temporary replacement. He has since taken up the role permanently.

Rambourg says this approach to succession planning for the brands would not happen at rival LVMH. "At LVMH, every brand's chief executive has a number of possible replacements and that is reflected every time you

hear about a change," he says. There are signs that Pinault is waking up to this, with insiders saying the family have taken steps to "try to be more involved in the strategies and brand positioning of each brand".

However, critics say recent moves indicate that Pinault is planning a change to how Kering is run, and even considering a different type of succession.

In last year's leadership shake-up, Yves Saint Laurent chief executive and rising star Francesca Belletini was appointed to a new role as Kering's co-deputy chief executive, with the remit of reinventing its brands.

It follows years of investors pushing for Pinault to consider bringing senior leaders into the fray. "It would be a positive if Kering gets professionally managerialised," one shareholder says.

They suggest that the business could flourish if Pinault stepped to the side,

'I felt that he was getting fidgety and I didn't want to hand over to him too late'

relinquishing his role as chief executive. Some view Belletini's promotion as the first step towards Pinault splitting the top position into two roles. "You could imagine a time when he would keep the role of chairman and give the group CEO position to a luxury heavyweight," says Rambourg. As Pinault approaches the age when his father passed the mantle, scrutiny over who will replace him is increasing. For the elder Pinault, timing was everything. "I felt that he was getting fidgety and I didn't want to hand over to him too late," the Kering founder had said.

In the hours before models walked out on the runway for Gucci's show on Monday, Pinault's wife Hayek shared an Instagram post with the caption: "The calm before the Cruise". With investors getting fidgety, Pinault will need to act soon before their nerves spill over and trigger a storm.

Microsoft urges 800 Chinese engineers to move to America

By Matthew Field

MICROSOFT has asked hundreds of Chinese engineers if they will relocate to the US amid simmering trade tensions between the global powers.

The tech giant has offered as many as 800 China-based staff, mostly engineers working on technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), alternative roles in the US, Ireland, Australia or New Zealand, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. A Microsoft

spokesman said it remained "committed" to China. Microsoft has long-standing ties to the country, having launched there in the early 1990s. It employs more than 9,000 staff in the region, expanding its presence even as other technology giants have withdrawn or had their products banned altogether.

The tech giant was forced to shut down its LinkedIn professional networking business in China in 2021, although it still offers its Bing search engine in a heavily censored form. The

company also operates an advanced AI lab in the country – first opened in 1998 under Bill Gates – employing hundreds of researchers.

A Microsoft spokesman said: "Providing internal opportunities is a regular part of managing our global business. As part of this process, we shared an optional internal transfer opportunity with a subset of employees. We remain committed to the region and will continue to operate in this and other markets where we have a presence."

However, trade tensions between the US and China have brought Microsoft's operations in the region – and those of other American businesses including Apple and Tesla – under scrutiny.

The US government has issued sanctions against Beijing to restrict its access to advanced microchips and artificial intelligence tools amid fears they could be put to military use. Microsoft itself has been the victim of Chinese state-backed hacking on multiple occasions, including a devastating

cyber attack last year that led to the accounts of senior US government officials being compromised.

Microsoft's cyber-security researchers have also blamed China for attempting to interfere with this year's elections around the world using AI and disinformation.

Separately, Microsoft on Wednesday disclosed its greenhouse gas emissions had increased by more than 30pc over the past three years, despite a pledge to go "carbon negative" by the end of

the decade. The company blamed the power requirements of its AI tools, which have placed additional demands on its data centres and infrastructure.

Microsoft said its increase in emissions "primarily comes from the construction of more data centres and the associated embodied carbon in building materials, as well as hardware components such as semiconductors, servers and racks".

Ben Marlow: Page 22

Thames Water's largest shareholder leaves board

By Chris Price and Luke Barr

THAMES Water's largest shareholder has withdrawn its representative from the troubled company's board, raising further questions over its future.

Michael McNicholas, a managing director at Canadian pension fund Omers Infrastructure, has quit his role as a non-executive director at Thames "with immediate effect".

It comes weeks after Omers, which owns a 31.7pc stake in Thames Water, cut off funding from the company along with other shareholders.

The withdrawal of financial support led to Kemble, Thames Water's parent company, defaulting on its debts last month.

This has heightened the risk of Thames Water collapsing under its £18bn debt pile, which could result in a taxpayer bailout costing billions of pounds.

Thames Water, which serves 16m customers, said Mr McNicholas's departure stemmed from shareholders' decision to step back from the business in March.

At the time, they described the supplier as "uninvestable". Bosses at Thames are in talks with Ofwat over

plans to increase bills by up to 45pc. This proposal, which is yet to be signed off by Ofwat, would lead to customers paying up to £627 a year by 2030.

While this would shore up the supplier's finances in the long term, there are still doubts over whether shareholders will inject fresh funding into Thames – even if Ofwat waves through hefty bill increases.

Thames Water has said that it has £2.4bn of funds to see it through the next 15 months. However, growing debt finance costs and looming fines from Ofwat could quickly eat away at that cash pile.

The regulator is expected to announce its draft decision on the proposed bill increases next month. So far, Kemble has defaulted on £590m of loans, with advisers at Alvarez & Marsal overseeing the restructuring process.

After announcing Mr McNicholas's exit, Thames Water said it "continues to meet Ofwat's expectation that independent non-executive directors form the largest single group on the board and the UK corporate governance code requirement that, excluding the chairman, independent non-executive directors make up at least half the board membership".



Lest we forget A D-Day 50p coin depicting soldiers disembarking a landing craft was unveiled on Gold Beach by Royal Mint yesterday.

United Utilities increases dividend after sewage spill

By Alex Singleton

ONE of Britain's biggest water suppliers has opted to raise dividend payments, days after it was criticised for releasing raw sewage in the Lake District.

United Utilities announced yesterday that it will hand investors £339m in payouts over the coming year, up from £310m in 2023.

That is despite profits falling by 38pc to £126.9m in the year to March, fuelled by rising debt interest costs.

The timing of the announcement comes in the same week it emerged United Utilities had illegally pumped raw sewage into Windermere for 10 hours in February.

United Utilities failed to report the incident to the Environment Agency for 13 hours, despite regulation requiring all pollution events be flagged as soon as possible.

Downing Street described the spill as "completely unacceptable".

The company, which serves 7m customers across the North West of England, said: "As soon as we discovered this fault, our engineers took urgent steps to resolve the situation and we informed the Environment Agency within an hour of the pollution being

confirmed." In its latest financial results, United Utilities said its finances were "robust" as revenues rose 8pc to almost £2bn.

Louise Beardmore, the company's chief executive, said she was "pleased to report that we have met or exceeded around 80pc of our regulatory targets".

She added: "We take our role in protecting the environment very seriously. Our ambitious business plan would see

£339m

The payouts that water supplier United Utilities will hand investors over the coming year, up from £310m in 2023

us investing more than ever before to improve services across the five counties of the North West.

"This would deliver a genuine step-change in infrastructure for the benefit of customers and the environment, and support 30,000 jobs".

United's results come amid increasing scrutiny of the water sector after sewage spills reached a record high last year.

Microsoft's warning shows globalisation is over

BEN MARLOW

The engine of prosperity that has driven growth since the Cold War is about to be switched off

Rishi Sunak had an interesting take on the Russia question this week: Sir Keir Starmer's policies would "embolden" Vladimir Putin, the Prime Minister claimed. It was quite the claim from the leader of a party that has repeatedly taken money from Russian donors and allowed Britain to become a refuge for dirty Russian money and Putin's cronies.

Still, if one thing is clear from Putin's vainglorious pow-wow with Xi Jinping this week, it's that he already feels emboldened by the way things are shaping up on the global stage. China-Russia ties are "stabilising" for the world, Putin declared as thousands of Ukrainians in the Kharkiv region fled a barrage

of Russian glide bombs, artillery and drones. Putin was basically trolling the West during his high-profile overseas state visit – with China no less – which tells you everything there is to know about our failure to defend Kyiv from Moscow's terror.

While Putin engages in yet more deranged propaganda, and Xi indulges him further with talk of welcoming an "old friend", Western companies are increasingly making their own minds up about Russia and China's so-called "stabilising" effect.

Reports that Microsoft has asked hundreds of employees in China to consider transferring outside of the country are another reminder of how quickly the walls are coming up between East and West.

Is the great era of globalisation that turned China into the workshop of the world effectively over? It's still too early to say for sure but there is clearly a dramatic correction taking place – the big question is how severe and painful it will be. Donald Trump has called it "decoupling". Brussels prefers to talk more diplomatically about "de-risking".

With more than an eye on getting re-elected, Joe Biden has seemingly

chosen to go in the other direction and turbo-charge the realignment into a full-blown divorce.

His decision to whack 100pc tariffs on electric vehicles from China is uncharacteristically bold for a man who has repeatedly shown himself to be a desperately weak international statesman. After all, it was Biden's woeful hesitancy over Ukraine – suggesting Western powers would tolerate a "minor incursion" – that at least partly encouraged Putin to go ahead with the invasion.

Meanwhile, America's wavering support for Israel is a gift to its many enemies around the world, not just a regrouped Hamas.

The tariffs are hypocritical, too, coming from someone who once accused Trump of harming American farmers and manufacturers with his trade war against China.

Even worse, it risks being reckless. Biden's tariff smackdown applies not just to electric cars but solar cells and lithium batteries – an attempt to prevent his Made in America green agenda from being undermined by cheap Chinese goods.

In total, \$18bn (£14bn) of Chinese imports will be affected. However, it is

the decision to quadruple the levy on electric cars that has shocked trade experts most because it effectively cuts off one of the world's biggest car markets from the planet's largest producer of electric vehicles in one fell swoop.

Some have dismissed the move as symbolic since very few of the electric cars found on US roads come from China – it accounts for just 2pc of America's EV imports, according to the

'China was never going to become more democratic as Bill Clinton and David Cameron naively believed'

Washington-based think-tank CSIS – but that misses the point.

Tariffs of this magnitude mean Chinese car manufacturers can kiss goodbye to any hopes they may have had of breaking into the US.

There are those that will argue China has brought this on itself with its growing anti-Westernism, which has spilled into outright hostility and attempts to seriously undermine Western interests. Yet in the end it may

be American politics that turns deteriorating relations into a catastrophic trade war.

Biden's bet is that in taking an increasingly hardline stance against Beijing, he stands a better chance of defeating Trump in the polls.

Trump is having none of it, accusing the White House of dilly-dallying and promising to go much further by hitting Chinese cars with 200pc tariffs, as well as imposing a 10pc surcharge on imports from everywhere. It's an unabashed appeal to Rust Belt voters from two candidates determined to prove they will erect an impenetrable wall around American industry.

European leaders will be watching nervously. Biden's actions mean that even more cheaper Chinese goods will be directed to the Continent, forcing Brussels to ramp up its tariffs in a bid to prevent European markets becoming overwhelmed by Beijing's dumping.

As all this plays out, the risk of a corporate exodus from China becomes much greater. Ultra-sensitive jobs in technology will move first. Bankers and accountants will be next, then eventually the big manufacturers. If multinationals don't go voluntarily, it

may get to the point where the US government forces them out.

If there's one thing Democrats and Republicans agree on, it's a need to lock China out of the West. That should send an icy chill through every major boardroom from Tesla and Nvidia to JP Morgan, Ford and Intel.

Perhaps it was always going to come screeching to a halt at some point. China was never going to become more democratic as Bill Clinton and David Cameron naively believed.

We should all mourn the passing of globalisation. On the current trajectory, the engine of prosperity that has propelled growth since the Cold War is about to be switched off, and that is bad news for the UK in particular, given we have always been one of the world's most open economies.

It is not in anybody's interests to see a return to the sort of blanket protectionism ushered in by Smoot-Hawley. That particular piece of US legislation cast a long shadow over the 1930s by prolonging the effects of the Great Depression, torpedoing world trade, and even complicating international efforts to contain Hitler. What a grim legacy.



Hammer time

Artist blacksmiths James Spedding and Roger Foyster hammer out the details on 80 large decorative medieval metal work designs. They have been recreated as part of the restoration of the keep at Norwich Castle. Most of the funding for the £15m project, which will improve accessibility, came from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Many voters believe living standards are in free fall. What if the doomsters are right?

PHILIP PILKINGTON

Most periods of inflation have ultimately been a result of war – and that is precisely what we see today

It is no secret that the US is experiencing a bout of economic ennui. In recent months, surveys have shown that confidence in President Joe Biden's stewardship of the economy is at historic lows.

A poll in the important swing state of Pennsylvania this week shows that Donald Trump leads Joe Biden on this issue by double digits. Since the economy is arguably the dominant factor in most American elections, it seems likely that Biden will lose based

on his mismanagement. Democrats are trying desperately to figure out what is going on. Biden's supporters within the party highlight the fact that the American economy is growing robustly.

In the first quarter, the US economy expanded 3pc year on year. This is the sort of growth number Britain and other European nations can only dream of. Yet the American public seem less than impressed.

Answers are coming from outside Biden's inner circle. A few weeks ago, Larry Summers, former US secretary of the Treasury, released a paper written alongside other economists. In it, the authors made a shocking claim: if inflation was measured in the same way that it was measured during the last bout of price rises in the 1970s, data showed that it peaked at 18pc in November 2022. This is far higher than the 9.1pc peak inflation shown by the official data.

The reason for this discrepancy is that since the last bout of inflation in the

1970s, economists have removed the cost of borrowing from the consumer prices index (CPI). The motivations here were not nefarious. The reasoning of the statisticians had something to it.

They argued that since borrowing costs are determined by central bank policy and central bank policy aims at suppressing inflation, including borrowing costs in the CPI created a logical loop. Yet, despite the motivation for changing the statistical metric being benign, it is clear that when trying to measure the pain inflation imposes on consumers, borrowing costs must be considered. Summers and his co-authors go as far as any statistical economist can go in proving this.

They show that a combined metric measuring inflation and unemployment – labelled the "misery index" – typically tracks consumer sentiment. But as the inflation took off under the Biden administration, the two series diverged. Summers and his co-authors then go on to show that if they use the older

measure of CPI, lo and behold, the two series align once more.

There is little doubt that Summers and his co-authors have solved the puzzle. Supporters of the Biden administration can point to robust GDP growth all they want. The reality is that most people in the US have seen their costs rise by nearly one fifth during Biden's tenure as president.

It barely needs to be said that wages have nowhere near kept up with this increase in costs. The Biden administration may try to channel Groucho Marx, asking voters "who are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes?" but most people know they've seen their living standards decline.

The old-but-new inflation metric that Summers and his co-authors have come up with is not the only interesting inflation-related data point circulating.

This week, John Authers, a Bloomberg columnist, highlighted a very interesting chart. The University of Michigan regularly surveys people

on the future trajectory of inflation. Typically, the mean of the sample is roughly equivalent to the median of the sample. But not today. The median is now much higher than the mean.

What does this mean? Simply put, a significant minority of people are far more pessimistic regarding inflation in the future than the average person. This is not just a small percentage of inflation-phobes. Presumably they always exist. No, a significant number of Americans who typically have an average view of future inflation currently think that inflation will remain much higher in the future.

Market analysts appear to be chalking this up to partisan politics. They argue that these people are strongly opposed to President Biden and project that opposition on to their inflation expectations. In effect, this argument states that the extreme pessimism we see in the median inflation survey data is a result of Maga ("make America great again") Republicans, passionate opponents of Biden and the Democratic Party.

Perhaps there is some truth to this. But there is another explanation: these people are worried about the state of the world. Economists love to think of metrics such as inflation in a technocratic manner – attributing it to interest rate policy or the money

supply. But the reality is that most periods of serious inflation we see in human history were ultimately owing to war and conflict.

That is precisely what we are seeing again today. The inflation of today was originally set off because of a virus. It was then exacerbated by a war in Eastern Europe. And now it is sticking around, in part at least, because of tensions in the Middle East and a curious blockade by a state without a navy in the Red Sea. Future inflation may well be driven by the knee-jerk reaction of many countries to these developments and their fall into being seduced by aggressive protectionism.

Perhaps this sizeable minority of people who think that inflation will be much higher in the future are reading the newspaper headlines and connecting the dots. Perhaps they have concluded that there is a link between the global chaos we see all around us and their declining living standards. Yes, maybe some of them blame the turmoil on Biden but, ultimately, the causal link is robust.

Here is a worrying thought: maybe this sizeable minority of Americans is correct. Maybe continued global turmoil and Western protectionism will generate inflation in the coming years. And maybe our living standards will fall accordingly.

Squeezed consumers cut back on gadgets

By James Warrington

CONSUMERS have cut back on buying new gadgets as the cost of living piles pressure on household finances, the boss of publisher Future has warned.

Jon Steinberg, chief executive of Future, said consumer confidence remained low in the UK unlike across the Atlantic.

Future, which owns magazine titles including *Country Life* and *The Week*, generates revenues through affiliate products, where readers click through from its websites to e-commerce sites.

While this division has been hit by lower sales, the group's price compari-

son website GoCompare saw sharp growth in the first half of the year as consumers sought out cheaper deals.

Mr Steinberg said: "People are under budget pressure. They're not buying laptops, they're not buying headphones, but they are going to GoCompare to try to shop for the best auto insurance value at a time when premiums are going up.

"So I just think the UK consumer is under a bit more pressure right now than the US consumer."

It came as Future reported a slump in profits for the first six months of the year, as the consumer downturn was compounded by a "challenging"

advertising market. The magazine owner posted a 3pc fall in revenues to £392m in the first half of the year, driven by a 12pc drop in digital ad revenues. Pre-tax profits dropped 30pc from £66m to £47m.

Future said profitability was dented by the decline in advertising, as well as investment in its £30m growth programme – which was launched at the end of last year.

The publisher has hired 30 new editorial employees since January – a fifth of its total target.

It is also looking to expand in the US and has restructured the group into three business divisions.

Surge in young drivers swerving insurance

By Joe Wright

AN INCREASING number of young motorists are opting to break the law and drive without insurance because of the surging cost of premiums.

Figures from the DVLA show a 200pc rise in 17 to 20-year-olds getting behind the wheel without cover.

In 2023, more than 6,300 Gen Z drivers were penalised for being uninsured – almost double the 2,900 fined in 2021.

Iam RoadSmart, a road safety charity, which obtained the figures via a Freedom of Information request, warned the rise in young rogue drivers is affecting insurance premiums for

everyone else. This is because those involved in a collision with an uninsured driver will need to claim from the Motor Insurance Bureau (MIB), which is funded by an annual levy paid by insurance companies.

Insurers pass on the cost of this levy to their customers through higher premiums, which have soared by 25pc in the last year. According to comparison website Compare the Market, the average annual premium stands at £545 for petrol cars and £740 for electric.

Rather than being priced off the road, more Gen Z are swerving insurance and driving without any form of cover.

Nicholas Lyes, of Iam RoadSmart,

fears there is now risk of having an "epidemic" of young, uninsured drivers.

"It is a legal requirement to have the correct insurance to drive, so it is deeply concerning to see a surge in young drivers breaking the law in this way," he said.

"For young drivers who have recently passed their test, the cost of learning to drive, getting a vehicle, taxing it and then insuring it is becoming an extremely costly process."

A survey of 2,100 people carried out by the charity found that 49pc of drivers believe their most recent car insurance renewal price was "significantly more expensive".

We're beating competitors despite slump, insists easyJet

By Christopher Jasper

THE outgoing chief executive of easyJet has defended the airline's share performance, insisting it has outperformed most other European carriers.

Johan Lundgren said easyJet had faced significant competition from Ryanair after the two airlines battled for market share in holiday destinations such as Portugal and Italy in the wake of the pandemic.

But he pointed to a near-40pc surge in the stock since October last year when easyJet restored its dividend and placed an order for hundreds of jets.

He said: "There isn't a CEO out there who does not want his share price to be higher. Ryanair has been a significant competitor, but our multiple [share price relative to profits] is the second best in Europe."

Mr Lundgren made the comments as he announced his departure from EasyJet after seven years in the role, triggering a near-6pc fall in the company's share price yesterday. He will step down as chief executive early next year.

EasyJet shares have slumped 58pc since the Swede, 57, took over in December 2017, during which time Ryanair's stock has increased by 6pc.

Rival airlines have also struggled, with British Airways parent IAG and Germany's Lufthansa also losing more than half their value and Air France-KLM tumbling 82pc during the same period.

Mr Lundgren, who entered the travel trade after failing to make the grade as a classical trombonist, said he has no immediate plans after leaving easyJet.

He will be replaced by Kenton Jarvis, who joined as chief financial officer in 2021 after 17 years at holiday giant TUI, where he also worked under Mr Lundgren.



Chelsea Shower Show Designer Rachel Sampson prepares greenhouse manufacturer Hartley Botanic's Calm & Wellbeing tradestand at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London during a downpour yesterday. The five-day event starts on Tuesday.

Unilever to keep Russian ice-cream business

By Daniel Woolfson

UNILEVER will hang on to its Russian ice-cream business despite plans to offload its frozen dessert brands, amid fears investors could be put off by exposure to Moscow.

The Magnum and Ben & Jerry's owner is mulling a potential sale or IPO of its ice-cream brands, which are worth about €8bn (£6.8bn) in annual revenues. However, Unilever said yesterday it will not include its Russian ice-cream business in the deal as it has been ring-fenced from the rest of the group.

The news comes despite pressure on Unilever to quit the country in the wake of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Unilever was labelled an "international sponsor of war" by the Ukrainian government, which until recently published a list of companies it deemed to be indirectly contributing to the war.

While it still trades there, Unilever has stopped advertising and halted imports and exports from Russia. Mr Schumacher said last year that remaining in Russia was the "least bad option" and that, were it to leave, its operations could be seized by the state. Other major food companies including Mondelez - owner of Cadbury - and Nestlé have taken a similar stance.

Unilever runs four ice-cream factories in Russia, where it owns the company Inmarko.

Soviet politician Anastas Mikoyan spearheaded a boom in ice-cream production after encountering the product on a trip to the US in the 1930s. He imposed strict state standards, with three main varieties: molochnoye, made with milk; slivochnoye, made with cream; and plombir, made with cream and egg yolks. Mikoyan was said to have been accused by Stalin of caring more about ice-cream than communism.

Nuclear waste to be kept 650ft underground

Less hazardous radioactive material from power stations to be buried closer to surface of countryside

By Jonathan Leake

NUCLEAR waste is to be buried in the English countryside after ministers agreed to dig a 650ft-deep pit starting this decade.

The facility, which has yet to be allocated a site, will hold some of the 5m

tons of waste that was generated by nuclear power stations over the past 70 years.

This will ease pressure on the 17 nuclear waste disposal plants in operation around the country, which consist of giant sheds and cooling ponds.

The largest facility is the Sellafield site in Cumbria.

Plans for the 650ft pit will result in it housing so-called intermediate-level waste, possibly on a pre-existing nuclear site to minimise planning objections. The facility will be separate from the much deeper geological

disposal site that will hold the UK's most dangerous waste, such as plutonium, which is unlikely to be built until after 2050. The proposals come amid fears Britain's stockpile of nuclear waste will grow in the coming decades with nowhere to put it.

Concerns are particularly acute as the Government is planning to build at least three new nuclear power stations.

This will put the country at odds with the 1976 review of nuclear waste policy by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, which warned the UK was accumulating nuclear waste so fast

that it should stop building reactors until it had a solution.

Ministers want to label nuclear energy as a "green" and "sustainable" fuel. However, experts on the Government's own advisory body, the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, have said such terms are misleading if there is no safe place to store radioactive waste.

Plans for a nuclear waste pit were recently published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (Desnz), headed by Claire Coutinho, the Energy Secretary. A government

spokesman said: "In addition to long-term plans to dispose of the most hazardous radioactive waste in a geological disposal facility hundreds of metres underground, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority will explore a facility closer to the surface for less hazardous radioactive waste."

"While a geological disposal facility is not expected to be ready until the 2050s, a shallower facility - which is up to 200m (650ft) below ground - could be available within 10 years."

Nuclear waste can remain dangerous for tens of thousands of years, with fears

of disposing of it underground stemming from the fact water can flow through waste, carrying radioactivity back to the surface.

Andrew Bowie, the minister for nuclear energy, said: "We're taking sensible steps to manage our radioactive waste, while reducing the burden on the environment and taxpayer."

David Peattie, chief executive at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, added: "We will maintain the highest standards of safety and environmental protection to deliver our nationally important decommissioning mission."

Rivals vie to take £1.6bn Royal Navy deal from Titanic shipyard

By Matt Oliver and Szu Ping Chan

BRITAIN'S biggest defence companies are lining up to take over a £1.6bn Royal Navy supply ship contract amid fears the business tasked with delivering it could collapse.

Yesterday, a government defence source said rival companies would be asked to step in and manufacture three fleet solid support (FSS) warships should Harland & Wolff, the Belfast-based yard that built the Titanic, be unable to deliver.

It is understood the project could be split among members of the former "Team UK" consortium, including BAE Systems, Babcock, A&P Group and Cammell Laird - all of which previously bid for the work unsuccessfully.

Sources close to Team UK confirmed they had capacity to take on the work and "stood ready" to help if asked, depending on the terms. However, the government source added that talks were still focused on helping to secure

Harland & Wolff's future, adding that contingency plans would only be looked at in a "worst-case scenario".

They said: "We are not reliant on the fate of one shipbuilder." It came as discussions over a £200m support package for the Northern Ireland company continued, with Whitehall officials said to be looking at "all options".

Harland & Wolff was plunged into uncertainty earlier this week after it emerged a loan guarantee promised by the Government was in doubt amid legal concerns it could breach state aid rules. In the company's most recent annual report, auditors warned the business would struggle to survive without the support.

Jeremy Hunt, the Chancellor, is expected to make a final decision on whether to approve the guarantee within days.

The issue has reportedly pitched the Treasury against the defence, business and Northern Ireland departments, with Grant Shapps, the Defence Secre-

tary, lobbying the Chancellor to wave the deal through. Despite the turmoil, Harland & Wolff said it was "business as usual", stressing that "nothing had changed" in relation to ongoing talks.

Yesterday, a spokesman added: "Only yesterday we accepted four of our new burning machines, which is a multimillion-pound investment. We have many other projects across all of our facilities that are in full production."

The £1.6bn contract to build three FSS ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, a civilian branch of the Royal Navy, was awarded to Harland & Wolff and Spanish shipbuilding giant Navantia, following a fraught bidding process in 2022.

That decision was criticised by some MPs because it will see certain sections of the ships - known as blocks - built at Navantia's shipyard in Cadiz.

However, ministers have insisted the warships, which will have a crucial role in supplying Royal Navy aircraft carriers with munitions and stores, will mostly be built in the UK.

Denmark doubles growth forecast on Ozempic success

By Tim Wallace

BOOMING demand for Ozempic is driving a surge in Denmark's economy as millions of people use the drug for weight loss, leading the government to almost double its growth forecast for this year.

Danish GDP will grow by 2.7pc, the ministry of economic affairs said, instead of the 1.4pc it had expected in December. This revision was driven in part by the success of pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk's hit drug Ozempic. The reopening of the Tyra gas field will also boost GDP by reducing energy imports and boosting exports.

The ministry said: "The pharmaceutical industry has been absolutely crucial for growth in real terms GDP in the past two years, as in other parts of the Danish economy there has been stagnation or actual decline."

"The progress in exports has been the major growth engine in recent years. Exports grew in real terms by 13.4pc in 2023."

Added to is a revival in gas extraction and exports, it is enough to almost double the rate of growth forecast this year. The pharmaceutical industry is

expected to continue growing in the year ahead, officials added.

Ozempic - a diabetes drug widely used for weight loss - has become a cultural phenomenon across much of the rich world, attracting high demand. Novo Nordisk also makes Wegovy, a similar drug.

Boris Johnson, the former prime minister, tried the treatment albeit for only a short time - while Elon Musk, Sharon Osbourne and members of the Kardashians clan have all used the drug.

Supplies are tight, leading to an investment binge from Novo Nordisk. Last year, the company said it would spend 42bn Danish kroner (£4.8bn) in expanding its plant in Kalundborg, west of Copenhagen.

The development for Denmark is reminiscent of Nokia's influence over Finland's economy. The mobile phone company was responsible for one quarter of its nation's GDP growth between 1998 and 2007, according to estimates from the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy.

However Nokia, known for its early dominance of the market, failed to keep up with the development of smartphones, led by Apple's iPhone.

Meta faces inquiry into how apps affect children's health

By Matthew Field

THE European Commission has launched an investigation into Facebook and Instagram over concerns the social media apps are damaging children's mental health.

Brussels is concerned the apps from US tech giant Meta are sending children down dangerous "rabbit holes" and causing social media addiction. The tech giant also faces questions over whether its verification tools are stopping young children accessing inappropriate posts, in breach of the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA).

Thierry Breton, the European commissioner for the internal market, said: "We are not convinced that Meta has done enough." Margrethe Vestager, the European commissioner for competition, said: "We have concerns that Facebook and Instagram may stimulate behavioural addiction."

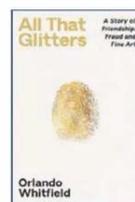
Meta can be fined up to 6pc of its worldwide turnover for failing to comply with the bloc's new digital rules.

A Meta spokesman said: "This is a challenge the whole industry is facing and we look forward to sharing details of our work with the commission."

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Orlando Whitfield and Inigo Philbrick met in 2006 at Goldsmiths University where they became best friends. By 2007 they had started I&O Fine Art. Orlando would eventually set up his own gallery and watch as Inigo immersed himself in a world of private jets and multi-million dollar deals. Inigo seemed brilliant, but underneath the extravagant façade, his financial schemes were unraveling. *All That Glitters* is at once a shocking story of ambition, a cautionary tale, and an intimate portrait of friendship.

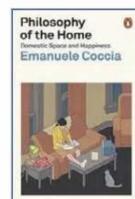
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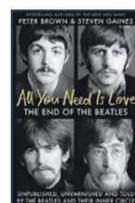
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Markets

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Government securities

52 week High	Low	Stock	Price	(p) +/-	Yld	P/E
102.30	99.20	Treas 5% 25	100.22	-0.01	4.99	4.75
112.21	100.63	Treas 6% 28	108.55	+0.04	5.53	3.93
106.59	90.79	Treas 4% 32	102.28	+0.07	4.16	3.92
106.09	94.06	Treas 4% 36	100.89	+0.10	4.21	4.15
110.73	96.88	Treas 4% 38	104.87	+0.10	4.53	4.30

Index Link Securities

385.22	371.32	Treas 2% 14	384.67	+0.04	6.05	2.65
352.43	325.85	Treas 4% 10	345.54	+0.11	1.19	0.25
243.64	239.45	Treas 2% 15	250.38	+0.68	0.80	0.53

10-year Government Bonds

Yield%	Spread vs Bunds	Spread vs F-Bonds	
France	2.93	-0.48	-1.45
Germany	2.45	-	-1.93
Japan	0.91	-1.54	-3.47
Great Britain	4.08	-1.63	-3.40
United States	4.38	-1.93	-

The share prices, price-earnings ratios and dividend yields above are supplied by Interactive Data (Europe) Ltd. The yields are calculated using historic dividend payments divided by the closing share price multiplied by 100.

Aerospace & defence

52 week High	Low	Stock	Price	(p) +/-	Yld	P/E
543%	266%	Bairdcorp	531	+5	0.3	-7.0
1406%	883%	BAC Systems	1364	+1	2.2	22.3
381%	292%	QinetiQ	367	+1	2.2	13.7
440%	142%	Bolloré-Royce	420	+6	-	2.6
184	146%	Seimor	170%	+6	1.3	22.7

Banks

216%	128%	Barclays	214%	+1%	3.7	7.8
998%	278	Crest Bios	482%	-2%	-	8.9
725%	572%	HSCB	696%	+1	6.9	7.7
55%	39%	Lloyds Bk Grp	55	+6	5.0	7.2
329%	16%	NatWest Group	326%	-	5.2	6.8
423	142%	Rolls-Royce	409	-1	3.0	23.8
796	571	Standard Ch	785%	+1%	2.8	9.2

Beverages

3599%	267%	Diageo	2817	+4	2.8	17.1
998%	278	Crest Bios	482%	-2%	-	8.9
725%	572%	HSCB	696%	+1	6.9	7.7
55%	39%	Lloyds Bk Grp	55	+6	5.0	7.2
329%	16%	NatWest Group	326%	-	5.2	6.8
423	142%	Rolls-Royce	409	-1	3.0	23.8
796	571	Standard Ch	785%	+1%	2.8	9.2

Chemicals

6802	4018	Croda Intl	4751	+122	2.3	38.8
1931%	1428%	Johnson Mat	1838	-23	4.2	18.2
1632	1152	Victrex	1334	+22	4.5	12.5

Construction

298%	291%	Balfour Beatty	372%	-11	3.1	10.5
582%	384%	Barratt Dev	519%	+8%	5.4	9.8
2898	1903	Reilly	2802	+30	4.0	12.4
5330	3634	Berkeley Grp	5320	+30	1.7	9.5
249	170	Booth H	197	-	3.7	10.0

Winners and losers (pc)

Telecommunications	7.01
Transport	1.87
Insurance	1.45
Mining	1.13
General financial	0.87
Household goods	0.80
Tobaccos	0.69
Construction	0.61
Beverages	0.50
Retailers	-0.24
Gas & Water	-0.35
Pharmaceuticals	-0.53
Aerospace & defence	-0.54
Support services	-0.70
Travel & Leisure	-0.78
Oil & Gas	-1.44
Chemicals	-1.83
Information technology	-8.54

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

86%	40%	Costain	82%	+2%	1.5	10.2
1026%	737%	Grafton Grp	977%	+1%	3.7	14.0
2495	1640%	Morgan Sindell	2415	-40	4.7	9.5
1501	925	Perstamim	1476%	+5	4.1	18.5
735	423%	Redrow	733	-11%	3.4	8.0
150%	96%	Taylor Wimpey	148%	-1%	6.4	15.0

Electricals

240	135	Dialight	176%	-%	-	-
958	586	discover/Grp	745	+4	1.6	33.4
2521	1802	Halma	2352	-4	0.9	37.9
4500	2823%	Renishaw	4065	-50	1.9	25.5
2489%	682%	XP Power	1128	-2	1.6	-24.8

Electricity

644%	395%	Drax Group <th>565</th> <th>+14</th> <th>4.1</th> <th>4.0</th>	565	+14	4.1	4.0
1171	918	Nat Grid	1142%	+6	5.0	5.4
1932%	1485	SSE	1853%	+1%	4.7	-163.5

Engineering / Industrial

88%	63%	Coats Group <th>88%</th> <th>+1%</th> <th>2.6</th> <th>31.8</th>	88%	+1%	2.6	31.8
960	212	Cropper J	600	-	1.8	74.1
7300	4200	Goodwin	4100	-300	1.9	29.5
1911	1429	IMI	1882	-10	1.5	20.6
1793%	1291	Mendip	1701	+5	2.9	13.7
76%	48%	Sverdrup	70%	+0	5.0	10.1
1776%	1517%	Smiths Grp	1731	-2	2.4	26.4
415	260%	Smith (DS)	369%	+1%	4.9	10.3
3946	2528	Srinivas Kappa	3908	-2	3.4	15.1
11480	7900	Spirax	9580	-75	1.7	38.4
2127%	1652%	Weir	2120	-10	1.8	24.0

Food producers

2765	1804%	Ass Brit Fds	2738	-27	2.0	20.4
2798%	2065	Coca-Cola HBC	2798	+18	2.9	18.8
4410	3084	Craneswick	4385	+15	1.9	21.1
957	614	Hilton Food	927	+4	3.5	22.8
101	48	REA Hldgs	82	-2	-	-3.2
4366%	3698%	Unilever	4280	-20	3.4	19.3

Gas & Water

173%	112%	Centrica	146%	+2%	2.7	2.1
863%	522%	Peponi Gr	714	-6	6.1	-
2949	2243	Severn Trent	2624	-29	4.2	49.8
1139%	896%	Utd Utilities	1097	-15	4.5	59.0

General financial

241	156%	Ashmore <th>199%</th> <th>-%</th> <th>8.5</th> <th>16.1</th>	199%	-%	8.5	16.1
300%	164%	Bridgpoint Gr	236%	+2	3.7	26.2
944%	676%	Hargreaves L	903%	+1%	4.7	13.2
800	600%	IG Group	791%	-9	5.7	9.1
2284	1244%	Intermediate Cp	2284	+4	3.4	23.3
567	401	Investec	558%	-	5.9	6.5
66%	40	IP Group	92%	+%	2.4	-3.2
833%	519	Liontrust	738	-8	9.8	12.0
300	30	Lon Fin & Inv	45%	-	2.6	10.3
9696	7784	Lon Stock Ex	9230	+112	1.2	66.5
241%	181%	M&G	207%	-	9.5	-3.1
279%	200%	Man Group	259%	-%	5.0	16.5
117%	71%	Quilter	111%	-	4.7	36.1

Major price changes FTSE 100

Risers 56	Volume	Close	Change
BT Group	126.02m	132%	17.19pc
Burberry	4.28m	1140	3.45pc
Prudential	8.01m	827%	2.94pc
Rio Tinto	3.01m	5649	2.30pc
Diploma	0.24m	4210	2.13pc
Phoenix	3.68m	525%	2.04pc
Intermediate Cap	0.71m	2284	1.96pc
Vodafone	96.06m	77%	1.87pc
Sainsbury	5.28m	282%	1.80pc
B&M EuroValRtl	2.01m	544%	1.76pc
Barratt Dev	6.56m	519%	1.60pc
Centrica	17.21m	146%	1.56pc
Standard Chart	7.91m	785%	1.50pc
Lon Stock Ex	1.32m	9230	1.23pc
Taylor Wimpey	11.78m	148%	1.19pc
Legal&Gen	16.92m	254%	1.15pc
WPP	3.10m	855	1.14pc
Glencore	27.70m	493	1.05pc
Perishing Square	0.15m	4100	1.03pc
Ass Brit Fds	1.03m	2738	1.00pc
Lloyds Bk Grp	128.48m	55	0.95pc
Marks & Spen	3.98m	278%	0.94pc

Results Roundup

Company	Turnover (£m)	Pre-tax (£m)	EPS(p)	DIV(p)	Pay Day	XD
Auction Technology	126.02	3.1m (600k)	5.300 (11.600)	n/a (n/a)	-	-
Baillie Gifford Euro	-	574k (283k)	0.140 (0.202)	0.000 (0.000)	-	-
Bank of Cyprus C	1Q 276.0m (234.0m)	159.0m (115.0m)	0.300 (0.210)	25.000 (5.000)	Jun 14	Apr 25
easyJet	Int 3.38m (-40.90m)	-347.0m (-415.0m)	-34.00m (n/a)	n/a (n/a)	-	-
Future	Int 391.5m (404.7m)	46.6m (66.4m)	29.200 (46.900)	0.000 (0.000)	-	-
Grainger	Int 113.7m (110.5m)	-31.2m (5.7m)	-3.000 (0.600)	2.540 (2.280)	Jul 05	May 23
Premier Foods	Fin 1.1m (1.0m)	151.4m (112.4m)	13.000 (10.600)	1.728 (1.440)	Jul 26	Jun 27
Sage Group	Int 1.2bn (1.1bn)	203.0m (139.0m)	15.310 (9.780)	6.950 (6.550)	Jun 28	May 30
Tritax Eurobox C	Int (-) -18.0m (-241.3m)	-2.320 (-27.200)	1.250 (1.250)	-	Sep 30	May 23
United Utilities Group	Fin 1.9bn (1.8bn)	170.0m (256.3m)	18.600 (30.000)	33.390 (30.340)	Aug 01	Jun 20

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

2570	1760	S A S	2010	-30	6.0	9.6
4734	346%	Schroders	374%	-%	5.7	25.2
234	43%	Vauxhall Banking Grp	60%	+1%	10.0	-65.1

Healthcare

348%	306%	Haleon	322%	+1%	1.8	29.2
1315	887	Smith & Neph	1025	+5	3.0	43.0

Household goods

2555	1080%	Burberry	1140	-38	5.4	15.4
123%	24%	McBride	109%	-1%	-	-16.6
200%	81%	PZ Cussons	111%	+3	4.7	12.8
6570	4102%	Reckitt Benck	4618	-22	4.2	20.1

Information technology

370%	224%	Aptitude Sftwre	318	+3	1.7	44.0
205	79%	Sprint	189%	-%	1.7	55.9

Insurance

238	134%	abrdn <th>156</th> <th>-1</th> <th>8.4 <th>-</th> </th>	156	-1	8.4 <th>-</th>	-
2870	2010	Admiral	267%	-3	3.9	24.0
501%	366	Aviva	497	+4%	6.7	13.2
699%	485%	Beazley	679%	+3	2.1	5.4
240%	132%	DirectLifeIns	202%	+5%	2.0	12.8
1277%	926	Hiscox	1187	-21	2.5	12.8
690	525	Lancashire Hldg	627	+7	2.5	5.9
259	203%	Legal & General	254%	-2%	8.0	34.7
587	436%	Phoenix	525%	+10%	10.0	-38.1
1188%	684%	Prudential	827%	+23%	2.0	16.9
1185%	393%	St. James's Place	481%	-3%	4.9	-267.6

Investment trusts

52 week High	Low	Stock	Price	(p) +/-	Yld	NAV
2992	1637%	SI	2977	+11	2.0	-
348%	276%	SI Infrastructure	346%	+3%	3.4	-
770	522	abrdn New India	742	-2	-	-
1261%	977%	Alliance Trust	1258	-2	2.0	-
367	227%	Allkare Tech Trust	365%	+1	-	-
4173	321%	Asia Dragon Trust	411	+4	1.6	-
24	175	Baill				

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BP's performance has been typically volatile but it has maintained dividend levels and its sound financial position confirms that it offers a favourable risk/reward opportunity

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There is no such thing as a risk-free dividend stock. Even companies that have made shareholder payouts without interruption for decades can experience unexpected difficulties that cause their dividend payments to end abruptly.

Indeed, the pandemic was a prime example of the risks involved in relying on a company for a regular income. Previously ultra-reliable dividend stocks suddenly hoarded cash in response to exceptional circumstances, so investors did not receive payouts for a prolonged period.

Despite this, Questor strongly believes that individual company shares should form the backbone of an income portfolio. There are inherent risks: cuts, postponement and even cancellation of dividends. But those threats must be weighed against the significant potential rewards provided by income shares, which can offer attractive yields, inflation-beating dividend growth and substantial capital gains in the long run.

Therefore, while BP's financial performance is typically volatile due to its dependence on erratic energy prices, it becomes the latest addition to our income portfolio as it aligns with our long-term plan to increase the number of direct equities we hold in it. The company's latest quarterly results

BP BUY

Though its latest quarterly results were disappointing, its shares yield of 4.6pc is about a percentage point greater than that of the FTSE 100 index

were, of course, somewhat disappointing. Underlying profits in the first quarter of its financial year missed expectations, and profits fell by 45pc versus the same period of the previous year and by 9pc compared with the prior quarter, partly as a result of lower energy prices.

Despite this, the company maintained dividends per share at the same level as in the previous quarter. This meant they were up 10pc compared with a year prior, significantly more than the rate of inflation. And with dividends covered 2.2 times by underlying profits in the first quarter of the current year, despite the decline in profitability, there is sufficient headroom for shareholder payouts to grow further.

Moreover, BP's dividend yield stands at 4.6pc. This is about one percentage point greater than the FTSE 100 index's yield and highlights that while the company's financial performance will be perennially volatile, the risk/reward opportunity for investors remains relatively favourable. When combined with a price-to-earnings ratio of just 7.8, the total return potential on offer for long-term investors is significant.

Of course, the company's solid financial position reduces overall risk for investors. Although net debt rose 15pc in the first quarter of the year, the company's net gearing ratio stands at a



very modest 28pc. This provides sufficient financial strength to invest in new projects, and capital expenditure is expected to amount to \$16bn per year in 2024 and 2025.

The company is also seeking to become more efficient. It aims to generate at least \$2bn in cash cost savings by the end of 2026. This forms part of a wider, refreshed strategy that seeks to maximise shareholder returns by aligning the company's pace of transition to cleaner forms of energy with changes in consumer demand.

Energy demand is likely to be buoyed by an improving global economic outlook. Although inflation is proving to be stickier than many investors had anticipated, particularly in the US, it is on track to fall to central bank targets on the coming months. This should lead to interest rate cuts that will (eventually) boost the world economy's growth rate.

Since Questor first advised readers to purchase BP in August 2021, its

'Its shares have produced a 64pc capital gain since August 2021, when Questor first advised readers to buy them'

shares have produced a 64pc capital gain. This equates to a 49 percentage point outperformance of the FTSE 100. Dividends received or declared since our original tip, meanwhile, amount to 19pc of our notional purchase price.

In this column's view, those returns have been well worth the frequent volatility of the company's financial performance and share price that is almost certain to continue.

The stock's low valuation means further capital gains are likely, while a relatively high yield, well-covered shareholder payouts and dividend growth potential mean it is poised to produce a decent income return.

With a solid financial position, sound strategy and an improving economic outlook, BP is a worthwhile addition to our income portfolio. The purchase will be funded by cash raised from recent sales.

Questor says: Buy
Ticker: BP
Share price at close: 489.3p

Sage's growth forecasts lacklustre despite profits surge

Sage's growth forecasts left investors disappointed despite surging revenues and profits, sending shares in the FTSE 100 accounting software developer down as much as 13pc.

The company reported a 38pc increase in operating profit and a rise in overall revenues of 6pc to £1.1bn in the first six months of the year.

Jefferies' analysts said the forecasts were a "marginal downgrade" on previous expectations and called the results "solid, not superlative".

The accounting software business, which is valued at more than £11bn, has sought to capitalise on demand for artificial intelligence tools by adding the technology to its products.

Its shares recovered to around £11.07, a decline of more than 7pc.

Tourist tax blamed for drop in Watches of Switzerland sales

Rolex retailer Watches of Switzerland has blamed the removal of tourists' VAT-free shopping for a fall in its British sales.

The London-listed company, which owns the Goldsmiths jewellery chain, said its revenue in the UK and Europe fell 4pc amid "challenging macroeconomic conditions" during the quarter to April 23. Revenue in the US grew 14pc, however, and overall sales rose 3pc to £380m.

It said UK performance "continues to be driven by domestic clientele" with "minimal return of tourist spending".

Other luxury retailers - including Burberry and Mulberry - have blamed the reversal of tax-free spending on weaker sales in the UK.

Toshiba to offer early retirement to employees over 50

Industrial giant Toshiba is to cut up to 4,000 jobs in Japan by encouraging employees over 50 to take early retirement.

The announcement follows the company being taken private in an £11bn deal by a consortium of around 20 Japanese banks and other firms.

Toshiba traces its roots back to 1875 and evolved into a vast conglomerate in Japan's postwar economic revival.

But it has lurched from crisis to crisis in recent years, including an accounting scandal in 2015 and losses from now-former US nuclear subsidiary Westinghouse. The company said that it was using its exit from the public markets as an "opportunity to fundamentally resolve Toshiba's structural issues".

Sony tells tech giants to stop using its music to train AI

The record label behind artists including Beyoncé and Adele has told tech giants not to use its songs to train artificial intelligence (AI).

In a letter to more than 700 companies, Sony Music Group said it prohibited any unauthorised use of its music to train, develop any AI system.

It also accused companies of already making unauthorised use of its copyrighted material and asked them to provide information of any instances where this had happened. Record labels have railed against the rapid development of AI, warning widespread breaches of copyright that will harm songwriters and artists.

But Sony said it was open to discussions about licence agreements for the use of its music.

GSK planning to sell its remaining stake in Sensodyne maker

GSK is planning to sell its remaining shares in Haleon, which makes Sensodyne toothpaste and Centrum vitamins.

It told investors that it plans to sell its 4.2pc stake in Haleon, two years after the business was floated on the London Stock Exchange. Haleon was previously known as GSK Consumer Healthcare, a joint venture between GSK, which owned 68pc, and its American rival Pfizer.

Since the demerger, Haleon has embarked on an economy drive, in an attempt to cut £300m in costs over three years. Last month, it announced it would close its toothpaste factory in Maidenhead, Berks, and transfer much of the work to Slovakia with the expected loss of 435 jobs by 2026.

Mr Kipling owner boosts profits after cost-cutting drive

Mr Kipling owner Premier Foods enjoyed rising profits after an efficiency drive that helped it cut prices on some of its ranges.

Profits jumped 23pc to £112.5m for the year ending March 30, and increased its dividend, following what Alex Whitehouse, the chief executive, called a "really strong year".

The company reported a 13pc rise in sales to £1.1bn.

Late last year, it pledged to reduce prices on ranges such as Loyd Grossman cooking sauces and Mr Kipling Bakewell slices, after falling cost-inflation and an efficiency drive. The company said it wanted to invest more, including through mergers and acquisitions, now that it had sorted out the risk from a pension deficit.

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Court & Social

Court Circular



BUCKINGHAM PALACE
 May 16th
 His Excellency Mr Ravshan Usmanov was received in audience by the King this afternoon and presented the Letters of Recall of his predecessor and his own Letters of Credence as Ambassador from the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Court of St James's.

Mrs Usmanova was also received by His Majesty.

His Excellency Mr Léopold Tongaonua Bonkougou was received in audience by the King and presented the Letters of Recall of his predecessor and his own Letters of Credence as Ambassador from Burkina Faso to the Court of St James's.

Mrs Bonkougou Ouedraogo was also received by His Majesty.

Sir Philip Barton (Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs) was present. The King received

representatives from the Sustainable Markets Initiative.

The Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MP was received in audience by His Majesty upon relinquishing his appointment as First Minister of Wales.

The King, Patron, this evening attended a Gala Performance at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London WC2, to mark Sir Antonio Pappano's 22-year tenure as Music Director, and was received by Mr Stuart Shilton (Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London), the Chairman of the Royal Opera House (Sir Lloyd Dorfman) and Mr Alexander Beard (Chief Executive).

The Queen, Patron, the Charleston Trust, this morning visited Charleston Literary Festival, Charleston House, Fife, and, having been received by Mr Graham Peters (Vice Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex), attended a talk entitled "The Power of Reading" and a Reception.

Her Majesty this afternoon met representatives of local organisations and community groups at the Parish Church of St Mary, Church Square, Rye, and was received by Mrs Sarah Kowitz (Deputy Lieutenant of East Sussex). The Queen afterwards visited Lamb House, West Street, Rye, and attended a Reception for the

EF Benson Society, the Friends of Tilling and National Trust volunteers.

KENSINGTON PALACE
 May 16th
 The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Appeal, the Fleming Centre, this afternoon attended "The World Together Solving the Antibiotic Emergency" Conference at the Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1, and was received by the Reverend Canon Dr Flora Winfield (Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London).

His Royal Highness, Patron of the Appeal, the Fleming Centre, this evening held a Reception at St James's Palace.

ST JAMES'S PALACE
 May 16th
 The Duke of Edinburgh this afternoon attended a Luncheon with Commonwealth Education Ministers at Marlborough House, London SW1.

ST JAMES'S PALACE
 May 16th
 The Princess Royal, Royal Patron, National Coastwatch Institution, this morning visited Bembridge Station, 25 Forelands Field Road, Bembridge, followed by a Reception at Brading Haven Yacht Club, Embankment Road, Ryde,

and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight (Mrs Susan Sheldon).

Her Royal Highness, President, Royal Yachting Association, later opened the Sea View Yacht Club's Training Centre, Duver Road, Seaview, Isle of Wight.

KENSINGTON PALACE
 May 16th
 The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Richard III Society, this afternoon attended the Society's Centenary Tea at Wax Chandlers' Hall, 6 Gresham Street, London EC2.

former Liberal Democrat MP, 73; **Sir Nicholas Bacon**, Lord Warden of the Stannaries, Duchy of Cornwall, 71; **Mr John Franklin**, Head Master, Christ's Hospital School, 2007-17; **Dame Patricia Reddy**, Governor-General of New Zealand, 2016-21, 70; **Mr Michael Roberts**, former flat racing jockey and Champion Jockey, 1992; now trainer, 70; **Prof Sir Paul Curran**, President, City, University of London, 2010-21, 69; **Mr Ivor Bolton**, conductor, 66; **Mr Paul Whitehouse**, actor, writer and comedian, 66; **Gen Sir Richard Barrons**, Commander Joint Forces Command, 2013-16; President and Colonel Commandant, HAC, 2013-19, 65; Mr Justin King, Chief Executive, J Sainsbury, 2004-14, 63; **Mr Jeremy Vine**, broadcaster, 59; Ms Lucy Frazer, KC, MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 52; Mr Chris Skidmore, MP, Chairman, Net Zero Review, 43; **Ms Chloe Smith**, MP, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, April-July 2023, 42; and **Miss Christine Ohuruogu**, track and field athlete; former Olympic, World and Commonwealth 400m Champion, 40.

Today is the anniversary of the Relief of Mafeking in 1900.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr A.R.St.V. Norman and Miss A.V. Martin
 The engagement is announced between Antony, eldest son of Sir Nigel and Lady Norman, of Wilcote, Oxfordshire, and Alice, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Roy Martin, of Barnes, London. *Online Ref: W0024542*

Mr F.B.R. Wathen and Miss I.M. Birch Reynardson
 The engagement is announced between Francis, son of Mr and Mrs Simon Wathen, of Owlpen, Gloucestershire, and Isabella, daughter of Mr Charles Birch Reynardson, of Chelsea, London, and Mrs Frederick Satow, of Kew, London. *Online Ref: W0024588*

Mr J.D. Mawicke and Miss E.F. Dove
 The engagement is announced between Jason, son of Mr Daniel Mawicke, of Florida, USA, and Mrs Kathryn Hall, of Connecticut, USA, and Elizabeth, daughter of Mr and Mrs Anthony Dove, of Warrington, Cheshire. *Online Ref: W0024585*

Mr J.H.S.C. Harbord and Miss C.E.L. Brook
 The engagement is announced between James, son of Mr and Mrs Jeremy Harbord, of Netheravon, Wiltshire, and Charlotte, daughter of Mrs Alison Brook, of Heathfield, East Sussex, and the late Mr David Brook, of Frensham, Surrey. *Online Ref: W0024525*

Mr S.C. Sykes and Miss D.K. Masters
 The engagement is announced between Sam, son of Mr and Mrs Tim Sykes, of Hambleton, Hampshire, and Daniella, daughter of Mr Steve Masters, of Potworth, West Sussex, and Mrs Karin Masters, of Hayling Island, Hampshire. *Online Ref: W0024557*

Appointment of coroners

Three new senior coroners and six new area coroners have been sworn into office in front of the Chief Coroner, Judge Teague, KC. They are:

Paul Appleton, area coroner, Manchester City; **Nicholas Graham**, area coroner, Oxfordshire; **Paul Smith**, senior coroner, Greater Lincolnshire; **Tony Murphy**, area coroner, London North; **Hannah Godfrey**, area coroner, Berkshire; **Lydia Brown**, senior coroner, London West; **Jayne Wilkes**, area coroner, Greater Lincolnshire; **Daniel Howe**, area coroner, Stoke and Staffordshire; **Julian Morris**, senior coroner, London Inner South.

Legal news

Judge Harvey Murray has been appointed the Designated Family Judge for Cleveland & South Durham with effect from June 3 2024.

Bridge Hand

What's in a lead

By Brian Senior
 VERY often, the opening lead is the most important single card played in any contract. Such proved to be the case on today's deal, where both tables in a team competition saw the same contract attempted after identical auctions, but with a major difference in the two outcomes.

Dealer South
 ♠ Q 6 3
 ♥ 9 7 6
 ♦ 10 8 3
 ♣ A 7 5 4

Game All
 ♠ A 10 7
 ♥ A J 4
 ♦ A Q 5
 ♣ K Q 10 8

At our first table, West made the inspired lead of his singleton club, giving nothing away. Declarer cashed a couple more clubs, seeing West discard a heart and a spade, then led a spade to the Queen, which lost to the King. Back came a club to dummy's ace, and declarer used his last dummy entry to take a second spade finesse. Alas, the 10 lost to Jack, and back came a spade to his own bare ace.

Declarer was in a mess now, and tried the five of diamonds. West put in the 10, but East overlooked with the Jack to lead a diamond through declarer.

Declarer read the diamond position correctly, rising with the

ace and exiting with the Queen. However, though the defence now had to open hearts, this proved to be of no benefit to declarer, who came to only one heart trick and seven in all, so was down two. These were the East/West hands:

♠ J 9 8 2 ♠ K 5 4
 ♥ Q 8 5 2 ♥ K 10 3
 ♦ K 10 8 3 ♦ J 4 2
 ♣ 6 ♣ J 9 3 2

At table two, West led the two of spades. Declarer played low from dummy, and East, fearing that declarer might hold ♠A109, when playing the King would cost a trick, followed low, enabling declarer to win cheaply with the seven.

Declarer cashed four club tricks, seeing West discard once from each of the other suits, then exited with ace and another spade. East won the King of spades, but it was not clear to him which suit he should switch to. He guessed wrong, leading from his stronger heart holding when a diamond would have proved to be more effective.

The 10 of hearts went to the Jack and Queen, and the ♥8 return was covered all around. That meant that declarer could cross to dummy's ♥7 to lead the ♣6. In practice, East played low, so declarer ran the six to West, who was employed to give a 10th trick. However, had East gone up with the 10, declarer would have played the Queen and, once again, West would have won but then been employed.

The defence could have done better later on, but the different opening lead had put declarer ahead of the game at table two.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The Daily Telegraph

LONDON, SATURDAY MAY 17, 1924

WORLD FLIGHT.
BRITISH AT CALCUTTA.

ANOTHER NEW ENGINE.
FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT, ALLAHABAD, FRIDAY (10.15 A.M.).

Squadron-Leader MacLaren and his party left Allahabad at daybreak today on the Vickers-Napier Vulture amphibian for Calcutta in continuation of the world-tour. Departure yesterday was prevented owing to the presence of water in the petrol. Investigation showed that the trouble was due to the accumulation of water and fine sand that had collected during various storms, and finally choked the jets of the carburetters. Yesterday these were thoroughly cleaned, and by evening the Vulture was ready to resume flight.

The new engine that was despatched from Mesopotamia was converted at Karachi from tractor to pusher and sent to Paru, whence it was conveyed on a bullock-cart to the Vulture. After fitting it was discovered that the tropical radiator was leaking, and efforts to repair it proving unavailing, a start was made with an ordinary radiator. By the time Nasirabad was reached, at 7.30 a.m., the great heat rendered further progress impossible, but during the day, with the help of an expert from Jodhpur, the tropical radiator was repaired sufficiently to enable the Vulture to continue the journey to Allahabad, where a new radiator, despatched from Umballa by the Air Force, was fitted.

UNEVENTFUL JOURNEY.
CALCUTTA, FRIDAY.

Squadron-Leader MacLaren and his companions landed at the Dum Dum Aerodrome, some eight miles from Calcutta, at 11.15 Indian standard time this morning, having flown from Allahabad. MacLaren described the journey from Allahabad as uneventful and made in good conditions. He pro-

Bridge news

The regional finals of the Garden Cities trophy have taken place at four centres, writes **Julian Pottage**, *Bridge Correspondent*. This stage of the competition is for each county's winning club teams of eight. At each venue the leading two teams qualify for the grand final at the start of June. Qualifiers are as follows:

Bradford (Northern)
 1st Yorkshire, Sheffield (Arthur Hughes, Mike Pomfrey, Dave Robinson, Tony Sowter, Bazil Caygill, Matthew Kiggins, Richard Pike and Sandy Davies) 41 VPs.
 2nd (on split tie) Manchester, Bramhall and Cheadle (Tom Dessain, Rodney Lighton, Gideon

Chess

Wei Yi's fabulous form

By Malcolm Pein
 THE 2024 Grand Chess Tour got under way with the Superbet Rapid & Blitz Poland, staged from May 8-12 in Warsaw. The \$350,000 prize fund was awarded equally between the two events, with combined scores determining the Tour points for each player.

The field included world number one, Magnus Carlsen, and the next world title challenger, D Gukesh, as well as Jan-Niklas Duda, Wei Yi, Arjun Erigaisi, Vincent Keymer, Kirill Shevchenko, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri.

Wei Yi won the Rapid, finishing half a point ahead of Carlsen. The winner of Tata Steel 2024 continued his fabulous form, scoring 6.5/9 and losing only to Carlsen.

Wei Yi - JK Duda
Gioco Piano 25-10
 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb1 a5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d3 d6 6.Bg5 b7 7.Bh4 a6 8.Nbd2 Ba7 9.a4 (Safeguarding the bishop from Ng6-a5 and preparing action on the queenside) 9...Qe7 10.0-0 g5 11.Bg3 Nh7 12.b4 h5 13.h4 g4 14.Ne1 Nf5 15.b5 Na5 (After 15...Nd8 16.d4 Ng6 17.Nd3! Black loses the e5-pawn or is forced to open the centre after e5xd4 with his king on e5) 17.Nc2 Nxb4 18.f4 was unclear in Chigorin-Nakamura, Titled Tuesday 2023) 16.Bd5 (6.d4 Ng6 17.Nd3 Nxb4 18.dxe5 Ng6! 19.exd6 cxd6 20.e5! dx5 21.Nxe5 Nxe5 22.Bxe5 0-0! was sharp and unclear) 16...c6 (After 16...Ng6! 17.bxa6 c6 18.axb7 Bxb7 19.Ba2 Nxb4 both sides was led a rook's pawn, but White's was defending his king and Black is better) 17.Bd2 Nc3 18.Bb1 a6 19.axb5 cxb5? (The Na5 is needed to deter Nd2-c4, so 19...Nxb4 was

Service dinner

Honourable Artillery Company
 Lt Col G Cobb, HAC, presided and Lt Gen M Elviss, Commander Field Army, was the principal guest at the annual dinner for officers of the Honourable Artillery Company, held last night at Armoury House.

The Rt Hon Dr A Morrison, MP, Gen Sir T Granville-Chapman and Lt Gen Sir A Gregory also attended.

Among the guests were The Rt Hon the Lord Russell of Liverpool, Maj Gen Smyth, Deputy Commander Field Army, Maj Gen Z Stenning, Commandant RMAS, Maj Gen J M Senior, Maj Gen (Ret'd) S F N Lalor and Brig A Jackson, Governor of the Tower of London.

Dinner

Defence and Security Forum
 Miss Lesia Vasylenko, MP, was the Guest Speaker at a dinner of the Defence and Security Forum on the theme "The Voice of Ukraine - Facing up to Dangerous Months Ahead" at the Army and Navy Club last night. The dinner was presided over by Major General Patrick Cordingley. Grace was said by Bishop Gemmett Nowakowski. The Moderator was Francis Dearnley.

Brigadier Ben Barry, Mr Charles Blackmore, Mr Mike Longstaff, the Earl of Oxford and Asquith and Lady Olga Maitland also spoke.

The Week in Westminster

Friday, May 17
 Commons: Private Members' Bills, Remaining Stages: Licensing Hours Extensions Bill; Pensions (Special Rules for End of Life) Bill; Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill; Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Bill; Secure 16 to 19 Ademies Bill; School Attendance (Duties of Local Authorities and Proprietors of Schools) Bill; Space Industry (Indemnities) Bill; Private Members' Bills, Second Readings: Animal Welfare (Responsibility for Dog Attacks) Bill; Benefit Sanctions (Warnings) Bill; Arms-length Bodies (Accountability to Parliament) Bill; Anonymity of Suspects Bill; Government of Wales (Referendum on Devolution) Bill; Immigration and Nationality Fees (Exemption for NHS Clinical Staff) Bill; Welfare Benefits (Adequacy, Debt and Deductions) Bill; Public Sector Websites (Data Charges) Bill; Pets (Microchips) Bill; Climate and Nature Bill; Disposal of Waste (Advertising and Penalty Provision) Bill; Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity (Ratification of Treaty) Bill; State Pension Age (Compensation) Bill; Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill; Off-Road Vehicles (Registration) Bill; adjourned debate on Second Reading (19 April); Horticultural Peat (Prohibition of Sale) Bill; Workers (Rights and Definition) Bill; Health and Safety at Work Bill; Asylum Seekers (Accommodation Eviction Procedures) Bill; Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (Powers) Bill; Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) Bill; Corporate Homicide Bill; Deductions from Universal Credit (Report) Bill; Food Poverty Strategy Bill; Under-Occupancy Penalty (Report) Bill; Devolution (Employment) (Scotland) Bill; Social Security Benefits (Healthy Eating) Bill; Universal Credit Sanctions (Zero Hours Contracts) Bill; Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (Amendment) Bill, adjourned debate on Second Reading (26 April); BBC Licence Fee Non-Payment (Decriminalisation for Over-75s) Bill; Public Sector Exit Payments (Limitation) Bill; Green Belt (Protection) Bill; Greater London Low Emission Zone Charging (Amendment) Bill, adjourned debate on Second Reading (22 March); Highways Act 1980 (Amendment) Bill; Covid-19 Vaccine Damage Payments Bill; Statutory Instruments Act 1946 (Amendment) Bill; Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (Amendment) Bill; Exemption from Value Added Tax (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill; Covid-19 Vaccine Diagnosis and Treatment Bill; Caravan Site Licensing (Exemption of Motor Homes) Bill; NHS England (Alternative Treatment) Bill; British Broadcasting Corporation (Privatisation) Bill; Children's Clothing (Value Added Tax) Bill; Regulatory Impact Assessments Bill; Barnett Formula (Replacement) Bill; Rule of Law (Enforcement by Public Authorities) Bill; Illegal Immigration (Control) Bill; National Health Service Co-Funding and Co-Payment Bill; Caravan Sites Bill; Domestic Energy (Value Added Tax) Bill; Child Criminal Exploitation Bill. Adjournment: Tackling Hajj fraud.

Lords: Legislation: Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill - third reading; Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross (Status) Bill - second reading; Paternity Leave (Bereavement) Bill - second reading; High Streets (Designation, Review and Improvement) Bill - second reading; British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Bill - second reading.

Announcements

Email: announcements.ads@telegraph.co.uk Book online: announcements.telegraph.co.uk

Births

CLEMENT—On 25th April 2024, to Alice (née Stein) and Tom, a son, Frederick. Cresswell Macrae, a brother to Mary. *Online Ref: W0024608*

ECKHOFF DZUBINSKI—On 26th April 2024, to Sheena Eckhof and Adam Dzubinski, a daughter, Maxine Gabriella, sister to Ziggy. Luck be a lady. *Online Ref: W0024499*

Deaths

BARRETT—Naomi Maude (née Ramsay) died peacefully at home. Dearly loved wife of Christopher (deceased), loving mother of Julia, Hugo, Rupert and Tessa, proud grandmother and great grandmother. Funeral Service at 2 p.m. on Friday 28th June at Felton Crematorium. *Online Ref: W0024600*

BARROW—Gp Capt John Barrow passed away on 7th May. Memorial Service at Holy Trinity Church, Dacre Banks, Harrogate on Tuesday 18th June, 11 a.m. No flowers please, donations to RAF Benevolent Fund. *Online Ref: W0024650*

LAWSON—Miranda Josephine. Passed away peacefully on 6th May 2024, surrounded by family, aged 82 years. Beloved wife and stepmother to the Alexander and Lawson families. She will be sadly missed. Funeral Service will be held at St Mary's Church, Knockin on Wednesday 29th May 2024 at 11 a.m. Family flowers only, but donations if wished to Severn Hospice. *Online Ref: W0024634*

LEE—Robin Julian Hugh passed peacefully away at home in Thaxted on Friday 3rd May 2024, aged 86 years after a long illness bravely fought. Loved husband of Dorothy and much loved father of Anna and the late Rupert. Freeman of The City of London. Funeral Service to take place at the Church of St John the Baptist with Our Lady and St Laurence, Thaxted on Friday 7th June at 10.30 a.m. followed by a private family interment. Family flowers only please. Donations, if desired, can be made to the Motor Neurone Disease Association and Thaxted PCC via his personal In-Memory page at www.peasgoodandskeates.co.uk or sent c/o Peasgood & Skeates, Saffron Walden, Shire Hill, CB1 3AQ. *Online Ref: W0024471*

LLOYD—Professor David Allden, BA (Hons Cantab) MB BChir FRCS SA FRCS FACS. Emeritus Professor of Paediatric Surgery at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool, died on 2nd May 2024. A much loved husband and father, and a dedicated surgeon whose life touched many others. Funeral at 12 noon on Friday 31st May at St Michael's Church, Liverpool, L23 8SP. No flowers please, but charitable donations welcome at david-alden-lloyd.muchloved.com *Online Ref: W0024627*

MERCER—Jeremy Lawson died on May 2nd 2024 in hospital aged 79 after years of ill health borne with fortitude and good humour. Beloved husband to Jane, adored father of Ben and Wiggy/ Pippa and grandfather to Georgia, Jack, Edward, Scarlett and Marina. Funeral at Yeovil Crematorium on Friday May 31st at 12.40 p.m. and afterwards at home. *Online Ref: W0024655*

STREETER—James John. On 30th April aged 95 years, of Collingham (late of Newbury). Retired Director of BBA Group, James, beloved husband of Patricia, dear father of Rachel, father-in-law of David, and much loved Papa of Alice and James. Funeral on Tuesday 28th May at 2.20 p.m. at Stonefall Crematorium, Harrogate. Flowers may be sent to Whitley and Leachman F/D, Knaresborough. Tel: 01423 863263. *Online Ref: W0024624*

TRUSTED—Jean Helen (née Illingworth) died peacefully surrounded by her family on 9th May 2024, aged 77 years. Beloved mother to Jos and Dominic, much loved grandmother, adored sibling and friend to so many. Funeral Service for family and friends at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday 19th June at Chelsea Old Church, Cheyne Walk, followed by a reception. *Online Ref: W0024604*

Personal

Text for the day
 IF WE confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1.9 (AV)*

Messages
 GRATEFUL THANKS to St Jude for prayers answered. *CH Online Ref: W0024638*

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Vice-Admiral Sir Clive Johnstone

Commanding officer of HMS *Bulwark* during the mass evacuation of British civilians from Beirut

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR CLIVE JOHNSTONE, who has died aged 60, participated in the largest British evacuation since Dunkirk, and was commander of Nato's Allied Maritime Command for four years.

Johnstone's command in 2006-07 of the amphibious assault ship *Bulwark* demonstrated the flexibility and versatility of sea power. With Royal Marines embarked, he took her for six months on her maiden deployment to the Indian Ocean, where she conducted counter-terrorist and counter-pirate tasks in the Gulf of Aden, and then into the Gulf to provide security for Iraqi oil platforms against terrorist and Iranian threats.

On the passage home, *Bulwark* was off Barcelona and only a few days away from Plymouth when on July 15 she was diverted to the eastern Mediterranean.

After an Israeli attempt to kill a Hamas leader in Gaza, Hezbollah had entered Israel from Lebanon, killing three Israeli soldiers and taking two hostages. In retaliation Israel bombed Beirut airport and the northern roads into Syria and tens of thousands of non-combatants were trapped. These included British civilians, who were advised to lie low and wait for the Navy to arrive. Operation Highbrow, involving British warships and helicopters, including Chinooks from Cyprus, was mounted to rescue them.

The Foreign Office had established that some 5,000 citizens, mainly dual-nationality, were eligible for evacuation, and when the helicopter airlift proved too slow, and not knowing what danger might arise from the Israeli navy or from Muslim terrorists, Johnstone took *Bulwark* into Beirut harbour.

During what was said to be the largest British evacuation by sea since Dunkirk, on July 20 *Bulwark* embarked 1,300 people to ferry to Cyprus. Highbrow ended on July 22, when between 3,500 and 4,400 British citizens had been evacuated, but *Bulwark* stayed off the coast for four more weeks at a high state of readiness.

Johnstone was appointed CBE and his operations officer Lieutenant Commander Chris Saunders MBE.



Johnstone: piercing intellect and dynamism. Below, invested CBE by Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in 2007

Clive Charles Carruthers Johnstone was born on September 6 1963 in Kampala, Uganda, into a family who had served for generations in the Royal Navy and British Army. He was educated at Shrewsbury School and gained a naval bursary to read anthropology at Durham University. There he rowed for GB Juniors and competed as an under-23 international, but his career as an oarsman was halted by severe injuries during a road accident.

His first ship was the fishery protection vessel *Shetland*, in the cold and stormy far reaches of the North Sea, where at first Johnstone was seasick. But he soon recovered and, typically, explored every corner of the ship, chatting with everyone on board, absorbing knowledge and rapidly becoming a hugely competent and popular officer. His humour showed in his party-trick parody of Noël Coward's war film *In Which We Serve*, which he restyled as "Cruel Sea Night".

After an appointment as navigating officer of the minesweeper *Nurton*, in 1996-97 he was first lieutenant of the Royal Yacht *Britannia* in her final commission covering the then Prince of Wales's historic visit to Northern Ireland, the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, and Queen Elizabeth II's summer cruise to the Western Isles.

Johnstone's career progressed rapidly and in 1999 he commanded the frigate *Iron Duke* during the war in Kosovo. While *Iron Duke* patrolled the Adriatic in defence watches, six hours on and six hours off with her weapons ready, and escorted ships carrying humanitarian aid to refugees, some three dozen of his people flew home for various reasons, including one man when his son became seriously ill with meningitis. "If something comes up in one of the men's lives that is

important," Johnstone said, "then I will try to get him home... but it's a bit different for the captain."

During deployment in the English Channel, with his wife about to give birth, Johnstone himself left the ship on a Friday; his daughter Emily Louise was born at 16:30 on the Monday, and Johnstone was back in *Iron Duke* by 19:00 that evening.

After commanding *Bulwark*, he was Director of Naval Staff at the Ministry of Defence, and then Principal Staff Officer to the Chief of the Defence Staff. Promoted to flag officer, he became Flag Officer, Sea Training in 2011, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Policy) in 2013, and Commander Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) in 2015, when he was also appointed CB.

At MARCOM, based at Northwood, Middlesex and reporting to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Johnstone was the prime maritime adviser to Nato, where he was much admired for his clear-sightedness, intelligence and impressive delivery. It was a wonder to many that Johnstone did not go on to be First Sea Lord, but he was up against strong competition. Instead, he was knighted in 2019, and retired from the Navy in 2020.

His potential was then seized upon by Sarah Kenny, CEO of BMT, a leading international company offering scientific, engineering and technical services and consultancy. BMT made Johnstone their director of strategy, where he brought a fresh approach to strategic planning and a dynamic flair for complex programmes of change, as well as a wry sense of humour and a deep care for people.

His enduring interest in strategy was shown by his membership of the Royal United Services Institute think tank and his work in the Nato advisory

committee of the Bratislava-based Centre for Democracy and Resilience. As chairman of the Naval Review, he showed infectious enthusiasm and was a passionate advocate for the many causes he believed in.

Admitted as a younger brother of Trinity House in 2009, he was engaged with the Maritime Leaders Forum, a Trinity House initiative jointly with Maritime UK, and was preparing to be a panellist at the next conference, "Maritime Trade in an Unstable World - Security for Mariners, Ships and Cargoes", later this year.

Although he only recently became a livyman of the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights, he was a highly regarded and popular member.

Last year, Johnstone was appointed the national president of the Royal British Legion and he led the legion at its Remembrance Day ceremonies. This year, he chaired the legion's annual conference in Newport, Wales, sharing his passion for "the best and most amazing charity". He died shortly afterwards, however.

Johnstone was an inspirational man of great integrity, dynamism and piercing intellect. Passionately interested in people, he had advised undergraduates at Durham, and he retained an interest in mentoring in university programmes, elite sport, and business management.

"It's people who make the world go round, not technology," he would say.

In 1990 Johnstone married the opera singer Alison Duguid, whom he met at university, and he enjoyed above all spending time with his family at their cottage in Argyll; she survives him with their two daughters.

Vice-Admiral Sir Clive Johnstone, born September 6 1963, died May 12 2024

Colin Breed

Amiable pro-hunting Lib Dem MP for South East Cornwall

COLIN BREED, who has died aged 77, was a former bank manager who was Liberal Democrat MP for South East Cornwall between 1997 and 2010, and for much of his time in the Commons a front-bench party spokesman.

A Methodist local preacher, he opposed a ban on hunting and the extension of gay rights, voted against the Iraq War and regularly visited the Middle East trying to promote greater understanding.

Amicable and bearded, Breed built a reputation for trying to find out what lay behind the obvious in any issue. He campaigned against the "neglect" of Cornwall by national government, the closure of community hospitals, and water charges he saw as excessive, and sought the rationalisation of Devonport naval dockyard.

Colin Edward Breed was born in London on May 4 1947, the son of Alfred Breed, a chef, and the former Edith Smith. He spent his childhood in Wandsworth, then after his father took up a job in Torquay attended the town's grammar school.

He joined the Midland Bank at 17, working his way up to area manager. From 1981 he spent a decade as managing director of Rowan Dartington, now part of St James's Place. After a brief corporate finance consultancy, he was a director of Gemini Abrasives from 1992 until his election to Parliament.

Breed joined the Liberal Party in 1966, and in 1982 was elected to both Caradon District Council and Saltash Town Council; he was twice mayor of Saltash.

For the 1992 election, he was agent to the local MEP Robin Teverson in his unsuccessful campaign to oust the Conservative Robert Hicks as MP for South East Cornwall.

Five years on, Hicks retired and the Conservatives chose Warwick Lightfoot, a former special adviser, to succeed him. His opponent's lack of local roots, and the national swing against John Major's government, helped Breed capture the seat by 6,480 votes; he would retain it in 2001 and 2005.

In his maiden speech Breed welcomed the £40 million Lottery grant that launched what became the Eden Project. He went on to promote an Energy Efficiency Bill to make such



Colin Breed: sought to heal divisions in the countryside

data compulsory in a mortgage survey, being livid when the maverick Tory Eric Forth talked it out.

Paddy Ashdown soon appointed him a front-bench spokesman on trade and industry. Charles Kennedy brought Breed into his shadow cabinet, giving him the agriculture portfolio. At this time, he also served on the General Medical Council.

At the start of 2001 Breed formed an All-Party Group on the countryside with the Conservative David Curry and Labour's Bob Blizzard, in an effort to heal the divisions in Parliament caused by the ongoing strife over banning foxhunting.

As foot-and-mouth disease spread that spring, forcing postponement of the general election, Breed called for the replacement of Maff with a Department for Rural Affairs. Post-election, Tony Blair's government relaunched the ministry as Defra; Breed kept the agriculture portfolio, but now outside his leader's inner circle.

Kennedy moved Breed to defence in 2002, giving him a higher profile as British and US forces struggled to take control of Iraq. After the 2005 election he was once again a Defra spokesman, under Kennedy, Menzies Campbell and Nick Clegg.

Breed stood down at the 2010 election, aged 62. The Conservatives retook South East Cornwall by 3,220 votes, and with the election deadlocked Clegg took the Lib Dems into coalition with David Cameron's Conservatives.

Out of Parliament, Breed was until 2017 one of a dozen former MPs with Global Partners Governance, delivering specialist technical advice worldwide.

Colin Breed married Janet Courtiour in 1968. She survives him, with their son and daughter.

Colin Breed, born May 4 1947, died May 9 2024

James Laurenson

Gifted stage actor with an 'Everyman quality' who was also a memorable screen supporting player

JAMES LAURENSON, the actor who has died aged 84, arrived in Britain from his native New Zealand in the early 1960s and enjoyed a varied career in theatre, television and film.

He made his film debut in 1969 with a small part in Ken Russell's *Women in Love* and his other screen roles ranged from Major General Ross in the Sharpe television series to Pink's Father in Alan Parker's *Pink Floyd: The Wall*.

On stage he played leading roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre and became a regular in productions by the Peter Hall Company after its foundation in 1998. Hall described him as "a great actor, because he had that Everyman quality. All great actors carry with them this quality: when they walk on the stage they do it for us."

In 2011 he was nominated for an Olivier award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for his portrayal of the Ghost and the Player King in Nicholas Hytner's acclaimed production of *Hamlet*, one reviewer noting that as the Player King, normally an ornately speechy role, Laurenson helped to make "the play-within-a-play into a moving tragedy-within-the-tragedy".

Hytner later forwarded to the cast an ecstatic email he had received from Stephen Sondheim in which he singled out Laurenson's performance: "When I found myself crying at the Ghost scene, I knew that something special was happening to me (Mr Laurenson gets my gold medal)."

In 1970 Laurenson joined Ian McKellen in television's first gay kiss, playing Piers Gaveston opposite McKellen's king in a Prospect Theatre Company production of Marlowe's *Edward II*. The BBC Two broadcast caused remarkably little commotion, despite coming only three years after the decriminalisation of homosexuality. The production had opened at the 1969 Edinburgh Festival then moved to the West End, McKellen recalling that kissing Laurenson (who was not gay) "was a bonus throughout the run".

Meanwhile, Laurenson became a stalwart of television. In 1968 he took a



Laurenson in ITV's *Crown Court* and, right, in 1970 as Piers Gaveston opposite Ian McKellen's Edward II in television's first gay kiss

guest role in *Coronation Street* as the Reverend Peter Hope of St Mary's Church. Later on, he had significant roles in both *State of Play* and *Spooks*, and his numerous British credits included the usual suspects, among them the first *Inspector Morse* drama, "The Dead of Jericho" (1987), as well as *Bergerac*, *Lovejoy*, *Taggart*, *Prime Suspect* and *Midsomer Murders*. In the US he was seen in *Cagney and Lacey* and *Remington Steele*.

His most significant small-screen appearance, however, was the title role in *Boney* (1971-2), an Australian detective series centred on the half-Aboriginal Detective Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte, created by the novelist Arthur Upfield.

The casting caused anger, not just because Laurenson, who wore dark make-up for the role, was white, but because he was a Kiwi to boot. However, his performance won admiring reviews, a critic in Australia's *The Age* opining that his "tall frame and dark, rugged good looks... should make him Australia's newest TV sex symbol", while the *Sydney Morning Herald* predicted that he would have "half the women of Australia drooling over their sets".



The series was well received in Britain, where it aired late at night on ITV, though it was not screened in the US, as the distributors said the public would not believe in a lawman who did not carry a gun.

James Laurenson was born at Marton on New Zealand's North Island on February 17 1940. His earliest memory was "seeing a Lockheed Hudson flying over our house and being told that my father was in it".

His father was also a keen amateur actor and at Canterbury University College, Christchurch, James was directed by the bestselling crime writer Ngaio (later Dame Ngaio) Marsh in several student productions, including the title role in *Macbeth*. She would dedicate her final novel, *Light Thickers*, centred on a stage production of *Macbeth*, to Laurenson.

When he arrived in London in the early 1960s, he recalled, "the first thing I learnt is that it is really hard to find work and be offered scripts. You have to have a passion for acting - Hollywood might come knocking but on the other hand you may spend vast amounts of the time unemployed."

In 1974, he took the lead role in the TV film *The Prison*, based on a novel by

Georges Simenon. In 1984 he played Julian Marsh in the West End production of Gower Champion's musical *42nd Street* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He was Vladimir in Peter Hall's production of *Waiting for Godot* and appeared in numerous Shakespeare productions on stage and television, including as the Earl of Westmoreland in adaptations of *Henry IV Parts I and 2* in *The Hollow Crown* series on BBC Two (2012).

In the late 1990s Laurenson moved from London to Frome in Somerset and enjoyed some of his busiest years as a regular in the Peter Hall Company summer festival productions at the Theatre Royal, Bath, and on tour.

In 2004 he starred as Roebuck Ramsden and Statue in *Man and Superman*, Don Luis in *Don Juan* and Pope Urban in *Galileo's Daughter*, and among other roles went on to play Duke Vincentio in *Measure for Measure*, the blustering prime minister in Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion*, Sir Peter Teazle in Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* and Dr Frobisher, the pompously evasive headmaster in Rattigan's *The Browning Version*. He also played in company productions of *As You Like It* in Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and London.

Laurenson did a lot of radio work, including the role of the Squire of Altarnun in Radio 4's 1991 adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn*. In 2016, he played the role of the royal physician Sir John Weir in the Netflix series *The Crown*.

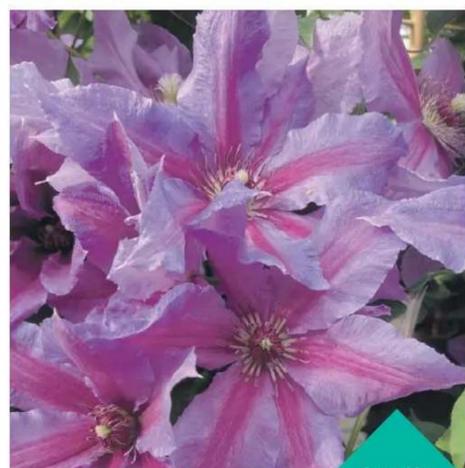
Laurenson relaxed, he told the *Western Daily Press* in 2012, by "walking our dog, Maisie, down by the River Mells" and was happiest "tucked up with my lady listening to Oscar Peterson and Dizzie Gillespie playing *If I Were a Bell*".

His first marriage to the actress Carol Macready ended in 1997. He is survived by his second wife, Cari Haysom, and by his son Jamie from his first marriage.

James Laurenson, born February 17 1940, died April 18 2024

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Television & Radio

Television reviews

Forget your woes, Man Utd fans, and party like it's 1999



Teddy Sheringham and Nicky Butt celebrate during the historic treble-winning season

At Manchester United, so fans of other football clubs gloat, all they have is history. With the team faltering, the manager awaiting delivery of his P45 and the supporters swamped by a leaky stadium roof, the past is less a foreign country and more a refuge from a woeful present. And there is no more explored territory than the 1999 season when, under the laser-eyed watch of Alex Ferguson, United won the treble: the Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League.

Which might make you wonder what is the point of 99, a new series from Amazon Prime Video. But this is a superb piece of work, informed, smart, filled with the recall of those who made it happen (it helps that the producer is one David Beckham). And it is what they have to say that makes this as acute an insight into what forges sporting success as any you will see.

Take the scene when Phil Neville, United's then reserve full back, recalls how close he came to missing it all up. We see him watching footage of the FA Cup semi-final replay, when, with only seconds of time left and exhausted by the pressure, he conceding a penalty.

Had Arsenal scored, the treble dream was dead. And it was obvious where the finger of blame would point. Neville revisits what was going through his mind as he lay face down

on the turf, knowing what the repercussions would be.

We now know that goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel saved the penalty, that in extra time Ryan Giggs scored a winner for the ages, that the Neville trophy cabinet soon required expansion to fit all the medals. But the grey expression on his face even now, as he remembers his minute of misery, speaks about sport and its meaning more loudly than a thousand trumpeting of glory.

Through such intense testimony, the series reminds us that what made the achievement special was how often those involved flirted with failure.

It is not just Neville – the series is full of tales of frayed nerves, personal disappointments and internal rivalries. As the striker and later club manager Ole Gunnar Solskjær puts it, the team don't often reunite because, well, they didn't all get on. Which makes their success ever more intriguing.

Such is the tribal nature of English football that, however brilliantly Sampson Collins, the director, has interrogated his cast and scoured the archive, this programme is unlikely to gain much traction in Liverpool, Leeds or in the blue parts of Stockport. But for those intrigued by the psychology of sport, about the way fear of failure is the most potent fuel in the drive for success, it is a treat. **Jim White**

Huey P Newton is a hard character to pin down. On the one hand the co-founder of the influential Black Panther movement is a seminal figure in race politics and worthy of celebration. Yet he was a tortured soul whose history of violence and mental-health issues alienated many of those around him.

That's more than enough material for a hard-hitting character study to shine a spotlight on the racial divisions in American society that continue to this day. But while *The Big Cigar* (Apple TV+) pays lip service to the issues that dominated Newton's life, they serve as a smokescreen for what it really wants to be... a *Shaft*-era Blaxploitation movie in six episodes.

The narrative arc is hooked on the true-ish saga of how movie producer Bert Schneider attempted to engineer Newton's escape to Cuba in 1974 so that his hero could evade arrest for murder. It's a comedy of cock-ups from start to finish as bribes, backstabbers and dodgy boat skippers collide in a mess of confusion that plays into Newton's (André Holland) escalating state of mental confusion. "I keep finding myself in some kind of prison or another," he muses as he cheats jail again. "The prison of my own mind."

Such moments provide a snapshot of what this show could be if it followed through on its source material. When digging into Newton's mind and the rival ambitions that undermined the Black Panthers, we are taken to the heart of a key period of recent history.

So much so that Newton's flight to Cuba and Schneider's part in it feel unnecessary. Alessandro Nivola never quite gets under the skin of the privileged Schneider, a man apparently prepared to risk everything for a cause he only has the shakiest of handles on.

That's not to say that *The Big Cigar* doesn't smoke along entertainingly enough. The period detail, from ace afros and the cracking soundtrack, feel right on the money. And, if nothing else, it will make you want to know more about the man at the centre of it all. "I was an icon and a mortal man," reflects Newton as the credits close in. If only *The Big Cigar* had chosen which one it wanted to follow. **Keith Watson**

99 ★★★★★
The Big Cigar ★★★

What to watch

REBUS
BBC Scotland, 10pm



Stuart Bowman, Richard Rankin and Brian Ferguson star in this brooding detective reboot

With all six parts box-setted on iPlayer and episode one airing on BBC One tomorrow night, Gregory Burke's take on Ian Rankin's titular Detective Inspector (played by John Hannah and Ken Stott in ITV's much-loved adaptations) reimagines him as a more youthful Detective Sergeant, this time wearing a hoodie but still pounding the streets of Edinburgh or, more commonly, glowering over

a pint in one of its many pubs. Richard Rankin's darkly charismatic copper is perhaps the most misanthropic incarnation to date (which is saying something), beginning the series by almost suffocating Ger Cafferty (a loathsome Stuart Bowman), the venal gangster whose actions have left Rebus's boss in a wheelchair. From there, Rebus lays out a family member, continues an ill-advised affair, attempts

to ignore his ex's pregnancy and alienates a daughter with already mixed feelings about her father, all the while trying to investigate a brutal attack on one of Cafferty's goons that suggests links to the military and even closer to home. Auld Reekie looks the part as always, and there is a palpable sense of a fraying society holding itself together no better than our protagonist that grips from the off. **Gabriel Tate**

COMEDY

The Young Offenders
BBC One, 9.30pm
The raucous Irish sitcom continues with Conor (Alex Murphy) once again being released from prison – conveniently for him, he was locked up nice and locally in Cork, "so you don't have to walk far when you get let out" – and vowing to turn his luck around. That means passing his school leaver's exams – though it soon becomes clear that academic excellence (and a future on the straight and narrow) is a secondary priority to winning a bet against enemy Gavin (Daniel Power).



Power explores America's relationship with the police

DOCUMENTARY

Power
Netflix
Every other week seems to bring worrying news of police overreach in the

US, from violence to abuses of power, and from its earliest incarnations in 18th-century "slave patrols", the police have been regarded with suspicion in some communities – particularly among African-Americans. Yance Ford's ambitious film attempts to make sense of its divisive role in American life.

Unreported World
Channel 4, 7.30pm
Reporter Amelia Jenne meets those risking their lives by speaking out against the so-called "timber mafia" – Romania's illegal loggers, taking advantage of Europe's last virgin forests for a quick profit, often waded through



by the government. Despite attempted intervention by the EU, it is estimated that around half of the timber harvested in the country is done illegally, breeding criminality and giving profit to gang leaders.

FACTUAL

The Big Steam Adventure
Channel 5, 8pm
This charming railway jaunt continues, with John Sergeant, Peter Davison and Paul "Piglet" Middleton boarding a T3 through Dorset, which means stunning coastal views of Corfe Castle, a slog up the sprawling green Dorset hills, a windswept walk over Chesil Beach and too many sweets for the erstwhile Time Lord.



Sue Perkins visits Phuket, Thailand's largest island

Hidden Treasures of the National Trust
BBC Two, 9pm; Wales, 9.30pm
Two sprawling domestic hubs of Edwardian society are the focus of tonight's fascinating edition, with a John Singer Sargent portrait and garden stonework at the Astor family pile of Cliveden House in need of attention, and the exteriors of Surrey mansion Polesden Lacey facing major restoration.

Sue Perkins: Lost in Thailand
Channel 5, 9pm
The comedian and presenter continues her off-beaten track tour of Thailand in Phuket, where she gets stuck in with an eco-friendly litter picking (that includes rifling through plastic bottles thrown in the Andaman Sea) and learns to harvest natural rubber. **GT**

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The Daily T

A new Telegraph podcast

Radio choice



Heart and Soul
World Service, 1.30pm & 10.30pm

This atmospheric documentary whisks us off to the sun-splashed hills of

southern France and the cloistered world of a historic Benedictine abbey, whose wine-making pedigree has, in recent years, been revived to help local small wine-makers survive. It's

the perfect combination of cheery anecdote and deeper insight to changing business trends, both in France and Britain. Later, Michael Mosely concludes his soothing week-long special

Deep Calm (Radio 4, 10.45pm) with an edition exploring music's ability to trigger the body's relaxation response. Pour a glass, turn on the tunes and relax. **Gerard O'Donovan**

RADIO 1

FM 97.5-99.8MHz

6.33am Radio 1's Best New Pop **6.57** Newsbeat **7.00** Radio 1 Breakfast with Greg James **10.00** Radio 1 Anthems with Greg James **10.30** Newsbeat **10.32** Radio 1 Anthems **11.02** Danny Beard **12.45pm** Newsbeat **1.00** Matt and Mollie **3.00** Radio 1's Party Anthems **4.00** The Official Chart on Radio 1 with Jack Saunders **5.45** Newsbeat **6.00** Radio 1's Dance Party with Danny Howard **8.00** Radio 1's Future Dance with Sarah Story **10.00** Pete Tong **12.00** Radio 1's Essential Mix **2.00am** Radio 1 Dance Presents **3.00** Danny Howard Club Mix **4.00** Radio 1's Chillout Anthems **5.00 - 6.00am** Radio 1 Relax

RADIO 2

FM 88-90.2MHz

6.30am The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Scott Mills **3.30** Scott Mills' Wonder Years **4.00** Sara Cox **7.00** Michelle Visage **8.30** Michelle Visage's Handbag Hits **9.00** The Good Groove with Gary Davies **11.00** The Rock Show with Johnnie Walker. A selection of rock tracks **12.00** Ramesh Ranganathan: For the Love of Hip-Hop **1.00am** Who Are We: Doctor Who? **2.00** My Life in a Mixtape **3.00** Abba at the BBC **4.00** Sophie Ellis-Bextor's Kitchen Disco **5.00 - 6.00am** Radio 2 In Concert: Dexy's Midnight Runners

RADIO 3

FM 90.2-92.4MHz

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.00pm** News **1.02** Classical Live **4.00** Composer of the Week: Elizabeth Maconchy **5.00** In Tune **7.00** Classical Mixtape. Featuring the soundtrack to the film Howl's Moving Castle **7.30** Friday Night Is Music Night. Film and classical music on the theme of flying **9.45** The Essay: Music

in Bloom **10.00** Late Junction **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30 - 6.30am** Through the Night

RADIO 4

FM 92.4-94.6MHz; LW 198kHz

6.00am Today **9.00** Desert Island Discs **10.00** Woman's Hour **11.00** The Food Programme **11.45** Book of the Week: The Immune Mind **12.00** News **12.04pm** AntiSocial. The issues of the day, presented by Adam Fleming **12.57** Weather **1.00** The World at One. Presented by Jonny Dymond **1.45** Shadow War: China and the West. The possibility of conflict between China and the West **2.00** The Archers. Emotions run high for one family **2.15** Drama: Money Gone. By Ed Seltek **2.45** Child. India Rakusens considers crawling **3.00** Gardeners' Question Time. Experts answer listeners' queries **3.45** Short Works. An Affliction, by Lottie Mills **4.00** Last Word. A selection of obituaries **4.30** Life Changing. People talk about extraordinary turning points in their lives. Last in the series **5.00 PM 5.57** Weather **6.00** Six O'Clock News **6.30** Dead Ringers. Comedy Impressions **7.00** The Archers. There's a sad goodbye for Chris **7.15** Screenshot **8.00** Any Questions? **8.50** A Point of View **9.00** Free Thinking **9.59** Weather **10.00** The World Tonight **10.45** Deep Calm – with Michael Mosley See Radio choice **11.00** Americast **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.00** News and Weather **12.30am** Book of the Week: The Immune Mind **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.00** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45 - 6.00am** Just One Thing with Michael Mosley

RADIO 5

MW 693 & 909kHz

6.00am 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Chiles on Friday

1.00pm Elis James and John Robins **2.00** Colin Murray **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport: The Friday Football Social. A look ahead to the weekend's football action **8.30** 5 Live Boxing. Build-up to Tyson Fury v Oleksandr Usyk **9.30** 5 Live Formula 1. The 5 Live F1 team preview this weekend's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix **10.00** Stephen Nolan **1.00am** Greg McKenzie **5.00 - 6.00am** 5 Live Boxing

CLASSIC FM

FM 99.9-101.9MHz

6.30am Classic FM Breakfast with Dan Walker **9.00** The Classic FM Hall of Fame Hour with Dan Walker **10.00** Alexander Armstrong **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Classic FM at the Movies with Jonathan Ross. Jonathan chooses scores from Toy Story 2 and Charlots of Fire **9.00** The Sound of Bridgerton: Kris Bowers in Conversation with Margherita Taylor **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Katie Breathwick **4.00 - 7.00am** Sam Pittis

WORLD SERVICE

DIGITAL ONLY

8.00am News **8.06** HARDtalk **8.30** Business Daily **8.50** Witness History **9.00** The Newsworld **9.30** Science in Action **10.00** News **10.06** Unexpected Elements **11.00** The Newsworld **11.30** The Global Story **12.00** News **12.06pm** Outlook **12.50** Witness History **1.00** The Newsworld **1.30** Heart and Soul See Radio choice **2.00** Newshour **3.00** News **3.06** HARDtalk **3.30** World Business Report **4.00** BBC OS **6.00** News **6.06** Outlook **6.50** Witness History **7.00** The Newsworld **7.30** Sport Today **8.00** News **8.06** BBC OS Conversations **8.30** CrowdScience **9.00** Newshour **10.00** News **10.06** HARDtalk **10.30** Heart and Soul See Radio choice **11.00** The Newsworld **11.30** World Business Report **12.00** News

12.06am Unexpected Elements **1.00** News **1.06** Business Matters **2.00** The Newsworld **2.30** Stumped **3.00** News **3.06** Outlook **3.50** Witness History **4.00** News **4.06** Unexpected Elements **5.00** The Newsworld **5.30** Dear Daughter **5.50 - 6.00am** More or Less

RADIO 4 EXTRA

DIGITAL ONLY

6.00am The Call of the Wild **6.30** One, Two, Buckle My Shoe **7.00** The Older Woman **7.30** Albert and Me **8.00** Says on the Tin **8.30** Brooklyn **8.45** The Mill on the Floss **9.00** Yesterday in Parliament **9.30** Britain at Sea **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Soul Music **10.30** Arise Black Man: The Peter Tosh Story **11.00** The Call of the Wild **11.30** One, Two, Buckle My Shoe **12.00** The Older Woman **12.30pm** Albert and Me **1.00** Says on the Tin **1.30** Brooklyn **1.45** The Mill on the Floss **2.00** The 3rd Degree **2.30** Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me **3.00** Bowen and Betjeman **3.45** The Amorous Ghost **4.00** Soul Music **4.30** Arise Black Man: The Peter Tosh Story **5.00** The Call of the Wild **5.30** One, Two, Buckle My Shoe **6.00** The Older Woman **6.30** Albert and Me **7.00** Says on the Tin **7.30** Brooklyn **7.45** The Mill on the Floss **8.00** The 3rd Degree **8.30** Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me **9.00** Bowen and Betjeman **9.45** The Amorous Ghost **10.00** You Heard It Here First **10.30** The Maltby Collection **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.00** Absolute Power **11.30** Bird Island **11.45** Tina C Goes Down: Under: The Abrogation Monologues **12.00** Soul Music **12.30am** Arise Black Man: The Peter Tosh Story **1.00** The Call of the Wild **1.30** One, Two, Buckle My Shoe **2.00** The Older Woman **2.30** Albert and Me **3.00** Says on the Tin **3.30** Brooklyn **3.45** The Mill on the Floss **4.00** The 3rd Degree **4.30** Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me **5.00** Bowen and Betjeman **5.45 - 6.00am** The Amorous Ghost

Main channels

BBC One

6.00 am Breakfast (S) 9.30 Morning Live (S) 10.45 Defenders: Busting the Bad Guys (R) (S) 11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (R) (S)
 12.15 pm Bargain Hunt (AD) (S)
 1.00 BBC News at One; Weather (S)
 1.30 Regional News; Weather (S)
 1.45 Hope Street (AD) (S)
 2.30 Money for Nothing (R) (S)
 3.00 Escape to the Country (R) (S)
 3.45 Garden Rescue (S)
 4.30 The Finish Line (S)
 5.15 Pointless (S)
 6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather (S)
 6.30 Regional News; Weather (S)



The Young Offenders

7.00 The One Show Hosted by Alex Jones and Roman Kemp (S)
 7.30 MasterChef The semi-finals come to an end (AD) (S)

8.00 Granite Harbour Lindo and Bart face a race against time to save innocent lives. Last in the series (AD) (S)

9.00 Have I Got News for You With Jess Phillips and Glenn Moore (S)

9.30 The Young Offenders Conor takes a job at the fishmonger's See What to watch (AD) (S)

10.00 BBC News at Ten (S)
 10.30 Regional News; Weather (S)

10.40 FILM: The Imitation Game (2014) Biopic of codebreaker Alan Turing starring Benedict Cumberbatch See Film choice (AD) (S) 12.35 - 6.00am News

BBC Two

6.30 am Money for Nothing (R) (S) 7.15 Garden Rescue (R) (S) 8.00 Sign Zone: Antiques Roadshow (R) (S) 9.00 News (S)
 1.00 pm Impossible (R) (S)
 1.45 Mastermind (R) (S)
 2.15 Mastermind (R) (S)
 2.45 Great Coastal Railway Journeys (AD) (R) (S)
 3.15 Dogs in the Wild: Meet the Family (AD) (R) (S)
 4.15 Summer: Earth's Seasonal Secrets (AD) (R) (S)
 5.15 Flog It! (R) (S)
 6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games (R) (S)
 6.30 Marcus Wareing Simply Provence (S)



Hidden Treasures of the National Trust

7.00 Grand Tours of Scotland's Rivers The River Forth (AD) (S)
 7.30 Beechgrove Garden Calum Clunie plants out a bed to produce cut flowers all summer long (S)

8.00 Gardeners' World Monty Don moves his tender succulents outdoors (S)

9.00 Hidden Treasures of the National Trust Cameras focus on Cliveden House and Polesden Lacey See What to watch (AD) (S)

10.00 QI More of the best moments from the U series hosted by Sandi Toksvig. Last in the series (S)
 10.30 Newsnight (S)

11.05 Rob and Rylan's Grand Tour 12.05am Secrets and Spies: A Nuclear Game 1.05 Sign Zone: Panorama 1.40 Sign Zone: Andi Oliver's Fabulous Feasts 2.35 Sign Zone: David & Jay's Touring Toolshed 3.05 - 6.15am This Is BBC Two

ITV1

6.00 am Good Morning Britain (S) 9.00 Lorraine (S) 10.00 This Morning (S)
 12.30 pm Loose Men (S)
 1.30 News; Weather (S)
 1.55 Regional News; Weather (S)
 2.00 ITV Racing: Live from York Coverage of today's race meetings (S)
 4.30 Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals (R) (S)
 5.00 The Chase (R) (S)
 6.00 Regional News; Weather (S)
 6.30 News; Weather (S)



Coronation Street

7.30 Emmerdale Kim is jealous when she finds Lydia and Rose bonding (AD) (S)

8.00 Coronation Street David falls under suspicion of attacking Nathan (AD) (S)

9.00 It'll Be Alright on the Night Featuring outtakes from Heartstopper, Plebs, and Coronation Street (AD) (S)

10.00 News; Weather (S)
 10.30 Regional News; Weather (S)
 10.40 ITV Studio Sessions Clara Amfo is joined by Tom Walker (S)

11.10 FILM: Casino Royale (2006) James Bond spy thriller starring Daniel Craig See Film choice 1.35am Shop on TV 3.00 English Football League Playoff Highlights 3.35 Unwind with ITV 5.05 - 6.00am Katie Piper's Breakfast Show

Channel 4

6.30 am 3rd Rock from the Sun (AD) (R) (S) 6.55 3rd Rock from the Sun (AD) (R) (S) 7.20 3rd Rock from the Sun (AD) (R) (S) 7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (AD) (R) (S) 8.10 Everybody Loves Raymond (AD) (R) (S) 8.40 Everybody Loves Raymond (AD) (R) (S) 9.10 Everybody Loves Raymond (AD) (R) (S) 9.40 Frasier (AD) (R) (S) 11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (R) (S)
 12.05 pm Channel 4 News (S)
 12.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (R) (S)
 1.05 Find It, Fix It, Flog It (R) (S)
 2.10 Countdown (S)
 3.00 A Place in the Sun (R) (S)
 4.00 Narrow Escapes (AD) (S)
 5.00 Come Dine with Me: The Professionals (S)
 6.00 Four in a Bed (S)
 6.30 The Simpsons (AD) (R) (S)



Unreported World

7.00 Channel 4 News (S)

7.30 Unreported World The illegal logging trade in Romania See What to watch (AD) (S)

8.00 Double the Money The remaining teams are given one week to double £1,000 (AD) (S)

9.00 Gogglebox The households' opinions on recent TV (AD) (S)

10.00 Late Night Lycett Chat show (S)
 11.05 Joe Lycett: More, More, More! How Do You Lycett? How Do You Lycett? 12.05am FILM: Mean Girls (2004) Comedy starring Lindsay Lohan 1.45 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA 2.30 Come Dine with Me 2.55 Come Dine with Me 3.20 Come Dine with Me 3.45 Come Dine with Me 4.10 Come Dine with Me 4.35 Grand Designs Australia 5.30 - 6.00am Beat the Chef

Channel 5

6.00 am Milkshake! 9.15 Jeremy Vine (S) 11.15 Storm Huntley (S)
 12.45 pm Friends (AD) (R) (S)
 1.10 Friends (AD) (R) (S)
 1.40 5 News at Lunchtime (S)
 1.45 Home and Away (R) (S)
 2.15 FILM: The Stranger in My Home (2020, TVM) Thriller starring Anna Marie Dobbins (S)
 4.00 Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (AD) (S)
 5.00 5 News at 5 (S)
 6.00 Police Interceptors (R) (S)
 6.55 5 News Update (S)



The Big Steam Adventure

7.00 Jane McDonald: Lost in Japan The presenter explores Kyoto (R) (S)

7.55 5 News Update (S)

8.00 The Big Steam Adventure: Here We Go Again! The trio take a T3 train for a journey through the Dorset countryside See What to watch (S)

9.00 Sue Perkins: Lost in Thailand The comedian heads south to the enticing waters of Phuket See What to watch (S)

10.00 Queen's 30 Greatest Moments The rock band's career highlights (R) (S)
 12.00 Queen: A Night at the Odeon 1.15am PlayOJO Live Casino Show 3.15 Secret Scotland with Susan Calman 4.05 Great Artists 4.30 Divine Designs 5.00 Wildlife SOS 5.25 Entertainment News on 5.35 Entertainment News on 5.35 Thomas & Friends: Big World! Big Adventures! 5.45 - 6.00am Paw Patrol

Film choice



My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3 (2023) Sky Cinema Premiere, 8pm ★★

This third instalment in the saga of the Chicago-based Portokalos family has been described as *Mamma Mia!* minus Abba. However, fans of the original 2002 romcom will relish the chance to revisit Nia Vardalos's heroine and her husband (John Corbett). This time, they're jetting off to Greece to fulfil her pappou's dying wish and give his diaries to his childhood friends. As cheesy as a piping hot moussaka.



The Imitation Game (2014) BBC One, 10.40pm; Wales, 11.00pm ★★★★★

Director Morten Tyldum portrays the life and work of mathematician Alan Turing across three time-frames: his school years, his stint breaking codes at Bletchley Park, and post-war, during the persecution he would face until his death. Benedict Cumberbatch is a compelling Turing, but the film omits much of the homophobic abuse that Turing suffered in his lifetime.



Casino Royale (2006) ITV1, 11.00pm ★★★★★

Casino Royale was Daniel Craig's first appearance as 007; his iteration is a brooding, pouting Bond who's more interested in cracking skulls than bedding beauties. In this hugely enjoyable film from Martin Campbell that serves as a reminder of just how much Bond has changed over the years, he wins his "licence to kill" and hunts for a terrorist in Madagascar. Eva Green and Judi Dench co-star.

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FV Freeview FS Freesat (AD) Audio description (R) Repeat (S) Subtitles (SL) In-vision signing

BBC Four

FV 9 FS 173 SKY 116 VIRGIN 108
 7.00 pm TOTP: 1996
 7.30 TOTP: 1996
 8.00 TOTP: 1991
 8.30 TOTP: 1977
 9.00 TOTP: 1984
 9.30 TOTP: 1984
 10.00 Bananarama at the BBC
 11.00 1984 at the BBC
 12.00 The 80s - Music's Greatest Decade? With Dylan Jones
 1.00 am Bananarama at the BBC
 2.00 TOTP: 1996
 2.30 TOTP: 1996
 3.00 TOTP: 1991
 3.30 - 4.00am TOTP: 1977

ITV3

FV 10 FS 115 SKY 119 VIRGIN 117
 11.20 am Heartbeat
 12.25 pm Heartbeat
 1.30 Classic Emmerdale
 2.05 Classic Emmerdale
 12.25am American Dad! 1.25 Bob's Burgers 2.15 Don't Hate the Playaz 3.00-6.00am Teleshopping
 More 4
 11.25am Find It, Fix It, Flog It
 12.30pm Come Dine with Me 3.10 Four in a Bed 5.50 Chateau DIY 6.55 Celebrity PopMaster TV 9.00 The Twelve: Cinderella Murder 10.15 24 Hours in A&E 12.25am 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown 1.25 24 Hours in A&E 3.30-4.00am Food Unwrapped

ITV4

FV 26 FS 117 SKY 120 VIRGIN 118
 11.25 am BattleBots
 12.30 pm Robin of Sherwood
 1.40 Magnum, PI
 2.40 Kojak
 3.40 Minder
 4.50 The Sweeney
 5.55 River Monsters
 6.30 British Touring Car Championship Highlights
 8.00 The Motorbike Show
 9.00 Auf Wiedersehen, Pet
 10.05 All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite
 12.15 am EFL Play Off Semi Final Highlights
 1.00 Minder
 2.05 The Sweeney
 3.00 - 6.00am Teleshopping

Sky Arts

FV 36 FS 147 SKY 130 VIRGIN 140
 1.00 pm Tales of the Unexpected
 2.00 Dickens in Italy with David Harewood
 3.00 The Big Design Challenge
 4.00 Discovering: Sissy Spacek
 5.00 The Joy of Painting
 6.00 Tales of the Unexpected
 7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
 8.00 Paul Simon: Graceland - The African Concert
 10.00 Grand Ole Opry
 11.30 Guy Garvey: From the Vaults
 12.30 am Bryan Ferry Plays Baloise Session
 1.50 Live from the Artists Den
 3.00 Isle of Wight Festival Greatest Hits
 3.30 - 5.00am David Gray: White Ladder - From Then 'Til Now

Sky Atlantic

SKY 108
 11.10 am Billions
 12.15 pm Game of Thrones
 1.20 Ray Donovan
 2.25 Ray Donovan
 3.30 True Blood
 4.35 True Blood
 5.40 Billions
 6.45 Billions
 7.55 Game of Thrones
 9.00 The Pacific
 10.00 The Tattooist of Auschwitz
 11.05 The White Lotus
 12.15 am House of the Dragon
 1.30 Euphoria
 2.35 Game of Thrones
 3.40 - 4.10am In Treatment

Film4

FV 14 FS 300 SKY 313 VIRGIN 428
 11.00 am The Winslow Boy (1948, b/w) Historical courtroom drama starring Robert Donat
 1.20 pm The Colditz Story (1954, b/w) Second World War drama starring John Mills
 3.20 Dead Reckoning (1947, b/w)
 5.25 Carry On Constable (1960, b/w) Comedy starring Sid James
 7.10 Made in Italy (2020) Comedy-drama starring Liam Neeson and Michéle Richardson
 9.00 Carlito's Way (1993) Crime thriller starring Al Pacino
 11.50 You Were Never Really Here (2017) Psychological thriller starring Joaquin Phoenix
 1.40 - 3.35am Hallam Foe (2007)

Drama

FV 20 FS 158 SKY 143 VIRGIN 116
 11.35 am The Bill
 12.40 pm Classic EastEnders
 2.00 Pie in the Sky
 3.05 Lovejoy
 4.15 All Creatures Great and Small
 5.20 Birds of a Feather
 6.00 Keeping Up Appearances
 6.40 Last of the Summer Wine
 7.20 Last of the Summer Wine
 8.00 Father Brown
 9.00 Sister Boniface Mysteries
 10.00 New Tricks
 11.20 Soldier, Soldier
 12.30 am Lovejoy
 1.40 When the Boat Comes In
 2.50 - 4.00am Classic Holby City

Northern Ireland

BBC One: 12.30am I Kissed a Girl 1.20 - 6.00am BBC News
 BBC Two: No variations
 UTV: 7.00 - 7.30pm UTV Life

Scotland

BBC One: No variations
 BBC Scotland: 7.45pm SportsScene: Premiership Play-off 10.00 Rebus See What to watch 10.50 Still Game 11.20 Two Doors Down 11.50 Short Stuff midnight Close
 STV: 2.00 - 4.30pm STV Racing: Live from York 7.00 - 7.30 What's on Scotland 3.35 - 5.05am Night Vision

Wales

BBC One: 7.00 - 7.30pm Iolo's Valleys 10.40 Rewind: 60 Years of Welsh Pop 11.10 FILM: The Imitation Game (2014) 1.00am Sam Smith Live at the Royal Albert Hall 2.00 - 6.00am BBC News BBC Two: 7.00pm The One Show 7.30 Scrump V Live 9.30 - 10.30pm Hidden Treasures of the National Trust
 ITV1 Wales: No variations

ITV1 Regions

No variations

S4C

6.00am Cyw 12.00 Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd 12.05pm Codi Pac 12.30 Heno 1.00 Y Sin 1.30 Cais Quinell 2.00 Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd 2.05 Prynawn Da 3.00 Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd 3.05 Y Fets 4.00 Awr Fawr: Olobobs 4.05 Awr Fawr: Digbi Draig 4.20 Awr Fawr: Bendibwmbws 4.30 Awr Fawr: Pentre Papur Pw 4.45 Awr Fawr: Awyr Iach 5.00 Stwmsh 6.00 Radio: 6.30 Garddio a Mwy 6.57 Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd 8.00 Alun, Chris a Kirri yn Seland Newydd 8.55 Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd 9.00 Rybish 9.30 Rybish 10.00 Welsh Whisperer - Ni'n Teithio Nawr! 10.35 - 11.40pm Ni Yw'r Cymry

Dave

Noon Storage Hunters UK 3.00pm Top Gear 5.00 Hair Bikers' Best of British 6.00 Rick Stein's Cornwall 7.00 Richard Osman's House of Games 8.20 Would I Lie to You? 9.00 QI 9.40 Would I Lie to You? At Christmas 10.20 Would I Lie to You? 11.00 The Shield 12.00 Mock the Week 12.40am Would I Lie to You? 1.20 QI 2.00 Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA 2.45-4.00am Modern Wheels or Classic Steals

GOLD

Noon Last of the Summer Wine 12.40pm Keeping Up Appearances 1.20 Ever Decreasing Circles 2.00 Open All Hours 2.40 Dad's Army 3.20 Are You Being Served? 4.00 Last of the Summer Wine 5.20 Open All Hours 6.00 Keeping Up Appearances 6.40 Dad's Army 8.00 Only Fools and Horses 9.50 Not Going Out 10.25 Mrs Brown's Boys 11.50 Dad's Army 12.30am Only Fools and Horses 2.25 Billy Connolly Does 3.15-4.00am Not Going Out

ITV2

Noon Secret Crush 1.00pm Dress to Impress 2.00 Family Fortunes 3.00 Veronica Mars 4.00 Dawson's Creek 5.00 Dress to Impress 6.00 Celebrity

Catchphrase

7.00 Family Fortunes 8.00 Bob's Burgers 9.00 FILM: The Invisible Man (2020) Thriller starring Elisabeth Moss 11.25 Family Guy 12.25am American Dad! 1.25 Bob's Burgers 2.15 Don't Hate the Playaz 3.00-6.00am Teleshopping

More 4

11.25am Find It, Fix It, Flog It
 12.30pm Come Dine with Me 3.10 Four in a Bed 5.50 Chateau DIY 6.55 Celebrity PopMaster TV 9.00 The Twelve: Cinderella Murder 10.15 24 Hours in A&E 12.25am 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown 1.25 24 Hours in A&E 3.30-4.00am Food Unwrapped

PBS America

Noon Mafia's Greatest Hits 1.00pm Beautiful Serengeti 1.45 The War on Disco 2.55 American Dynasties: The Kennedys 3.45 The Great Escape: The True Story 4.50 Attack of the Zeppelins 5.55 Mafia's Greatest Hits 6.55 American Dynasties: The Kennedys 7.50 The Great Escape: The True Story 8.55 Attack of the Zeppelins 9.55 Mafia's Greatest Hits 11.00 The Great Escape: The True Story 12.00 Attack of the Zeppelins 1.05am Beautiful Serengeti 1.40 American Dynasties: The Kennedys 2.25 Mafia's Greatest Hits 3.15-4.30am The Civil War

Talking Pictures TV

24 hours, including at:
 10.50am FILM: The March Hare (1956) Racing comedy starring Peggy Cummins 12.30pm The Four Just Men 1.00 Melynn's Talking Pictures 1.50 FILM: Sally in Our Alley (1931, b/w) Musical comedy starring Gracie Fields 2.40 Melynn's Talking Pictures 2.50 FILM: Ladies Who Do (1963, b/w) Comedy starring Peggy Mount 4.30 FILM: Sherlock Holmes and the Woman in Green (1945, b/w) Mystery starring Basil Rathbone 5.50 What's On TPTV with Noel 6.00 Worzel Gummidge 6.30 Fireball XL5 7.05 Look at Life 7.20 FILM: Journey to the Center of the Earth (1989) Fantasy adventure starring Nicola Copwer 9.00 Cellar Club with Caroline Munro 9.05 FILM: Visiting Hours (1982) Horror starring Michael Ironside 11.15 Cellar Club with Caroline Munro 11.20 FILM: The Power (1984) Horror starring Suzy Stokey 1.05am Cellar Club with Caroline Munro 1.10 FILM: Run for the Sun (1956) Jungle adventure starring Richard Widmark 3.05-4.45am FILM: Sierra Baron (1958) Western starring Brian Keith

Yesterday

Noon Great British Railway Journeys 1.00pm Antiques Roadshow 2.00 Bangers & Cash 4.00 Narrow Escapes

of World War II

5.00 War Factories 6.00 Antiques Roadshow 7.00 Secrets of the London Underground 9.00 Abandoned Engineering 10.00 Bangers & Cash 11.00 Abandoned Engineering 12.00 Great British Railway Journeys 1.00am Secrets of the Transport Museum 2.00 Abandoned Engineering 3.00-6.10am Teleshopping

Sky Sports Main Event

11.05am Live NRL. Manly Sea Eagles v Brisbane Broncos (kick-off 11.05am)
 1.00pm Live PGA Championship Golf. Coverage of day two of the second Major of the year 7.00 Live EFL. Southampton v West Bromwich Albion (kick-off 8.00pm) 10.45 Fury v Usyk Weigh-In 17.05 15 Minute Highlights 11.00 Live PGA Championship Golf. Coverage of day two of the second Major of the year 12.00-6.00am Sky Sports News

Sky Sports Premier League

Noon Total Football 5.00pm Premier League 100 Club 6.00 Premier League Legends 7.00 Premier League Preview 7.30 Premier League - The Big Interview 8.00 Fantasy Show 8.30 Gary Neville's Soccerbox 9.00 Premier League Preview 9.30 Premier League - The Big Interview 10.00 Premier

League Icons

10.30 PL Retro 12.30am Premier League Icons 1.00 Premier League Years 3.00-4.00am PL Greatest Games

TNT Sports 1

10.15am Live AFL. Sydney Swans v Carlton Blues (bounce-up 10.40am)
 1.30pm Fight Night 3.30 Fight Night Live 5.30 Fight Night 5.45 Live: Fight Night Live. Coverage of the weigh-in ahead of Tyson Fury v Oleksandr Usyk 7.30 Fight Night 8.00 Live French Women's Division 1. Lyon Women v Paris Saint-Germain Women (kick-off 8.00pm) 10.15 Premier League Reload 10.30 WRC Review 11.30 NBA Action 12.00 WWE SmackDown Highlights 1.00am Live: WWE Friday Night SmackDown. Wrestling action 3.00 Uefa Champions League Magazine 3.30-5.45am Live: NWSL. Bay FC v San Diego Wave FC (kick-off 3.30am)

Discovery

Noon Wheeler Dealers 1.00pm Building Off the Grid 3.00 Gold Rush 4.00 Alaska: Homestead Rescue 6.00 American Chopper 7.00 Wheeler Dealers: Dream Car 8.00 Gold Rush: White Water. Desperation pushes the miners a step too far 9.00 Moonshiners 10.00 Blowing Up History 11.00 Combat Dealers 12.00 Gold Divers 1.00am Moonshiners

2.00 Blowing Up History 3.00-4.00am Gold Rush: White Water

Sky Cinema Premiere

24 hours, including at:
 10.55am Some Other Woman (2023) Thriller starring Ashley Greene
 12.35pm My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3 (2023) Premiere. Romantic comedy starring Nia Vardalos 2.15 Force of Nature: The Dry 2 (2024) Thriller starring Eric Bana and Anna Torv 4.15 The Equalizer 3 (2023) Thriller starring Denzel Washington 6.15 The Blackening (2023) Comedy horror starring Grace Byers and Jermaine Fowler 8.00 My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3 (2023) Premiere. Romantic comedy starring Nia Vardalos 2.15 Force of Nature: The Dry 2 (2024) Thriller starring Eric Bana and Anna Torv 4.15 The Equalizer 3 (2023) Thriller starring Denzel Washington 1.30am Some Other Woman (2023) Thriller starring Ashley Greene 3.05-4.45am Relax, I'm From the Future (2023) Comedy starring Rhys Darby

Sky Documentaries

Noon FILM: The Loneliest Whale: The Search for 52 (2021) A rare whale that calls out at a frequency unrecognised by other whales 2.00pm Dan Carter: A Perfect 10 3.50 My Icon: Leon Pryce 4.00 The Directors 5.00 Discovering:

Helen Mirren

6.00 McMillan's 7.00 I Am Patrick Swayze 8.50 My Icon: Anthony Joshua 9.00 FILM: McEnroe (2022) The story of former tennis star John McEnroe in his own words 11.00 Dreams of a Nation 12.10am FILM: McLaren (2017) The life of Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton, who founded the McLaren motor racing team 2.00-4.00am An American Bombing: The Road to April 19th

Sky History

Noon The Unplanned with William Shatner 1.00pm Pawn Stars 2.00 Digging Up Britain's Past 3.00 The Abyss: Rise & Fall of the Nazis 5.00 Pawn Stars 6.00 American Pickers 7.00 Forged in Fire 8.00 Crusaders 9.00 Mafia Killers 10.00 Kings of Pain 11.00 Ultimate Mysteries 12.00 Pawn Stars 2.00am Lost U-Boats of WWII 3.00-4.00am Crusaders

Weather & Crosswords

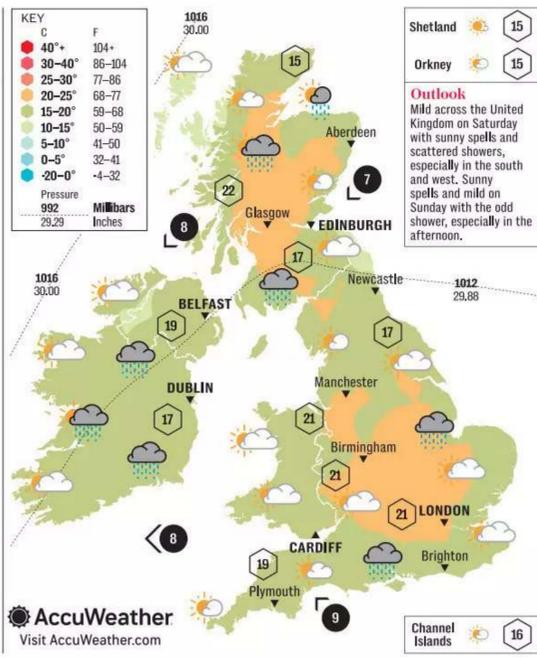
Forecast

General situation

Cloud, sunny spells and light winds across the United Kingdom today with scattered showers, especially during the afternoon. Some of the showers can be heavy in the west.

- ◆ **North, Cent S England, Channel Is, SW England, E England, SE England, E Anglia, Midlands:** Sunny spells today with a couple of afternoon showers. A light and variable wind. Max 60-72F (16-22C). Clear periods and mainly dry tonight. Min 48-55F (9-13C).
- ◆ **NW England, Lake Dist, IoM, Cent N England, NE England:** Sunny periods today with showers, mainly in the afternoon. A light variable wind. Max 57-66F (14-19C). Dry tonight. Min 46-54F (8-12C).
- ◆ **Wales:** Clear periods today and tonight with showers in the afternoon and

- evening. A light SE wind. Max 52-68F (11-20C). Min 42-54F (6-12C).
- ◆ **N Ireland:** Sunny spells today with the odd afternoon shower. A light NE wind. Max 52-66F (11-19C). Mainly dry tonight. Min 45-54F (7-12C).
- ◆ **SW Scotland, NW Scotland, Glasgow, Cent Highlands, Argyll, W Isles, SE Scotland, NE Scotland, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, Orkney, Shetland:** Broken cloud today with scattered showers. A gentle E to NE wind. Max 54-72F (12-22C). The odd shower tonight. Min 40-52F (4-11C).



Four day forecast

- Saturday** [Weather icons]
- Sunday** [Weather icons]
- Monday** [Weather icons]
- Tuesday** [Weather icons]

European readings

Last night's report for 24 hours to 6pm

City	Max	Min	Daytime	Weather
Akrotiri	24	16	windy	
Alicante	24	16	sunny	
Amsterdam	20	14	rain	
Athens	25	15	p/cldy	
Barcelona	19	13	cloudy	
Bari	26	19	rain	
Belgrade	26	14	showers	
Benidorm	25	15	sunny	
Bergen	23	13	sunny	
Berlin	26	14	sunny	
Biarritz	17	10	showers	
Bodrum	27	15	showers	
Bordeaux	17	10	rain	
Brest	16	10	showers	
Brussels	18	14	showers	
Bucharest	23	6	p/cldy	
Budapest	23	8	windy	
Cagliari	27	16	sunny	
Chamonix	13	6	rain	
Copenhagen	20	12	sunny	
Corfu	28	18	cloudy	
Cork	17	10	showers	
Corsica	23	16	showers	
Crete	28	15	sunny	
Dublin	19	8	showers	
Dubrovnik	26	16	showers	
Faro	20	12	p/cldy	
Florence	25	15	p/cldy	
Frankfurt	22	14	p/cldy	
Funchal	22	16	cloudy	
Gdansk	20	7	sunny	
Geneva	16	10	p/cldy	
Gibraltar	22	12	sunny	
Hamburg	26	15	windy	
Helsinki	26	8	sunny	
Innsbruck	24	13	p/cldy	
Istanbul	20	11	p/cldy	
Kyiv	19	6	p/cldy	
La Rochelle	16	11	showers	
Lisbon	19	13	cloudy	
Locarno	16	9	showers	
Luxembourg	17	11	showers	
Madrid	19	8	p/cldy	
Majorca	23	11	p/cldy	
Malaga	26	15	sunny	
Malta	32	20	p/cldy	
Marseille	21	13	sunny	
Menorca	21	15	p/cldy	
Milan	21	13	storms	
Monaco	20	15	showers	
Moscow	21	5	p/cldy	
Munich	23	12	sunny	
Naples	29	18	haze	
Nice	20	15	storms	
Nicosia	28	14	sunny	
Oporto	17	12	showers	
Oslo	23	8	sunny	
Palermo	27	19	p/cldy	
Paris	19	12	p/cldy	
Perpignan	18	9	rain	
Prague	20	13	p/cldy	
Reykjavik	11	7	rain	
Rhodes	26	17	p/cldy	
Riga	22	10	sunny	
Rome	25	16	sunny	
Saint Malo	16	9	showers	
Salzburg	23	14	showers	
Santander	17	10	rain	
Santiago/Comp.	14	8	showers	
Sofia	16	9	showers	
St. Petersburg	20	11	p/cldy	
Stockholm	22	8	sunny	
Strasbourg	20	11	showers	
Tenerife	24	16	windy	
Tirana	29	15	showers	
Toulouse	19	9	p/cldy	
Valencia	26	13	windy	
Venice	22	13	showers	
Vienna	19	12	cloudy	
Vigo	16	9	showers	
Vilnius	19	7	p/cldy	
Warsaw	21	10	p/cldy	
Zagreb	23	13	showers	
Zurich	18	9	showers	

Nature Notes

Birds ruffled by human contact

THE vast majority of bird species hate being too close to humans, a nature report reveals.

The study by the University of Helsinki in Finland and Aarhus University in Denmark found that 78 per cent of the world's bird species struggle in habitats with significant human pressure.

Birds instinctively shy away from people – but as our population spreads, they have fewer and fewer places to go.

Emma-Liina Marjakangas, a PhD student who led the study, published in *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, said: "Threatened species are less tolerant to breeding in human-dominated habitats."

Aleksi Lehikoinen, senior curator at the Finnish Museum of Natural History, said: "This study enables us to identify species that are sensitive to human activity. Conservation action can then be targeted to the species and locations that need it most."*

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British readings

Last night's report for 24 hours to 6pm - *estimated readings

City	Sun hrs	Rain in	Max/Min	Daytime weather	
Aberdeen	7.9	0.00	16	10	p/cldy
Aberystwyth	9.5	0.21	19	6	showers
Antrim	5.9	0.00	19	8	p/cldy
Aviemore	3.2	0.02	23	7	showers
Barnstaple	4.8	0.34	17	9	showers
Barrow-in-Furness	5.9	0.04	18	12	showers
Basingstoke	1.1	0.24	18	8	rain
Bedford	1.9	0.23	18	8	showers
Belfast	12.5	0.00	19	11	sunny
Berwick	5.5	0.01	18	9	p/cldy
Birmingham	4.5	0.18	20	8	showers
Bodmin	1.6	0.15	16	10	showers
Bournemouth	0.2	0.02	17	8	showers
Braintree	1.0	0.14	18	9	showers
Brecon	8.3	0.11	17	3	showers
Bridlington	0.0	0.05	14	11	showers
Brighton	2.4	0.26	18	9	showers
Bristol	6.3	0.04	18	10	showers
Cambridge	9.5	0.00	17	11	p/cldy
Cardiff	4.5	0.00	18	10	p/cldy
Carlisle	2.2	0.01	17	11	showers
Catterick	0.6	0.01	18	10	showers
Cheltenham	6.4	0.07	19	8	showers
Chester	4.0	0.41	21	8	rain
Coveytry	3.4	0.31	19	8	rain
Doncaster	1.1	0.04	17	12	showers
Dover	0.8	0.31	17	11	showers
Dundee	7.0	0.01	14	11	p/cldy
Eastbourne	0.5	0.86	18	11	showers
Edinburgh	2.0	0.00	18	11	cloudy
Epsom	5.2	0.02	17	9	showers
Falmouth	8.5	0.00	16	10	p/cldy
Farnborough	3.7	0.14	18	9	showers
Fort William	2.8	0.00	21	11	p/cldy
Glasgow	1.5	0.01	20	12	cloudy
Great Malvern	7.1	0.04	20	6	showers
Grimby	0.0	0.08	16	12	showers
Guernsey	7.8	0.00	16	11	p/cldy
Hereford	9.3	0.03	19	6	showers
High Wycombe	3.9	0.18	19	9	showers
Holyhead	6.6	0.03	19	9	showers
Huddersfield	1.7	0.05	15	11	showers
Ipswich	0.3	0.51	17	11	showers
Isle of Man	4.9	0.04	18	12	showers
Isle of Skye	4.4	0.00	19	13	p/cldy
Isle of Wight	4.0	0.02	16	11	showers
Isles of Scilly	5.6	0.18	15	12	showers
Jersey	8.8	0.13	17	10	p/cldy
Keswick	3.9	0.18	20	8	rain
King's Lynn	1.5	0.68	18	10	rain
Kew Gardens	2.7	0.14	19	11	showers
Leek	3.9	0.75	16	11	showers
Leeds	1.4	0.04	17	11	showers
Leicester	3.9	0.75	16	11	showers
Leicester	4.4	0.13	19	5	showers
Lincoln	0.0	0.30	18	12	showers
Liverpool	4.0	0.41	21	8	showers
London	0.0	0.02	21	11	showers
Manchester	3.1	0.10	18	8	showers
Middlesbrough	0.6	0.04	15	10	showers
Newcastle	1.8	0.01	18	10	cloudy
Newquay	9.5	0.07	17	11	showers
Nottingham	0.0	0.71	18	12	showers
Orkney	11.2	0.00	16	7	p/cldy
Oxford	1.2	0.05	19	7	showers
Perth	1.8	0.01	21	12	showers
Peterborough	0.0	0.29	17	8	showers
Plymouth	3.9	0.02	18	11	p/cldy
Portsmouth	3.6	0.24	18	10	showers
Prestwick	1.6	0.03	16	12	showers
Ramsgate	0.0	0.12	17	11	rain
Rhyl	10.5	0.12	19	9	showers
Rugby	3.4	0.27	19	8	showers
Salisbury	4.0	0.20	18	9	showers
Scunthorpe	0.7	0.04	16	11	showers
Sheffield	1.1	0.04	17	12	showers
Shetland	12.8	0.00	16	7	sunny
Shrewsbury	0.0	0.27	20	9	rain
Skewness	0.3	0.14	16	12	showers
Southampton	5.0	0.08	18	10	showers
Southend-on-Sea	0.5	0.03	18	9	showers
Stockport	3.1	0.10	18	8	showers
Stornoway	6.9	0.00	18	10	p/cldy
Swansea	6.9	0.18	16	12	showers
Swindon	6.1	0.01	17	8	showers
Thirsk	1.1	0.01	18	8	cloudy
Tiree	1.5	0.01	18	12	cloudy
Weymouth	3.7	0.00	15	11	p/cldy
Whitehaven	6.9	0.06	17	11	showers
Widmerere	4.3	0.04	18	8	showers
Worcester	7.2	0.04	20	6	showers
Yeovil	1.9	0.27	18	7	showers
York	0.7	0.04	17	11	showers



World readings

City	Max	Min	Daytime	Weather
Accra	33	24	storms	
Addis Ababa	30	15	cloudy	
Adelaide	21	10	p/cldy	
Alexandria	29	17	sunny	
Algiers	25	11	windy	
Amman	25	12	sunny	
Anchorage	7	4	cloudy	
Ankara	20	8	p/cldy	
Ascension Is.	30	26	p/cldy	
Auckland	17	12	showers	
Baghdad	36	23	haze	
Bahamas	32	25	cloudy	
Bahrain	40	30	haze	
Banako	35	24	p/cldy	
Bangkok	35	29	cloudy	
Beijing	31	11	cloudy	
Beirut	23	18	sunny	
Bermuda	23	20	showers	
Bogota	19	11	showers	
Bridgetown	32	28	storms	
Brisbane	24	17	showers	
Buenos Aires	17	10	sunny	
Cairo	32	19	sunny	
Canberra	18	1	cloudy	
Capetown	20	8	p/cldy	
Casablanca	22	10	sunny	
Chicago	23	11	storms	
Christchurch	11	0	p/cldy	
Colombo	30	26	storms	
Damascus	30	11	sunny	
Dar es Salaam	31	24	cloudy	
Dhaka	38	27	p/cldy	
Dubai	40	30	sunny	
Falkland Is.	4	1	flurry	
Harare	25	9	sunny	
Havana	33	25	sunny	
Hong Kong	30	24	sunny	
Honolulu	24	22	rain	
Jakarta	33	27	p/cldy	
Jeddah	37	25	haze	
Jerusalem	34	22	sunny	
Johannesburg	24	7	sunny	
Kabul	27	14	storms	
Karachi	37	28	sunny	
Kolkata	37	30	p/cldy	
Kuala Lumpur	30	25	storms	
La Paz	14	3	p/cldy	
Lahore	46	29	haze	
Lima	21	17	haze	
Los Angeles	17	16	p/cldy	
Makives	33	29	storms	
Manila	37	24	p/cldy	
Marrakesh	29	13	sunny	
Melbourne	21	6	sunny	
Miami	34	28	storms	
Montego Bay	31	26	sunny	
Mumbai	35	30	storms	
Nairobi	27	15	rain	
New Orleans	30	21	storms	
New Delhi	44	26	haze	
New York	17	15	rain	
Ottawa	20	12	p/cldy	
Perth	29	11	sunny	
Port-of-Spain	34	26	storms	
Rio de Janeiro	25	21	p/cldy	
Riyadh	41	29	sunny	
San Francisco	17	12	p/cldy	
Santiago	12	0	sunny	
Seattle	12	10	cloudy	
Seoul	19	6	cloudy	
Seychelles	31	27	showers	
Singapore	31	26	storms	
Sydney	22	11	cloudy	
Taipei City	25	20	windy	
Tangier	21	14	sunny	
Tel Aviv	26	19	sunny	
Tokyo	25	15	windy	
Toronto	20			