

Labour's front bench is its duller ever

Tim Stanley, Comment



The Daily Telegraph

NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA ORGANISATION OF THE YEAR

Starmmer lacks the courage to debate me, says Sunak

GENERAL ELECTION 2024

PM hopes to expose Labour's empty plans in weekly television face-offs

By Ben Riley-Smith POLITICAL EDITOR

RISHI SUNAK claims today that Sir Keir Starmer does not have the "courage" to face him in a televised election debate because he does not have a plan for the country.

Writing for *The Telegraph*, the Prime Minister escalates his personal criticism of the Labour leader, saying "you simply don't know what you are going to get" with him.

The Tories have challenged Sir Keir to a record six TV debates, one in every week of the campaign, as they seek to change the dynamics of a race in which they are 20 points behind in the polls.

Mr Sunak uses his article - his first of the election campaign - to lay out the core arguments he will be taking to the nation in the weeks ahead.

He highlights the progress that has been made on the economy under his leadership, and claims that Labour will "run out of your money... and raise your taxes".

Mr Sunak also makes reference to the threats facing Britain from Russia, Iran and China, and warns that under Labour the UK would become "a magnet for every illegal immigrant in Europe".

He directly issues a debate challenge to Sir Keir: "There are big issues at stake in this election. Do we continue cutting taxes or raise taxes on working households as Labour would do? Do we prioritise energy security and your family's finances in our approach to net zero or put environmental dogma first as Sir Keir Starmer and Ed Miliband would. And, above all, how do we give this country the secure future it deserves?"

"I want to debate these issues with Sir Keir Starmer. But he doesn't want to because he doesn't have a plan and

doesn't have the courage to say what he wants to do."

Sir Keir's camp has insisted he will take part in debates but has not named how many he is willing to attend. A Labour source said: "Of course we'll be taking part in debates."

The skirmish over debates came as all party leaders toured the country on the first full day of campaigning for the snap general election called by the Prime Minister for July 4.

Mr Sunak, appearing in Derbyshire, Wales and Inverness, put the Rwanda scheme on the agenda by saying deportation flights would only begin if he was re-elected.

Sir Keir called for "change" at a rally at Gillingham Football Club and heads to Scotland today to argue that a vote for the SNP is a waste since it will not hold office in London.

Meanwhile, Reform announced they would stand candidates in 630 of the 650 seats available, potentially taking support from the Tories across the country. However, Nigel Farage said he would not stand himself.

It came as the Tories are approaching a record number of MPs standing down at the election. Seventy-two have now confirmed that they will not contest their seats, just shy of the 75 who stood down at the 1997 election.

Today, the party leaders will clash on energy policy, with Mr Sunak set to seize on an expected fall in the energy price cap to argue his plan is working, and Sir Keir saying his plans for more renewable energy will reduce costs.

Televised debates have been a staple of election campaigns since 2010. The Tories want the first debate to happen as early as next Tuesday, but broadcasters are unsure it can be arranged so quickly.

In the 2019 election campaign, there were just two head-to-head leader debates. Downing Street insiders believe that Mr Sunak could pin down Sir Keir on the economy, the issue the party has placed at the centre of its campaign, because Mr Sunak is a former chancellor.

Tory Cabinet ministers publicly called for weekly debates after this newspaper revealed the demand. Claire Coutinho, the Energy Security Secretary, said voters must know "exactly" where the leaders stood on issues.

Labour figures noted Sir Keir had



Better late than never: Rishi Sunak, the Prime Minister, was given an umbrella by fellow MP Maggie Throup yesterday after he was drenched during his election announcement

said consistently he would take part in debates, waving away the claim they were holding up negotiations with broadcasters.

In January, Sir Keir said: "I've been saying 'Bring it on' for a very, very long time. I'm happy to debate any time."

The campaign's first 48 hours suggested the Tories will repeatedly single out Sir Keir and raise questions about whether voters know what he stands for

and how he would approach office. Mr Sunak writes in his *Telegraph* article: "He has junked every pledge he made when he was campaigning to be Labour leader. How do you know he wouldn't repeat the trick if he became prime minister?"

The Labour leader will today focus on his hopes of triggering a resurgence in Scotland, where his party won just a single seat at the 2019 election. Support

for the SNP has slumped in the past year amid controversies.

Sir Keir will say: "We can't just send a message in this election, we must send a government - but we can only do that if we rebuild trust and chart a new course for the country."

The message appears to be a direct attempt to convince voters not to back the SNP, arguing that Labour, unlike the SNP, can actually enter Downing Street

after these elections. Winning more Scottish seats would mean Sir Keir requires fewer gains elsewhere to enter Number 10. He will say: "When I say let's get Britain's future back, we say it with one voice. Scotland is at the beating heart of that mission."

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Essex man, 64, 'spied on MP for Russia'

By Patrick Sawyer and Martin Evans

AN Essex man charged with spying for Russia is accused of passing on an MP's personal details to Vladimir Putin's foreign intelligence service.

Howard Michael Phillips, an unemployed man from Harlow, was charged at Westminster magistrates' court yesterday with assisting Russia's foreign intelligence service contrary to section 3 of the National Security Act.

The court heard that Mr Phillips, 64, is charged with "acquiring and retaining personal contact details" of an MP and "disclosing personal contact details and



Howard Phillips has been charged with assisting Russia's foreign intelligence service

information relating to a Member of Parliament to a foreign intelligence service".

He is also accused of applying for jobs with the Home Office's Border Force Agency and applying for security clearance. Mr Phillips allegedly offered to provide logistical support to a foreign

intelligence service, including booking a hotel and buying and setting up a mobile phone.

In court Mr Phillips, wearing a grey tracksuit, spoke only to confirm his address and date of birth.

Judge Daniel Sternberg denied Mr Phillips bail and ordered him to appear at the Old Bailey on June 14.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: "On May 16, a 64-year-old man was arrested in central London... The arrest is not connected to any other recent charges or investigations linked to NSA offences, and there is not believed to be any threat to the wider public."

Tories focus on energy to attack Labour

By Ben Riley-Smith

Energy bills are to be put at the centre of the election campaign today, as Rishi Sunak seizes on an expected fall in the price cap.

Ofgem is expected to announce today that the energy price cap will be reduced by £116, to £1,574.

The Tories will vow to make price comparison websites easier to use and consider telling the regulator Ofgem to publish league tables showing how long energy firms take to respond to customer complaints.

Claire Coutinho, the Energy Secre-

tary, said: "Labour does not have a serious approach to Britain's energy security and they aren't honest about the costs that their reckless net zero targets would place on households."

But Labour dismissed the Tory approach as a "bunch of empty buzzwords" which would do nothing to lower bills.

The Prime Minister has put the improving economy at the heart of his re-election bid, hoping that reducing inflation and the return of growth can help him pull off a surprise victory.

The Tories are also attempting to frame Labour's approach to net zero as

too ideological and claiming it risks impacting family finances.

Mr Sunak's party today unveils a list of energy proposals. One is a call for evidence on price comparison services to help consumers make more informed choices about switching tariffs.

Another is consulting on regulating energy brokers and price comparison websites to prevent rip-off hidden fees, inaccurate bills and high-pressure sales tactics. Other suggestions include a new code of practice covering the use of smart metres and urging Ofgem to ensure standing charges are kept as low as possible.

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NEWS

Vennells warned of bad press from Horizon

The Post Office's PR chief warned Paula Vennells that investigating old Horizon cases would make "front page news", the inquiry heard. The inquiry was shown a July 2013 email in which the former chief executive asked colleagues for opinions on why a forensic accountants could not review all cases of false accounting over the last 10 years. However, a response warned that a decision to review older cases could lead to the story becoming "front page news".
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NEWS

Scientists hail breast cancer breakthrough

Breast cancer "immunity" could be achieved for survivors of the disease by killing undruggable cells, a breakthrough study has found. By killing cancer cells in a way that trains the body's immune system to recognise and destroy them, scientists believe they may have unlocked the key to long-lasting protection against recurrence of the disease. The protein being targeted, called RIPK1, plays a crucial role in helping tumours to remain undetected.
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WORLD

Taiwan not cowed by aggressive China drills

Taiwan's new president has said he will "stand on the front lines" to defend his country after China surrounded it with military drills. The "punishment" air and sea manoeuvres are simulating direct attacks for an invasion, something Beijing has threatened for years. Lai Ching-te, a moderate labelled a "separatist" by China, took power this week. At his inauguration he warned China against further military intimidation and said: "Peace is the only option."
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BUSINESS

Economic growth to hit buffers before July

Economic growth is slowing sharply, according to a survey that throws fresh light on Rishi Sunak's decision to call a snap election. Activity in Britain's dominant services sector fell to its slowest rate in six months, according to S&P Global, putting the economy on course to grow at just half the 0.6 per cent rate seen in the first three months of the year. Chris Williamson, of S&P Global, said the current "Goldilocks" combination of robust growth and low inflation was unlikely to last until July.
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PR warned Vennells on opening old cases

Former Post Office chief executive was told it would be 'front page news' if she had investigated further

By Fiona Parker, Max Stephens and Alex Barton

A POST OFFICE PR warned Paula Vennells opening old cases would be 'front page news'.

The Post Office's PR chief warned Paula Vennells that investigating old Horizon cases would make "front page news", the inquiry heard.

On her second day of giving evidence to the Post Office inquiry, the former chief executive admitted the business could have avoided a "lost decade" before wrongful convictions were uncovered if more cases had been reviewed.

More than 900 sub-postmasters were wrongfully prosecuted as a result of the Horizon scandal, which saw shortfalls incorrectly recorded on their branch accounts.

Yesterday, the inquiry was shown a July 2013 email in which Ms Vennells asked colleagues for opinions on why forensic accountants Second Sight could not review all cases of false

accounting "eg over the last five to ten years".

The firm had been appointed by MPs and the Post Office the year before to investigate multiple assertions that Horizon was generating spurious branch shortfalls and that sub-postmasters were being forced to pay the shortfalls and prosecuted. Accountants wanted to expand their review across the previous decade.

But the inquiry was shown a response from Mark Davies, the Post Office's then-director of communications, warning that a decision to review older cases could lead to the "story" becoming "front page news".

In her response Ms Vennells said: "You are right to call this out. And I will take your steer [sic] no issue."

When asked about the exchange, Ms Vennells said she "absolutely" did not accept that she took a decision to not review past cases "based on a media outcome". She added: "I didn't take any decision on that, I wouldn't have been able to do so."

However, she insisted she could not remember if she took the "advice of the

well have done", but insisted that she did not try to close down a review into the Horizon software. The former chief executive, who will face questions from lawyers representing sub-postmasters today, was also asked about a board meeting later that month (July 2013) in which the Post Office's most senior lawyer was made to sit outside.

Ms Vennells told the inquiry how Post Office chair Alice Perkins "stood down" Susan Crichton, the general counsel, so the board could have a "full and frank discussion" on a paper she had written on Second Sight's report in late July.

Addressing Ms Vennells, Mr Beer said: "She was made to wait outside on a chair?"

"Yes," Ms Vennells responded. "Sitting there like a naughty school-girl?" Mr Beer asked.

"It must, she must have felt terrible," responded Ms Vennells.

"Tensions" between Paula Vennells and the former Post Office chair relating to the Horizon investigation were documented by solicitors in 2013.

Ms Vennells will finish giving evidence to the inquiry today.

'A review of all prosecutions of false accounting may have avoided a lost decade'

PR guy" not to review five to 10 years of past prosecutions. Counsel to the Horizon inquiry Jason Beer KC asked: "Do you agree your nascent idea here of a review of all prosecutions of false accounting, if it had been carried into effect, may have avoided a lost decade until miscarriages of justice were discovered?"

Ms Vennells admitted that "it may

NEWS BULLETIN

NI police hit with record fine over data breach

Northern Ireland's police force is facing a record £750,000 fine for putting thousands of officers at risk with the worst security breach in UK police history.

The Information Commissioner has announced his intention to hit the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) with the penalty for the "perfect storm of risk and harm" caused by the leak of details of its entire workforce.

The PSNI declared a "critical incident" last August when a junior staff member published online the data of all 9,483 serving and civilian staff, including dozens who work with MI5. Police later said the information had reached dissident republicans.

Owners of killer dogs avoid going to prison

A mother and son whose rottweiler dogs fatally savaged a woman in a "frenzied" attack have avoided jail.

Marie Stevens, 40, went to pet the two dogs owned by Brian Walshe, 42, and his mother, Rachel Walshe, 69. One of the dogs, Frankie, bit her on the arm, before the other pet, Rocky, joined in the attack, Liverpool Crown Court heard. Judge Andrew Menary KC yesterday handed the pair suspended sentences for the incident.

Stevens was bitten multiple times and had to have skin grafts before being discharged from hospital two weeks later. But the next day she collapsed and died at home following a deep vein thrombosis.

Turbulence victims have brain and spine injuries

Passengers on a Singapore Airlines flight that hit extreme turbulence over Asia suffered skull, brain and spinal injuries, the head of a Bangkok hospital said.

Twenty people remain in intensive care in the Thai capital, where flight SQ321 made an emergency landing on Tuesday after the terrifying ordeal. The Boeing 777-300ER hit what an official described as "sudden extreme turbulence" over Myanmar, sending passengers and crew flying and slamming some into the ceiling. A 73-year-old British man died and 104 people were injured on the flight, which was carrying 211 passengers and 18 crew from London to Singapore.

Manchester bombing mother 'misled' by PM

The mother of a Manchester Arena bombing victim said she felt "a bit misled" by the Prime Minister after promising Martyr's Law - named after her 29-year-old son who was one of 22 people killed following an Ariana Grande concert in May 2017 - would be passed before the general election.

Figen Murray, the mother of Martyr Hett, spoke with Rishi Sunak on Wednesday, just a few hours before he called the general election.

Martyr's Law would require venues and local authorities to have training requirements and preventative plans against terror attacks. Just two more days of Commons business is scheduled, during which important legislation will be rushed through.

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Case: No 10 had alternatives to lockdowns

By Neil Johnston and Blathnaid Corless

THE head of the Civil Service has admitted to the Covid Inquiry that the Government failed to be open with the public about alternatives to lockdown.

Simon Case, the Cabinet Secretary, said there was a "failure of transparency" over what other options ministers looked at before locking down the nation for a second time.

Giving evidence, Mr Case compared officials making decisions in No10 to "boiling frogs" who were "trapped into a way of thinking" that stopped them taking "decisive action". It also emerged that he privately told Boris Johnson to stop agreeing with Rishi Sunak, the chancellor at the time, and urged him to assess factors other than the economy.

Mr Case replaced Sir Mark Sedwill as Cabinet Secretary in September 2020 at the age of 41. During nearly five hours of questioning, Mr Case was asked by Hugo Keith KC, lead counsel to the inquiry, if the Government had failed to show it had considered alternatives to lockdown in late 2020.

"I think it's a very fair criticism," he said. "There were a number of occasions where this desire to have simple, clear unambiguous messages coming out of government about the strategy meant that there wasn't enough engagement on the alternatives."

"I think this is a case where there could have been an explanation, there could have been more explanation of what we'd done to explore alternatives and why they wouldn't work, it was a sort of failure of transparency."

Mr Case claimed that Mr Johnson had found the decisions to introduce lockdowns difficult, and said he had not initially understood that the prime minister struggled on a "deep ideological level" with the idea of "the mass locking up of the population".



Simon Case, the Cabinet Secretary, arrives to give evidence at the Covid Inquiry. He told the hearing that officials making decisions were like 'trapped boiling frogs'

Slasher attack murderer jailed for life

By Albert Tait

AN "EXTREMELY dangerous" man has been sentenced to at least 32 years in jail for the "horrific" killing of a woman as part of a series of random slasher attacks in south London.

Mohamed Nur ran up behind 31-year-old Johanita Kossiya Dogbey and stabbed her three times in the neck as she walked home in Brixton last May.

Two days earlier he had slashed the faces of Rebecca Wilkes, Tomasz Kmiecik and Katie Matthews in what the Old Bailey heard were "unprovoked and random" attacks.

The 34-year-old admitted murder and having a home-made blade on

May 1 and was found guilty of three charges of unlawful wounding.

Yesterday Nur, who was on remand at Belsmarsh Prison, failed to attend court



Mohamed Nur did not attend sentencing as a judge jailed him for the 'vicious and horrific' murder

and Judge Angela Rafferty KC requested that a copy of her remarks be sent to prison to be read out to him.

She said the murder was "random,

vicious, horrific" and "without mercy".

Addressing Nur despite his absence, she said: "You have led a life dominated by drug use. You are a very dangerous man and the risk you pose is incalculable." Nur, who came to the UK from Somalia in 1993, became addicted to drugs and was homeless from December 2022, the court heard.

At the time of the attacks, he was living in accommodation for vulnerable adults in Vauxhall and had previous convictions for possession of cannabis, a firearm, ammunition and blades.

During the hearing, Ms Dogbey's younger sister, Laura, outlined the impact of losing her "innocent, loving, selfless" sister.

Murrell charges span 7 years

By Martin Evans CRIME EDITOR

PETER MURRELL, the husband of Nicola Sturgeon, is facing charges alleging that he embezzled funds from the Scottish National Party for seven years, it has emerged.

The 59-year-old was charged in April by Police Scotland officers investigating the funding and finances of the party as part of Operation Branchform.

Under Scottish legal process after someone is charged, police then submit a report to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service ahead of any potential court action.

In a statement, Scotland's independent public prosecution service con-

firmed that it had received the report from Police Scotland and that the investigation into Mr Murrell covered a period between 2016 and 2023.

A spokesman said: "A standard prosecution report has been received by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service from Police Scotland in relation to a 59-year-old man and incidents said to have occurred between 2016 and 2023. "Connected investigations of two other individuals, a man aged 72 and a 53-year-old woman, remain ongoing."

"Professional prosecutors from COPFS and independent counsel will review this report. They will make decisions on the next steps without involving the Lord Advocate or Solicitor General."

BBC comedies don't tell 'em like they used to

Bosses admit need to revive old-school sitcoms as too many shows today focus on serious subjects

By Craig Simpson

THE BBC has said its sitcoms need a revival as executives want more "laugh out loud" comedies.

Bosses say that the broadcaster has "oversupplied" new comedy dramas that touch on worthy subjects but are lacking in jokes.

The BBC has announced that the classic sitcom needs to be saved as programmes in the style of *Only Fools and Horses* are "what audiences want to see".

Executives have launched a new initiative to revive the format and will offer financial support to find "the next big UK sitcom with broad appeal".

The announcement by Jon Petrie, the BBC's director of comedy, comes

following a period dominated by comedy dramas, often with a heavy focus on mental health.

Speaking at the BBC Comedy Festival in Glasgow, Mr Petrie said: "If our comedy eco-system is shrinking, then it's on all of us to fight for the right of UK mainstream comedy to exist."

"The sitcom isn't dead but it needs a couple of Berocca. And a black americano with two sugars.

"We're asking you to do something really ambitious and help save our sitcom. It's what audiences want to see."

He also explained that "the editorial direction we want to travel in" is now "firmly sitcom first, with a high joke rate".

Recent commissions in the wake of the BBC Three hit *Fleabag* have included series like *Ladhood* and *Alma's Not Normal*. Such programmes are far from the sitcoms that once dominated the BBC comedy slate, including *Only Fools and Horses* and, more recently, *Gavin and Stacey*.

Mr Petrie said the BBC intended to

Rarely a laugh a minute BBC sitcoms that put subject over humour

Fleabag

A dark comedy about a traumatised young woman, played by Phoebe Waller Bridge, below, who has dysfunctional relationships with lovers and her family.

The series which first aired in 2016 was a critical hit, and was moved from BBC Three to BBC Two, reflecting its mass appeal.

Such Brave Girls
A comedy about a dysfunctional single-parent family, with a female-led cast of characters handling the

trauma of being abandoned by their father. The series won a Bafta for best scripted comedy, and was as renewed for another series after airing in 2023.

Alma's Not Normal

The series follows Bolton native Alma as she tries to reconcile with her family after spending time in care. Its star,

Sophie Willian, whose personal experiences informed the series, won a Bafta for her performance in 2022.

Ladhood

A coming-of-age comedy set in Yorkshire which explores themes of toxic masculinity as the friends question relationship and behaviours that shape their personality. It ran from 2019-2022.



once again aim for mass appeal with its comedies, which remained popular favourites long after they were broadcast, giving them far greater shelf-life.

He said: "The BBC has always been the place for homegrown comedy hits that people want to come back to again and again."

"We want you to take the risk, go for the big rewards, and create the next generation of classic sitcoms and immortal characters that audiences will keep returning to for decades to come."

As part of this strategy, Mr Petrie has announced the return of Lee Mack's long-running show *Not Going Out* and a Christmas special for *Outnumbered*.

He added for prospective writers: "Please send us less shows that are 'an exploration' of something and more that know where their funny bones are."

"We want less 'vital pieces' and 'comfort baths', and more 'toe-curlingly funny', 'gleeful' and 'laugh out loud'."

"Comedy drama will always have its place, and we're really proud of our

slate. But we are oversupplied with them." Not only have adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* proven perennially popular, but works merely about the play have had a mass appeal.

The 1999 film *Shakespeare in Love*, starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Joseph Fiennes, told a fictional story of the Bard finding inspiration for his play.

The film intervenes plots from

'The sitcom isn't dead but it needs a couple of Berocca and a black americano, two sugars'

averse plays, and suggest that Shakespeare was inspired by his own ill-fated love affair with a noblewoman.

The film swept the Oscars, with multiple awards including for best picture, best actress for Paltrow, best supporting actress for Dame Judi Dench, and best screenplay for Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman.

Moss remembers 'magical moment' trying on a piece of royal wedding history

By Anita Singh
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

IT IS a dress fit for a royal bridesmaid and worn by Kate Moss.

When Lady Elizabeth Longman met Moss at a magazine photoshoot, she allowed the supermodel to try on one of her most treasured possessions: the dress she wore to the wedding of the late Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

A previously unseen photograph capturing the moment has been published to mark the sale of the dress, which is being offered at Christie's with an estimate of £30,000-50,000.

Lady Elizabeth, nee Lambart, was one of eight bridesmaids at the Westminster Abbey ceremony in 1947. She died in 2016.

In 2012, she was staying at Houghton Hall in Norfolk, home to her granddaughter, the Marchioness of Cholmondeley.

Moss was there to take part in a photoshoot for *Love* magazine.

While other images from that day were featured in an edition of *Love* magazine, with Lady Elizabeth, then aged 87, gracing its pages in her own Vionnet dress, tiara and pearls.

The shot featuring the royal bridesmaid's dress remained private.

"Meeting Lady Elizabeth and wearing her dress that had such a wonderful heritage, was a magical moment for me," Moss said.

"I felt like I was wearing a piece of history."

The dress will be a highlight of The Exceptional Sale at Christie's on July 2.

It consists of a white silk bodice, with a layered tulle skirt embroidered with flowers in mother-of-pearl.

An accompanying headdress is a floral wreath design.

The piece is in "incredibly good condition", according to Benedict Winter, a specialist with responsibility for Christie's private and iconic collections. "As you would expect, it has been very well looked after in the last 70 years."

"The dress has been much-loved and

'This dress represents the love story between the late Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh'

the family feel it is time to give it to a wider audience."

The dress was on loan to the Fashion Museum in Bath from the 1980s until the early 2000s, when it was returned to the family.

It will be on public view at Christie's in London during the pre-sale exhibition from June 28 to July 2.

"Christie's is privileged to be offering this evocative and rare example of royal fashion history," Mr Winter said.

"This beautiful dress epitomises the glamour of Norman Hartnell's commissions and the hope that the late Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh's wedding gave to post-war Britain."

He expects the dress to attract bidders from all over the world.

"The late Queen was so loved, and this dress represents the love story between the late Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh."

"We expect interest globally not just from royal collectors, but from collectors of vintage couture. This is the best of the best."

"I think it would be wonderful if someone bought it to wear, and I think Lady Elizabeth would have found that quite amusing. Only the slender can wear it, as the waist measures 24."

Lady Elizabeth's sense of amusement extended to the Kate Moss shoot, Mr Winter said. "They decided it would be quite fun to show Kate wearing the dress. I love the photograph because it is the old world meeting the new world - Kate is wearing a remarkable piece of history."

Lady Elizabeth was a lifelong companion to the late Queen. As girls, they were members of the Buckingham Palace Girl Guides troop, which met in a summerhouse in the garden.

She rarely spoke publicly about the royal wedding, although she once recalled the Duke of Edinburgh giving each of the bridesmaids an Art Deco silver compact embellished with a gold crown and the bride and groom's initials. "He dealt them out like playing cards," she said.

Kate Moss, right, wearing Lady Elizabeth Longman's bridesmaid's dress, which she wore at the royal wedding in 1947, circled below



50 Cent sells P Diddy docuseries to Netflix

By Susie Coen US CORRESPONDENT

50 CENT, the rapper, has sold a documentary to Netflix that accuses his rival Sean "Diddy" Combs of a string of sexual assaults.

The artist, whose real name is Curtis Jackson, started promoting the programme after Combs was accused of rape and abuse by Cassie Ventura, his ex-girlfriend, last year. 50 Cent said that he sold the series to the streaming service after a "massive bidding war".

"Netflix wins the bidding war but if more victims keep coming out I'm gonna need more episodes," the rapper said in an Instagram post. The series, which will be produced through 50 Cent's G-Unit Film and Television Studios, will reportedly focus on claims brought by Ventura, a 37-year-old singer, and several other women.

Combs has denied all allegations against him. Last week Combs - also known as P Diddy - apologised for assaulting Ventura in 2016 after footage emerged showing him dragging, punch-

ing and kicking her in a hotel corridor. Ventura broke her silence yesterday after the video of her being assaulted by Combs was published online saying: "This is only the beginning."

The singer said domestic violence "broke me down. With a lot of hard work, I am better today, but I will always be recovering from my past". Calling on her 10.4 million Instagram followers to believe victims who take legal action, she added: "It takes a lot of heart to tell the truth out of a situation you were powerless in."

This week, Combs, 54, was hit with the sixth lawsuit since Ventura sued him in November. Ventura's case was swiftly settled. In the lat-

est case, Crystal McKinney, a model, claimed Combs drugged her when she was 22 and forced her to perform oral sex during a visit to his New York studio two decades ago.

Jackson, 48, has repeatedly revelled in Combs's ongoing legal woes.

After federal agents raided Combs' Los Angeles and Miami homes in March, Jackson said: "Now it's not Diddy do it, it's Diddy done - they don't come like that unless they got a case."

Jackson and Combs have been rivals for more than two decades after Combs reportedly refused to sign 50 Cent because he would bring "too much drama". Tensions rose in 2006 when Jackson appeared to suggest Combs had inside knowledge about the murder of Biggie Smalls.



50 Cent and P Diddy are long-time rivals

Scott sets record straight on Swift's album

By India McTaggart
ENTERTAINMENT CORRESPONDENT

ANDREW SCOTT has played down rumours that Taylor Swift's new album was based on his WhatsApp group with Joe Alwyn, her former boyfriend.

The *Ripley* actor, 47, addressed speculation by the singer's fans about the group chat, which included actor Paul Mescal and was titled *Tortured Man Club*, insisting that it was short-lived and "collapsed".

In an interview with *Variety* magazine, he set the record straight, saying: "Let me tell you what that [group] is... So they were about to play these tortured characters, and I had played a tortured character in *Fleabag*. It wasn't about our own characteristics!"

"I think there were three texts, like, 'Hey, guys: You know those groups that you set up, and they just collapse.'"

Swift's fans had speculated that the pop star's new album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, was inspired by the group chat after Alwyn, had revealed its

existence while they were still together in 2022.

It was later discussed during an interview Alwyn had with Mescal, the star of *Normal People*, for *Variety's* Actors on Actors series. They also revealed that Scott had created it.

"It hasn't had much use recently," Alwyn said at the time, with Mescal add-

"They were about to play these tortured characters. It wasn't about our own characteristics!"

"I feel like we're less tortured now." They later joked that Scott was "on it by himself" with Alwyn quipping that he was "just messaging himself good mornings".

Now the *Sherlock Holmes* actor's comments to *Variety* appear to confirm the existence of the shared dialogue between the three men was short-lived. Scott added that he reached out to

Swift to tell her "how amazing" her new 31-track album is, before describing her as "an extraordinary human" and "a force of nature". His favourite song, *The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived*, appears to address her brief romance with musician Matty Healy, while other tracks are understood to be nods to her six-year relationship with London-based Alwyn.

In the interview, he also discussed the challenges of his role as Tom Ripley in the new Netflix TV drama.

Scott said he was "concerned about how it would be perceived" and how it might change things for his career.

He addressed some of the backlash he faced over his age for the part, which is based on a 25-year-old male, insisting: "When I played James Moriarty [in *Sherlock*], I was younger than people wanted the character to be."

"And they'd go: 'I wanted the character to have a beard and wear a top hat, and this little f----- is now playing it like this, and I don't want that!' The biggest challenge for you is to put your dukes up and go, 'Sorry, but this is this.'"

I'm afraid there really is no money: Why PM called an election now

GENERAL ELECTION
2024

No10 realises there is no room for tax cuts with just £6bn in the Treasury and the world as volatile as ever

By **Gordon Rayner**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

RISHI SUNAK decided on an early election after Treasury officials concluded there would be no money for "meaningful" tax cuts in an autumn budget.

Jeremy Hunt had just £6 billion left in the Treasury coffers after the spring Budget, in which he cut National Insurance by 2p. That £6 billion figure would need to have swollen to £30 billion for any significant giveaways in autumn.

By way of comparison, Lord Hammond, the former chancellor, liked to have £60 billion left over at the end of every budget to leave enough headroom for debt reduction and unexpected events 10 times what Mr Hunt was left with in March.

It meant Mr Sunak and Mr Hunt would have needed to borrow money for a pre-election tax cut, which they are very much against; hope for a windfall from economic growth,

Jeremy Hunt, the Chancellor, and Lord Cameron, the Foreign Secretary, at Rishi Sunak's campaign event on Wednesday night



Office scandals, there wouldn't have been any money left for a people-pleasing budget with meaningful tax cuts.

"It's possible that the Bank of England might have implemented one or two interest rate cuts before the autumn and the growth forecasts could have improved, but that is by no means guaranteed.

"There is also an expectation that inflation will creep back up from the 2.3 per cent that has just been announced. The assumption is that 3 per cent will be the new normal, at least while energy prices stay as high as they are.

"Geopolitically things are very volatile as well so there were just too many risks in going long.

"If there had been a budget there would have been an awful lot of Tory MPs disappointed with what was in it."

Plenty of other factors played into Mr Sunak's decision to go for a July 4 election, including a desire to wrong-foot Nigel Farage, which proved successful when the Reform UK honorary president decided six weeks was not long enough to mount a winning campaign to become an MP.

The economy, though, is the battleground on which Mr Sunak has chosen to fight the election, and Carl Emmerson, the deputy director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, agrees that an autumn budget would have come with its problems.

He said: "The public finances are clearly in a very weak state... and the spending plans pencilled in for the next parliament are already questionable.

"The Chancellor might have had head room for a very modest tax cut but would still be left with questions

£60bn

The amount of money Lord Hammond, as chancellor, tried to leave as headroom at the end of every budget

over how that would ultimately really be paid for."

Government debt is high, partly because of the huge borrowing to fund the response to the Covid pandemic, and predictions of growth are "a long way from stellar", Mr Emmerson said.

"The Chancellor could have cut spending to pay for tax cuts but it's much more about 'are these funding plans credible?'"

This week, the International Monetary Fund warned Mr Sunak that the Government was on course to miss its debt target and should not cut taxes before the election.

A Downing Street source said Mr Sunak had not sought or been given Treasury advice about an autumn budget.

They said that "ultimately it is the Prime Minister and the Chancellor that would have to decide" on spending priorities, and that "it is wrong to say that tax cuts would be impossible because he would have to have made a choice elsewhere".

Mr Sunak has made it clear he has plans to reduce the welfare budget by changing the benefit system, which would have left room for tax cuts, but government sources conceded that there was not time before the autumn to implement a long-term plan for welfare reform.

which is unpredictable; or make sizeable spending cuts elsewhere, which the Treasury doubted was possible in the time available – with the deadline for an election being in January 2025.

Mr Sunak's announcement of an uplift in defence spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP further squeezed the amount of money left for an autumn budget, and there were fears that economic variables, such as inflation and growth, could go against the Government.

Mr Sunak knew that an underwhelming pre-election budget would have done more damage than going to the polls before a budget was due, and it became a major part of his thinking as he made up his mind about an early election.

One Whitehall source explained: "By the time you have factored in the increased defence spending, the need to keep some money back for extra NHS spending going into the winter, the compensation payments for the victims of the infected blood and Post



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Record number of Tory MPs may stand down before July 4

By **Dominic Penna**
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

RISHI SUNAK faces a record number of Tories standing down before July's general election after five more of his MPs announced that they would not contest their seats.

Seventy-two Conservative MPs have now declared that they plan not to leave Parliament rather than stand for re-election. The current record is 75 – the number of Tories who stood down ahead of the Labour landslide at the 1997 general election.

There are fears the Conservatives are on track for a similarly heavy election defeat, with Mr Sunak trailing Labour and Sir Keir Starmer by around 20 points in the polls.

When Mr Sunak called the election

on Wednesday, it had already been confirmed that 65 Tory MPs were standing down.

The announcement prompted a flurry of declarations by MPs on Thursday, with five confirming that they would not stand. More are expected to follow in the coming days.

Yesterday, Huw Merriman, the rail minister, and Jo Churchill, the employment minister, confirmed that they would not seek re-election. They were joined by Sir Michael Ellis, a former frontbencher, James Grundy, who entered Parliament in 2019, and Dame Eleanor Laing, the deputy speaker.

Two former Tory MPs, Matt Hancock and Bob Stewart, who had already announced they were standing down at the election, also had the whip returned yesterday, taking the total to

72. Other senior Tory figures who had already confirmed they were leaving Westminster include Theresa May, the former prime minister, and Sajid Javid, the former chancellor and health secretary.

Some MPs had planned to stagger news of their resignations over the coming months ahead of an anticipated autumn election, but Mr Sunak's surprise decision to trigger a summer poll forced their hand.

An MP since 1997, Dame Eleanor held the role of Deputy Speaker for 11 years, regularly filling

Jo Churchill said she was standing down yesterday



in for John Bercow and subsequently Sir Lindsay Hoyle. Ms Churchill has served in a number of frontbench roles since 2019 and became Mr Sunak's employment minister as part of his reshuffle last November.

In a letter to the Prime Minister dated April 26, she said: "It has been the honour of my life to represent the people of the Bury St Edmunds constituency but for family reasons, I have decided I will not be fighting the next election."

She said she had taken "much pride in serving in Government", citing her stint as a public and primary care minister during the Covid pandemic and her role as Vice-Chamberlain during the death and funeral of Elizabeth II.

Ms Churchill added: "My current role as minister for employment, driving jobs and opportunities, is integral to my belief in the conservative values of rewarding hard work, self-responsibility and

reaching out to help others... Prime Minister, I have the utmost respect for the difficult job that you do in protecting us and assure you of my constant support until the next election."

Last weekend, Chris Heaton-Harris, the Northern Ireland Secretary, announced he would also quit parliament and asked Mr Sunak if he would

Old guard Johnson and Cameron unlikely to seek a seat

Boris Johnson is unlikely to stand again as an MP in the upcoming election, friends of the former prime minister believe.

Some of Mr Johnson's supporters wanted him to return, after he resigned last year following a probe into partygate.

But friends told *The Telegraph* that

'It would be cheaper to put all these people up in the Ritz in Paris than this plan'

was not likely to happen, with one saying: "I would think 100 [per cent] not."

Another said: "I seriously doubt it. He doesn't want to."

Mr Johnson, however, is yet to categorically rule out a return. Lord Cameron will also not stand as an MP, a source said.

The ex-prime

able to deliver that, people will keep coming."

It came as Home Office figures showed the number of asylum seekers granted permission to stay in the UK hit a new high in the past year.

A record 68,564 people were granted refugee status or other types of leave to remain in the year to March – the highest level in 40 years and nearly four times the rate in the previous year.

It is the highest annual number since records began in 1984 and dwarfs the 16,700 in the final year of the last Labour government in 2009. It follows attempts by the Government to clear the asylum backlog by fast-tracking decisions The



Labour to scrap Rwanda on 'day one' even if flights are ready

Opposition brands scheme a 'gimmick' as figures show record numbers have been granted asylum in past year

By **Charles Hymas**
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

A LABOUR government would scrap the Rwanda deportation scheme on day one, even if flights were scheduled, a frontbench spokesman has said.

Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow paymaster general, said yesterday that Labour would ditch the Rwanda

scheme as it was not a deterrent and would only deal with 1 per cent of the asylum seekers in the UK.

Asked if the party would scrap it immediately, he told BBC's *Politics Live*: "Yeah. It's not going to work. It's only going to deal with 1 per cent of the people that it is supposed to deal with. It would be cheaper to put all these people up in the Ritz in Paris than this plan.

"It's an expensive gimmick, and it's not going to work. So, yes, we would scrap it, and we have got a detailed plan for dealing with this problem."

However, Rishi Sunak said that the Rwanda scheme would provide a deterrent, telling GB News: "Unless you're

able to remain in his post until polling day.

He also thanked Mr Sunak and former prime ministers Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, vowing to continue to campaign for the Conservatives as the "only party that has and can deliver for the whole of the United Kingdom".

can still have a place in Parliament without being an MP.

Mr Johnson walked away from his Uxbridge constituency last June after accusing the Commons Privileges Committee of mounting a "witch hunt" against him.



To polling day and beyond
Key dates for the 2024 election

Today
All parliamentary business will end

May 30
Dissolution of Parliament

June 7
Deadline for nomination of candidates

June 18
Deadline to register to vote

June 19
Deadline to apply for postal vote

June 26
Deadline to apply for proxy vote and ID certificate

July 4
Election day

July 9
The new Parliament will be summoned

July 17
State Opening of Parliament

Rishi Sunak travelled north yesterday to canvass supporters alongside Douglas Ross, the Scottish Tory leader

data, however, show that the Home Office has still not cleared more than 118,000 asylum applications, prompting the Liberal Democrats to claim Rishi Sunak had failed to meet a pledge to cut the number of people waiting for their claims to be decided.

ONS figures yesterday also showed that net migration was higher than previously thought, hitting a record of 764,000 in 2022. However the figure, which shows the difference between those entering the UK and leaving, fell by 10 per cent last year to 685,000.

The 685,000 total for the year to December 2023 is still the third highest on record and nearly three times the level in 2019, when the Tories pledged to reduce migration in their election manifesto.

The ONS said some 1.22 million people are estimated to have arrived in the UK in the year ending December 2023 to work, live or study, while 532,000 left. This compares with 1.26 million who arrived in the UK in the year to December 2022 and 493,000 who left, giving a rounded net total of 764,000, a

revision of the ONS's previous estimate for the year of 745,000.

Last year's fall will be seen as a boost for Rishi Sunak in his attempt to rein in record levels of net migration through measures including bans on foreign workers and students bringing in dependants.

James Cleverly, the Home Secretary, claimed the 10 per cent fall in net migration and 25 per cent drop in visa applications this year showed the Prime Minister's plan was working.

"The choice is clear in this election – sticking with our bold, clear plan to control immigration with Rishi Sunak and the Conservatives or going back to square one with Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Party who don't believe in immigration controls, want an illegal immigration amnesty and have no plan to stop the boats," he said.

The figures do not reflect the full impact of the new visa restrictions, which only started to take effect from January. Home Office figures on Wednesday showed a fall in work and study visas of 25 per cent in the first

four months of this year. The revision of the record net migration of 764,000 in 2022 was because of more people staying for longer than the ONS had originally estimated. It is based on real numbers rather than estimates from historical trends.

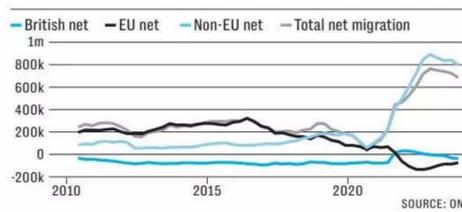
ONS officials attributed the fall to the increasing numbers of people emigrating from the UK, the bulk of whom were foreign students returning to their home countries after completing their studies. The estimates show that non-EU immigration for work-related reasons increased from 277,000 in the year to December 2022 to 423,000 in the year to December 2023, replacing study as the main reason for long-term migration. More than four out of 10 people moving to the UK for work-related reasons last year came from India or Nigeria, most commonly in the health and social care sector.

The number of non-EU nationals arriving as dependants of those on long-term work visas was higher last year than the number of main applicants, at 219,000 and 204,000 respectively. On a

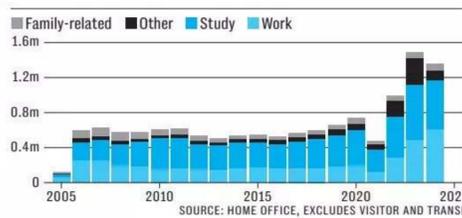
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Net migration by year



Annual visas by type



visit to a distribution centre in Derbyshire, Mr Sunak reiterated his message that the Tories had a "clear plan" while Labour would go "back to square one".

The Prime Minister told GB News: "If you elect me, if I'm Prime Minister on July 5, those flights will go off to Rwanda and we will begin to put in place the deterrent that we need to stop the boats."

"Because there is no way to stop this problem unless you can have a deterrent, unless it's clear that if someone comes to our country illegally they won't be able to stay and they will be removed. Unless you're able to deliver that people will keep coming."

However, Mr Sunak did concede that the deportation flights will not take off before the election on July 4. The earliest date that the Home Office had scheduled for the flights was June 24, although ministers have suggested they were more likely to take off between July 1 and July 15.

Labour has said that it would use the £75 million a year saved from scrapping the Rwanda scheme to set up a new border force command unit.

Sunak's smoking ban and killer cyclist law shelved by snap vote

By Charles Hymas
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

RISHI SUNAK'S legislation to ban smoking looks set to be shelved after his decision to call a snap election.

MPs and peers are unlikely to have enough time before Parliament is dissolved to pass the smoking and vaping bill, which aims to prevent anyone born after 2009 from legally smoking by gradually raising the minimum age to buy cigarettes.

Also at risk are plans to introduce tougher sentences for dangerous cyclists, which formed part of the Government's Criminal Justice Bill.

They are among up to a dozen pieces of proposed legislation at risk in the so-called "wash-up" period between the announcement of the election and

the dissolution of Parliament. However, Bills likely to be saved include plans to compensate victims of the infected blood scandal, which is part of a legislative package to boost victims' rights, the Post Office Bill paving the way for compensation for postmaster victims of the Horizon scandal and a ban on foreign state ownership of newspapers.

Public Bills cannot be carried over from one parliament to the next in the same way as they can be carried over from one session to the next within the lifetime of a parliament.

During the "wash-up" period, Bills can be fast-tracked before Parliament's dissolution but the Government is reliant on the cooperation of the opposition parties. Labour has said it will bring in the smoking ban if it wins the election, which means that even if it fails for this

parliament, it could be revived by whoever wins the election.

The Criminal Justice Bill, which also included a crackdown on knives and anti-social behaviour, had still to complete its final Commons stages before going to the Lords, which means it is particularly vulnerable to being lost.

Some of its measures already agreed in the Commons, such as the dangerous cyclists amendment put forward by Sir Iain Duncan Smith, the former Tory leader, and backed by the Government could be saved if part of the Bill is rushed through, but two sources contacted by *The Telegraph* said it was unlikely.

Also being scrapped are the Government's plans to scrap most jail sentences under 12 months to tackle the prison overcrowding crisis.

Corbyn to stand as independent risking splits in Starmer's party

By Nick Gutteridge

JEREMY CORBYN will announce that he is standing against Labour as an independent candidate, presenting a major headache for Sir Keir Starmer.

The former Labour leader is soon expected to unveil his campaign to defend his north London seat, which he has represented for more than 40 years.

His decision will present an unwelcome distraction for Sir Keir and risks exacerbating splits between the Labour leadership and the Left of the party. The Labour leader has also come under pressure from the Left to restore

the whip to Diane Abbott, who served as a Labour MP for almost 36 years.

Mr Corbyn standing as an independent candidate raises the prospect that grassroots Labour activists and members of the 30-strong Socialist Campaign Group of MPs in the party could refuse to campaign against him.

The ex-leader, who was suspended for claiming the level of anti-Semitism in Labour on his watch was "overstated", remains a popular figure on the Left.

Labour HQ has been forced to fast-track the selection process for Islington North following the Prime Minister's

decision to call a snap election. The pared-back shortlist features only two candidates, both of whom are local councillors, and has prompted significant criticism from grassroots activists. Mr Corbyn retains significant local backing, with the constituency branch in his seat passing a motion saying he should be able to stand for the party.

Ms Abbott, a shadow home secretary under Mr Corbyn, was suspended last April for suggesting that Jewish people did not experience racism. The MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, in London, has hinted that she may follow Mr Corbyn by standing against Labour as an independent.

But a number of senior Labour figures have privately and publicly lobbied Sir Keir to reinstate the whip so that she can run for the party.



Jeremy Corbyn, the ex-Labour MP

I've got one more big card to play...

GENERAL ELECTION 2024

Former Ukip leader effectively announces candidacy for 2029 as he rules out July 4 run

Gordon Rayner
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

"I've got one more big card to play in politics in my life. It's not now," Nigel Farage said yesterday, as he effectively announced his candidacy for the 2029 general election five years early.

He would not, he said, be standing for Parliament on July 4, telling his supporters that a six-week campaign was not long enough for him to ensure victory.

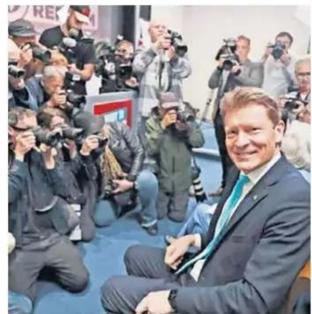
Mr Farage had been set to announce his candidacy next week for an expected autumn election, and had got as far as making arrangements for a launch event.

He had not made a final decision, but Rishi Sunak effectively made the decision for him by calling a surprise summer poll.

Having decided to sit this one out, Mr Farage was at pains to tell the public - and his opponents - that "I haven't gone away at all" and even promised that "at some point I will be back as a candidate".

So there can be little doubt that Mr Farage intends to make an eighth and final attempt to be elected to Parliament at the next election but one.

What is certain is that he will spend the next six weeks making life as uncomfortable as possible for Mr Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer.



Richard Tice, the Reform UK leader, held his campaign launch event yesterday

By not standing for election (which would have tied him down to fighting a local campaign), he will be free to cause chaos for the mainstream parties by turning up everywhere they don't want him.

As Mr Farage said in a social media post yesterday afternoon: "The bad news, Mr Sunak, is that I will be out around the country, fighting, campaigning, appearing on media, supporting [Reform UK leader] Richard Tice in every single way."

Some Tory MPs had suggested that Mr Farage returning as Reform UK leader would be an "extinction-level event" for their party.

There was even talk of the Conservatives being wiped out in the same way as Canada's ruling Progressive Conservative Party, which was left with just two seats after a calamitous general election in 1993.

Mr Tice, Reform UK's leader, announced yesterday that unlike in 2019, his party would not cut any deals to stand aside in Tory seats, but would contest every constituency in England, Scotland and Wales.

To applause from party activists, Mr Tice said: "We will be standing in 630 seats across the whole of England, Scotland and Wales. No ifs, no buts."

The Reform UK leader later said that "about 500" candidates had already been approved, with "hundreds more" currently going through vetting.

He added that all 630 will have been selected by June 7, the deadline by which MP hopefuls have to submit their papers to the Electoral Commission.

Analysis carried out for *The*



General Election 2024
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Telegraph by the polling group More in Common found that if Reform secures 9 per cent of the vote the Conservatives will win 35 fewer seats as a result.

However, if it won 14 per cent, a level at which it has consistently polled in recent months, then the impact would be even starker, costing the Tories 64 MPs.

Mr Tice announced that he will be standing in Boston and Skegness, moving from Hartlepool which he contested for the Brexit Party back in 2019.

He made the remarks at a campaign launch event two hours after Mr Farage announced that he would not be one of the party's candidates.

Talk of his return to frontline politics may have proved premature, but so have any thoughts of Mr Farage leaving the political stage.

At the age of 60, Mr Farage shows no sign of slowing down.

His friends say he has the energy of a 30-year-old, boundless enthusiasm for politics and for life in general, and loves being part of the national conversation.

Nigel Farage catches up with coverage of Rishi Sunak's announcement of a snap election in July

The confluence of the British and American electoral cycles presents a unique opportunity for him to increase his presence on the international stage, raising his profile higher still before a possible shot at his dream of becoming prime minister.

From July to November he will divide his time between the UK and the United States, supporting his friend Donald Trump in the run-up to the presidential elections and resuming his evening show on GB News (which he will have to pause during the election).

Mr Farage has made no secret of his desire to take on a liaison role between the UK and the US if Mr Trump becomes president for a second time, and it would be a brave person who bet against that happening, given the close and genuine friendship between the two politicians.

In the same way that he forced Brexit to happen through sheer force of will, Mr Farage would be in a far more powerful position to influence British politics than he could be as a backbench MP.

Presidential terms last for four years,

With an ageing Ken doll centre stage, this was a wedding with no bride

Sketch
By Madeline Grant

With Nigel Farage absent, up stepped Richard Tice flanked by former Tory Ann Widdecombe

INEVITABLY, this campaign will have plenty of surprises in store. The first materialised with the "exit, stage right" of one of the assumed main characters. Nigel Farage ruled himself out in a statement declaring that the American election would be more important than the British one. Presumably, his bank manager agrees.

Farage's announcement letter had

the air of a hastily printed notice in a theatre foyer informing you that "in this performance of the *Lion King*, the role of Scar will be played by an understudy".

Missing its leading man, the launch of the Reform Party campaign in Westminster felt like a wedding without the bride.

Ageing Ken Doll Richard Tice took centre stage, flanked by two support acts: Strictly Star Ann Widdecombe and Ben Habib, radiating earnest awkwardness. The event was held in a windowless sardine tin of a room, where Tice was first mobbed by photographers, as if he were Dua Lipa - or even, God forbid, Nigel Farage.

Habib, the Reform candidate for Wellingborough, waffled.

Widdecombe - not a candidate this time round - reeled off the latest staggering net migration figures. "The population of Manchester has come in, in a single year," she said. Alas,

Reform's attempts to escape the stench of amateurism weren't helped by the fact the mic kept cutting out. Further details of perhaps the most vital issue facing the country evaporated into the ether.

Next, they played video clips of successive dithering Conservative leaders talking about net migration, interspersed with scary music. Then came a particularly nasal Sir Keir Starmer preaching the benefits of free movement. This was the launch's standout moment.

As with so much in this election, their strongest argument will be simply pointing at the other lot and saying "God, they're awful".

Over in Derbyshire, the Conservatives' first stump event was making Reform's efforts look positively Gladstonian. Proceedings began with a Sky News reporter being forcibly ejected from the venue and ended with the PM fielding questions from



Ann Widdecombe, the former Tory MP, and Lee Anderson attend the Reform UK campaign launch in Westminster

"random" members of the public wearing high-vis jackets - one of whom, inevitably, turned out to be a Tory councillor in disguise.

Things went little better at Labour's

official launch where once again Angela Rayner and Keir Starmer had to pretend to like each other, this time at a football pitch in Kent. No sign of Labour's solitary Kent MP, Rosie

Duffield - consigned to outer darkness for her suspect allegiance to biological reality. Instead Rayner and Starmer were introduced by Nashaba Khan, their parliamentary candidate for Gillingham and Rainham. Panting nervously through the mic, Khan pledged further investment in "RNHS", which may come as news to Rachel Reeves's spreadsheet.

As the mic passed between Starmer and Rayner, Sir Keir moved in for an awkward embrace and then bottled it; instead faintly bumping his deputy's hips. There was excruciating football-themed banter. The Leader of the Opposition dropped his first "my Father was a toolmaker" of the campaign and even referenced his little-known stint as Director of Public Prosecutions.

Six long weeks of this to go. If "None of the above" was a candidate in the next election, he'd be on course for a landslide.

but it won't be now, says Farage



Fading blues The seats where Reform is confident of 'punishing' the Tories

Reform UK poses a major threat to the Conservatives in 28 seats, analysis by *The Telegraph* has found.

YouGov data indicates that Richard Tice's party is expected to win more than 20 per cent of the vote in a series of constituencies across England's North and Midlands. In these areas, Reform UK could deny the Conservatives a win by taking a slice of their support, challenging the party for victory, or leapfrogging the Conservatives and taking second place.

Unlike in 2019, when the Brexit Party agreed not to run in 317 Tory-held constituencies, Reform will field candidates in every seat in England, Wales and Scotland on July 4.

Mr Tice promised yesterday to "punish" the Conservatives for their record in Government, threatening to take swathes of its Right-wing vote.

Labour-held Barnsley North and Hartlepool both rank highest for Reform's expected vote share.

In both seats the party is polling at 27 per cent, more than twice the projected vote shares of the Conservative candidates – 11 and 13 per cent respectively.

Sir Keir Starmer's party maintains a more

than 20-point polling lead in both seats, however.

In Conservative-held Boston and Skegness – the seat Mr Tice is contesting – one in four voters are expected to support Reform.

The Tories are polling at 36 per cent in the constituency, followed by Labour in second on 28 per cent and Reform third on 25 per cent.

Other seats ranking high on the Reform UK target list include Barnsley South, Doncaster North, Bassetlaw and Rotherham.

In Ashfield, which is currently represented by Lee Anderson who joined Reform UK after losing the Tory whip, the party is polling at 23 per cent. This would, however, not be enough to beat Labour (35 per cent).

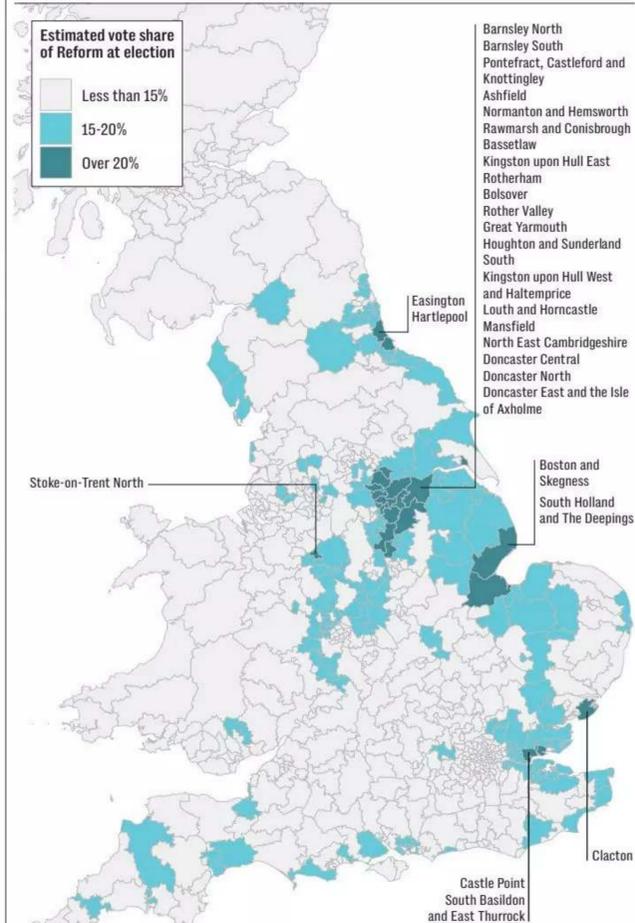
A further 375 seats could see the party secure more than 12 per cent of the vote, their current vote share in national polling.

This includes East Thanet, formerly South Thanet, where Nigel Farage stood for Ukip in 2015 and secured 32 per cent of the vote.

Around 16 per cent of people could vote for Reform in this election, polling suggests.

At the bottom of the list are two seats in Edinburgh, Orkney and Shetland, and Brighton Pavillion

Most at risk from Reform



SOURCE: YUUGOV, MRP RELEASED 3RD APRIL AND CONDUCTED THROUGHOUT MARCH

– the Green Party's only seat in Parliament.

The polling, produced through a constituency-level MRP poll of more than 15,000 voters, was conducted in late March.

Since then, Reform's estimated vote share has declined

slightly from around 12 per cent to 11.4 per cent.

Rishi Sunak will have been buoyed by the news that Nigel Farage will not be standing for election.

But Mr Farage, who will not present his GB News television show for the duration of the

six-week campaign, will be dispatched to maximise Reform's impact in the target seats.

Previous analysis for *The Telegraph* by the polling group More in Common found that if Reform secures nine per cent of the national vote, the

Conservatives will win 35 fewer seats as a result.

But if it won 14 per cent, a level at which it has consistently polled in recent months, then the impact would be even starker, costing the Tories 64 MPs.

Tim Sigsworth and Ben Butcher

meaning that by the time of the next US election in 2028, when Mr Trump would not be a candidate, Mr Farage would be ready for the next phase of his planned ascent.

Mr Farage is convinced that Sir Keir will win the election in July and go on to make such a hash of running the country that voters will kick him out at the first opportunity, which is likely to be in 2029, though it could come sooner.

He also believes that voters will be so unconvinced by the alternative being offered by the Conservatives

that a revolution in British politics will be on the cards, and that Reform UK will overtake the Tories as the chosen party of the Right.

Mr Tice believes that he should be the one to take Reform UK into a likely 2029 general election. He, too, has grand visions of entering Number 10.

So that leaves the question of which party Mr Farage will stand for if he plays that final card in the years to come.

It is possible he will replace Mr Tice as leader of Reform UK, and it is also possible that he could form yet another

new party, having been through Ukip, the Brexit Party and Reform UK.

Could he, though, decide that his best chance of becoming prime minister would be as leader of the most successful electoral party of them all, the Conservative Party?

He was a Conservative until 1992, when he left in disgust at the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, and many Tory members would welcome him back with open arms.

Right now he insists that Reform is the only party for him. But five years is an awfully long time in politics.

ELECTION BRIEFS

Duffield snubbed by Starmer launch in her backyard

Rosie Duffield was snubbed by Sir Keir Starmer at his election launch event in Kent even though she is the only elected Labour MP in the county.

The MP for Canterbury, who has angered many in her party for her stance on women's rights, found out about the event on social media. No Labour leader had visited Kent for years after Ms Duffield was elected in 2017. Sir Keir has travelled to the county recently, although she says he has never thought to tell her.

Sir Keir launched his campaign at Gillingham Football Club in the constituency of Gillingham and Rainham. It is believed Ms Duffield found out about the event on X after people messaged her to ask why she was not there.

Sunak scores own goal in Euros chat with Welsh workers

Rishi Sunak kicked off his election campaign with a gaffe as he tried to engage workers in a conversation about football.

The Prime Minister asked workers at a brewery in south Wales whether they were looking forward to "the football" this summer. Unfortunately, Wales did not qualify for the European Championships. Of the home teams, only England and Scotland reached the finals. His gaffe prompted an embarrassed silence at the Vale of Glamorgan Brewery in Barry.

He asked: "So are you looking forward to all the football?" After an awkward pause, one employee answered: "We're not so invested in it," to which another responded: "That's because you guys aren't in it."

Sky journalist manhandled at PM's campaign event

Security staff at the launch of Rishi Sunak's general election campaign manhandled a political journalist out of the event live on camera.

Darren McCaffrey, a Sky News correspondent, was "forcibly removed" with his crew while filming the rally attended by about 100 Conservative activists at the Excel Centre in east London on Wednesday.

In footage, the security officer can be seen physically escorting McCaffrey and his team out of the venue and herding them towards an elevator as they continue to film.

McCaffrey tells the camera: "I am being forcibly removed. We wanted to have access as Sky News but we're told that because of pool arrangements we are not allowed to be here."

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Buy your pet medicine online to avoid rip-off vets, owners told

Regulator issues advice to cut costs after concerns that corporate takeovers are driving up prices

By Fran Ivens
SENIOR MONEY WRITER

PET owners should buy medication online to avoid rip-off vet costs, the competition watchdog has said.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has launched a review into the £5 billion market amid concerns that private equity takeovers are driving up prices for pet owners.

More than half of vet practices now belong to large companies, up from 10 per cent a decade ago.

Under the scope of the inquiry, first announced in March, experts will look at consumer choice, whether customers receive the right information to make best-value decisions, and whether regulation of the sector is preventing it from functioning as well as it could.

Meanwhile, the regulator has advised pet owners to look further than their closest vet for services as a way to cut costs because fees differ between practitioners. It also suggests asking about alternative treatment options and getting a full understanding of why the vet has recommended the option they have.

Consumers should also consider looking online or in specialist pet shops for cheaper medication if the treatment

needed is non-urgent, it has said. As a result of the inquiry there may be a cap on prescriptions for pets, and vets could be mandated to provide customers with specific information.

Sarah Cardell, chief executive of the CMA, said: "The message from our work so far has been loud and clear - many pet owners and professionals have concerns that need further investigation."

"We've heard from people who are struggling to pay vet bills, potentially overpaying for medicines and who don't always know the best treatment options available to them."

"We also remain concerned about the potential impact of sector consolidation and the incentives for large, integrated vet groups to act in ways which reduce consumer choice." Around 16

'People are potentially overpaying for medicines and don't always know the best treatment options'

million households have pets and rely on vets for essential services.

The CMA said it received 56,000 responses from customers and practitioners raising concerns before the inquiry.

The proportion of vet practices that are independent has fallen by half in a decade to 45 per cent, the CMA said. In 2013, almost nine in 10 practices were not part of a chain.

Six companies own more than half of the UK's clinics, with three of those being private-equity owned.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics suggest the average cost of owning a dog has risen by more than 12 per cent, or £256, in the past year. Households spend more than £2,500 annually to look after their pet.

The investigation comes as the deadline approaches for cat owners to have their pets microchipped. By June 10 cats in England need to be microchipped and registered on a database before they are 20 weeks old. It has been compulsory to microchip a dog since 2016.



In fine feather A male kingfisher spies a potential mate at Rainham Marshes, Essex. The nature reserve, made up of lagoons and woodland, was once an MoD firing range until it was bought by the RSPB in the summer of 2000.

Swimming pool closed for being too slippery is now too grippy

By Ewan Somerville

PADDLING pools that were closed for being too slippery have been treated with a rough textured grip-coating that could hurt children's feet, a councillor has warned.

The four bathing spots in the North Wales resorts of Llanfairfechan, Penmaenmawr, Rhos on Sea and Craig y Don in Llandudno were closed for the summer months after health and safety restrictions were tightened last year.

Conwy council blamed a "high risk of people slipping" for the move last April, which led to a public outcry from fami-

lies and tourism officials. Now the pools are due to reopen with a new "non-slip" surface but a councillor claims this is unsafe, too.

Cathy Augustine, a Plaid Cymru member of the council who defected from Labour over its stance on Israel, wants officials to erect large warning signs in case children are injured on the "rough" new surface.

"We are in the business of making people feel as safe as we possibly can, especially, of course, our children. But there is a risk with any activity," she said. "The new surfaces are textured. When people are paddling or swim-

ming, your skin will become softer, so if you are not wearing those shoes, that texture may graze your foot. Or if you fall heavily, you may graze.

"But you shouldn't slip and crack your heads open anymore."

She called for signs about the surface to be "bigger and in an obvious place". Residents are less than impressed, having endured the four pools being closed throughout last year. Aside from one other location, they are the last facilities of their kind in North Wales.

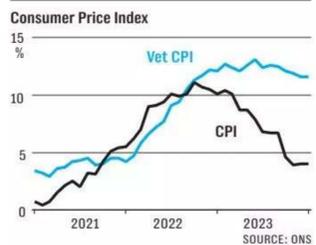
One mother said: "People will whinge about anything, kids get grazed knees all the time from just playing out. I'd

rather have a grazed knee than a hospital trip with split heads."

A father said it was "incredible", adding that the pools were out of action for all of last year "despite zero evidence of anyone being injured slipping. Now they have put the anti-slip in, you need pool shoes to avoid injury." Another resident said: "Parents need to stop wrapping their little 'darlings' in cotton wool."

A spokesman for the independent-run Conwy council said the non-slip coatings had been tested in wet and dry conditions, adding: "Advice for using them is displayed on the signs."

Inflation-busting vet costs



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Breakthrough offers hope of breast cancer 'immunity'

Seek-and-destroy trial on 'undruggable' cells hailed in fight on country's most common form of disease

By Michael Searles
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

BREAST cancer "immunity" could be achieved for survivors of the disease by killing "undruggable" cells, a breakthrough study has found.

By eliminating cancer cells in a way that trains the body's immune system to recognise and destroy them, scientists believe they may have unlocked the key to long-lasting protection against recurrence of the disease.

In an early-stage trial on human cancer cells, researchers from the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), London, used a new treatment called proteolysis targeting chimera (Protac) to target a specific protein and cause "immunogenic cell death".

This means that the cell is not only wiped out, but the immune system is mobilised to destroy any remaining cancer that has evaded treatment or become resistant to drugs.

The protein being targeted, called RIPK1, plays a crucial role in helping tumours to remain undetected, keeping them alive and allowing them to spread.

Prof Pascal Meier, of the ICR, said that activating the immune system in this way "could make treatment more effective and potentially offer individuals a longer-lasting immune response against breast cancer".

"By using Protac, we have been able to use the cell's own recycling system to specifically degrade and destroy the RIPK1 cancer protein," he said. Prof Meier hailed the "exciting findings" that suggest "targeting RIPK1 could improve the effectiveness of existing cancer treatments and protect people from recurrences of breast cancer".

Breast cancer is the most common

form of the disease in Britain with almost 60,000 new cases a year.

About 10 per cent of survivors will suffer a relapse, but this increases to 40 per cent among people diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer - accounting for a fifth of cases - and who could stand to benefit most.

Dr Simon Vincent, director of research at Breast Cancer Now (BCN), which funded the study, said "breakthroughs" like these were "urgently needed".

"There are many hallmarks of cancer, including the ability of cancer cells to evade detection by the immune system and resist being killed by common treatments such as chemotherapy," he said. "However, these exciting findings could pave the way for new, targeted breast cancer treatments which also have the potential to offer a longer lasting immune response against the disease."

The cancer cells have been dubbed "undruggable" because no treatments have been able to attach to them and destroy them.

Traditional inhibitor drugs have only been able to block the function of the protein and slow down or halt its spread rather than eliminating it, but Protac has been able to overcome this obstacle.

The study involved injecting Protac into a tumour in combination with radiotherapy and/or immunotherapy, but scientists are working on creating a version of the treatment that could be delivered into the bloodstream too.

Scientists said the findings could be applicable to a range of other cancers but more work was needed. Given the research is still in a very early stage it is likely to be a number of years before the technology could be used on the NHS.

The study was also able to demonstrate that targeting the RIPK1 protein in mice boosted their immune system responses to cancer further down the line.

The findings were published in the journal *Immunity*.



True colours Model Bella Hadid, 27, makes a pro-Palestinian statement as she wears a dress fashioned from a keffiyeh during the 77th Cannes Film Festival yesterday.

'Pills by post' raise abortion figures by 17pc

By Laura Donnelly HEALTH EDITOR
and Meike Eijsberg

ABORTIONS have risen by a record 17 per cent in one year, following the introduction of the "pills by post" system.

In total, there were 251,377 terminations in England and Wales in 2022, up from 214,869 in 2021. The jump in one year is the biggest since 1971.

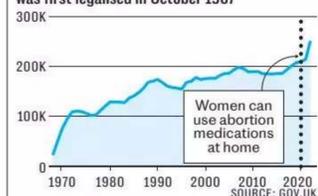
Abortion providers said they expected increases to continue, with unprecedented demand since changes to make it easier for women to have home procedures.

The majority of cases in 2022 involved pills by post, introduced as a temporary measure in the pandemic, and then retained after a Commons vote.

In total, 61 per cent of terminations in involved taking medication at home,

Abortions on a steep increase

Number of abortions for women resident in England and Wales per year since abortion was first legalised in October 1967



without having to see a doctor in person, up from 52 per cent in 2021.

Abortion providers said the rise in terminations was "in large part" down to women being given the option to end the pregnancy in their own homes.

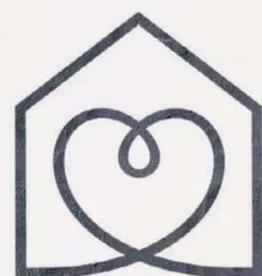
The 2022 statistics show that 102,689 of the cases involved women who were not having their first abortion, with a 12 per cent rise in "repeat" abortions in one year.

Sarah Salkeld, UK associate clinical director, at abortion provider MSI Reproductive Choices, said: "The figures announced today show abortion continues to rise at a record rate. Despite greater demand, we have worked hard to ensure that more women are able to access care early in their pregnancy."

Anti-abortion campaigners called for a return to previous systems which insisted that women see a doctor face-to-face before securing an abortion.

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Boy, 11, shot in head fetching ball next door

Youngster recovering from surgery having collapsed at home as neighbours fear for children at play

By Patrick Sawyer and Ian Leonard

A SCHOOLBOY was shot in the head after climbing a garden fence to retrieve a football.

The 11-year-old suffered a fractured skull after being hit by a pellet fired from what police believe to be an air rifle.

Officers said it was sheer luck that he

did not suffer more significant injuries or was even killed.

The boy was playing football with friends in the back garden of a house in Leyland, Lancs, at about 7.20pm on Monday when the ball went over a fence. As he climbed up to look over, he was struck by the pellet.

He was taken to Alder Hey Hospital, Liverpool, for surgery and is said to be recovering.

Lancashire Police last night said it had identified a juvenile as "someone of interest" in its investigation. A spokesman said: "We will be speaking to them in due course."

The boy's mother told *The Telegraph*:

"He's doing OK considering he's been shot in the head."

She said she discovered her son had been wounded when he appeared with a tea towel on his head. All the other kids were shouting that he had been shot," she added to the Mail Online.

"I was in shock. One minute he was playing football and the next he is collapsed on the floor."

"He spent three nights at Alder Hey Hospital and he's been left with a hole the size of a 5p coin."

"It narrowly missed his brain so he has been lucky. He's a tough lad."

One resident, who did not wish to be named, said: "My daughter was playing

'He's been left with a hole the size of a 5p coin. It narrowly missed his brain so he has been lucky'

in our garden at the time and I heard all the commotion in the road. I heard that the boy's mother had gone to a friend's house to get help and it was she who dialled 999. The friend told me the boy had been shot in the head."

The woman added: "I can't understand why it happened. And it make you think if it's safe for kids to be playing out."

Another neighbour said police had asked for her Ring doorbell footage. "They didn't tell me what it was about," she said. "It was only later I heard about the boy being shot. Poor him, I just hope he's going to be OK."

Det Con Paul Brown, of South CID, said: "This incident has left a young boy with some really significant injuries, and it is fortunate he was not more seriously hurt or even killed."

"We are carrying out a number of inquiries to try and identify the person or persons responsible and I would appeal to anyone who saw what happened, has any dashcam or Ring doorbell footage, or who has any

information which could assist our investigation to get in touch. I'm sure someone in the local community knows who is responsible for what's happened boy and I would urge them to come and speak to us."

Roadtrain Avenue – where the incident occurred – is part of a newly built residential development on the edge of Leyland, close to open countryside and popular with young families.

One mother of two who lives close to where the shooting took place, told *The Telegraph*: "It's appalling to think someone is taking shots at a child who was just climbing a fence to get their ball back."

Police remove pro-Palestine activists from Oxford campus

By Will Bolton and Gabriella Swerling

A GROUP of pro-Palestinian protesters have been removed by police after occupying a building at Oxford University.

At around 8am, the group of activists entered an administrative office on Wellington Square and refused to leave.

Thames Valley Police attended the scene and at least two protesters from Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) have reportedly been forcibly moved on.

The Telegraph understands that a number of protesters were arrested.

At least five police cars were parked on Wellington Square, and at least one police vehicle entered the building through the back gate.

A group of protesters were blocking the entrance of the building. A note on it read: "We are in lockdown – no access".

A banner was hung from the first floor of the Wellington Square block, with a list of seven demands, including: "Disclose all finances", "Divest from Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation", and "Support Palestinian-led rebuilding of education in Gaza".

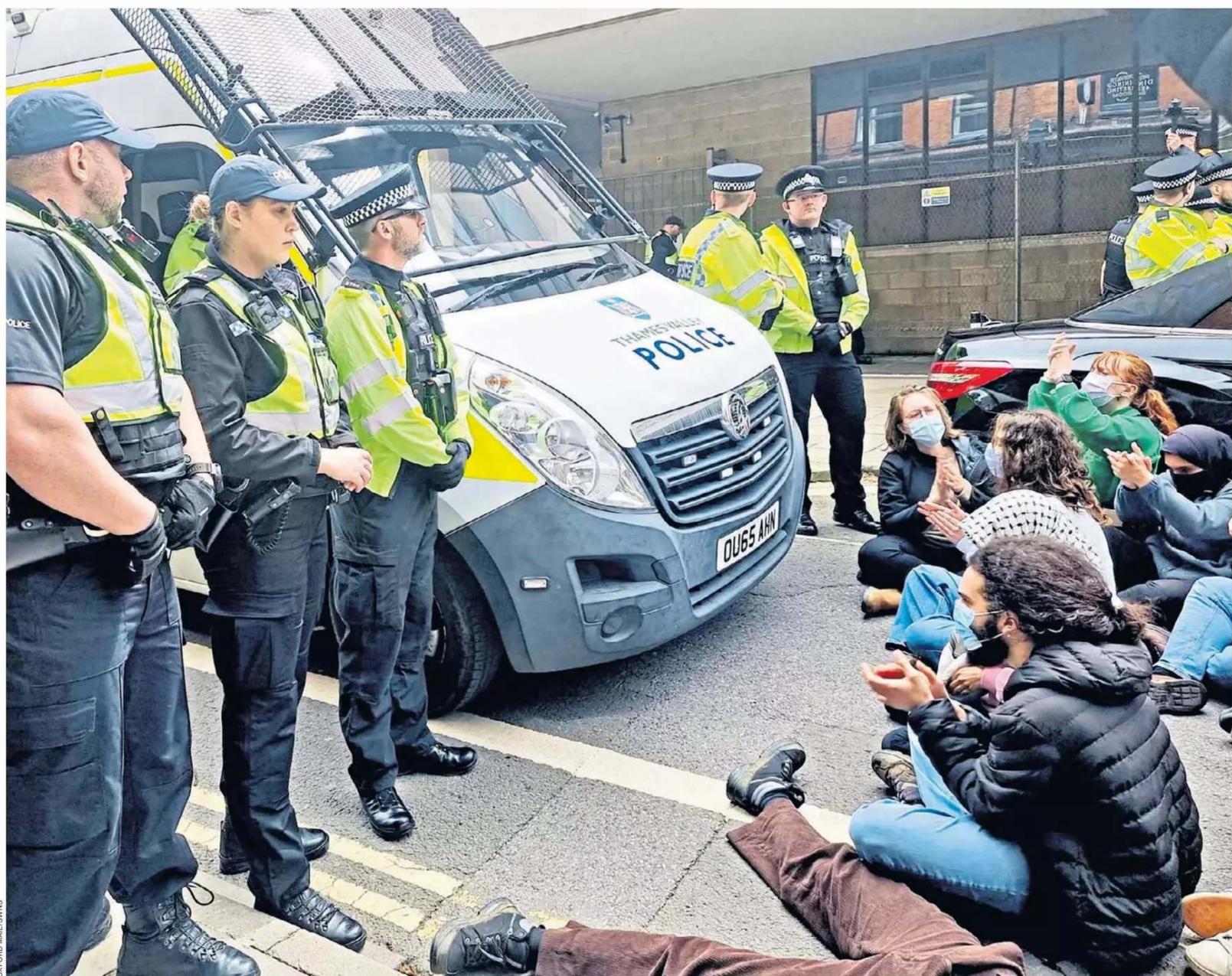
A final demand reads "Amnesty for all involved".

An OA4P statement on Twitter reads: "Emergency: mass arrests are happening now at our sit-in at Wellington Square! Mobilise now for support!"

In another post, the group stated: "We will not leave the offices in Wellington Square until the University agrees to negotiate on the preconditions we have already requested."

A spokesman for Thames Valley Police said: "We are aware of an ongoing protest this morning."

Officers were called to the Phoenix Cinema in north London yesterday after reports of criminal damage, the Metropolitan Police said. Images shared of the building on social media appeared to show graffiti sprayed on its front doors that said "Say no to artwashing". The venue had reportedly been scheduled to hold a private screening of a documentary about the Hamas attack on the Supernova festival on Oct 7 last year.



Police poised to move in and remove sit-in protesters from the university site in Wellington Square, Oxford. A Twitter post from the group read: 'Emergency: mass arrests happening now. Mobilise now for support!'

'Much-loved' schoolgirl, 10, named as mudslide victim

By Will Bolton

A "MUCH-LOVED" schoolgirl died following a mudslide in North Yorkshire.

Leah Harrison, a Year 6 pupil at Mount Pleasant Primary School in Darlington, died after a mudslide on the edge of the North York Moors National Park on Wednesday.

In a statement, Leah's family described the 10-year-old as a "bubbly, happy-go-lucky little girl".

They added: "The beautiful smile, the giddy laugh, the silly jokes. You will never ever be forgotten baby girl. You will achieve your dream and become a player for the Lionesses. Spread those wings. May you rest in paradise."

The family are being supported by specially trained officers.

Mount Pleasant said staff and pupils had been left in a "state of shock", describing her as a "much-loved part of their school".

Paying tribute to Leah yesterday, Nick Blackburn, the chief executive of Lingfield Education Trust, said: "The full details are still emerging but this is clearly a heartbreaking tragedy. Leah was a much-loved part of our school and our thoughts and prayers are with



Leah Harrison, a pupil at Mount Pleasant Primary School in Darlington, was described as a 'bubbly, happy-go-lucky little girl'

her family, friends, and the school staff.

"Counselling is being arranged within the school. We are all in shock and we would ask that the privacy of the family and the school community is respected while we try to come to terms with what has happened."

Husband threatened to kill wife over mowing the lawn

By Ewan Somerville

A GARDENER threatened to kill his wife of 40 years in a row over cutting the lawn.

Steven Briscall, 57, told Debbie Briscall "I will bury you" when they began arguing over whether cutting wet grass in their front lawn might damage his mower, a court heard.

Briscall, a former herdsman, dialled 999 during the argument and twice said he was going to kill his wife or "knock her out" as she stood nearby.

He suggested that the operator tell her to get out of their £180,000 semi-detached house in Hartford, near Northwich, Cheshire.

When police attended, they found Mrs Briscall shaken but she told them she wanted to stand by her husband, with whom she had been in a relationship for 40 years.

The couple's front lawn is thought to

have gone uncut for several weeks as a result of heavy rain.

Police pursued a prosecution based on the 999 calls, leading to Briscall pleading guilty at Warrington magistrates' court, where his wife and daughter supported him, making threats to damage or destroy property.

Joseph Kindley, prosecuting, said: "Two separate calls were made. He says to the officers, he will knock his wife out if she does not stop and he said he will kill her. Officers did attend the scene and the defendant's wife said that day the defendant said he was going to kill her and she believed him."

Briscall claimed he was intoxicated at the time. In mitigation, David Thompson, Briscall's lawyer, said: "The complainant still wants to pursue a relationship."

Briscall was sentenced to an 18-month community order, fined £100 and ordered to pay £199 in costs.

Aristocrat blames care home for death of uncle at 102

By Patrick Sawyer
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

THE mother of socialites Lady Victoria and Lady Isabella Hervey has accused a care home of being partly to blame for the death of her 102-year-old uncle.

Yvonne, Marchioness of Bristol told an inquest in Ruthin, Denbighshire, that she had been left shocked by the condition of Norbert Marshall's feet when she visited him in hospital last year.

Mr Marshall, a retired jeweller, died in hospital in November after fracturing his hip in a fall at Plas Isaf Home in Rhos-on-Sea, Colwyn Bay.

Lady Bristol said in a statement: "His toes were blue, his nails were three inches long and he was very unkempt. He was in a terrible state. I believe it to be negligence on the part of the care home."

The widow of the 6th Marquess of

Bristol, who divides her time between her apartment in London's exclusive Eaton Square and Monaco, said she believed that the length of her uncle's toenails had caused him to be unsteady on his feet, leading to his fall.

After the inquest was shown photographs of her uncle's toes, John Gittins, senior coroner for North Wales (East and Central), said he was concerned by their condition.

However, Mr Gittins recorded Mr Marshall's passing as an accidental death, concluding that, despite Lady Bristol's claims, "the reality was different".

The inquest heard Mr Marshall, who retired to Llandudno after falling in love with the town as a child, was known for taking pride in his appearance.

The widower, who had been diagnosed with dementia, was able to walk with help but had fallen about six times, the inquest was told.

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Age limit puts Romeo and Juliet beyond reach of young

New West End production handed 15-plus rating as tragic denouement may be too much to bear for some

By Craig Simpson

THE latest stage production of *Romeo and Juliet* has been given a 15-plus age rating as it opens in the West End.

Tom Holland, the *Spiderman* actor, and newcomer Francesca Amewudah-Rivers appear as the tragic leads in director Jamie Lloyd's hotly anticipated version at the Duke of York's Theatre.

The stripped-back production sees all the violence in the tale of the star-crossed lovers removed and merely implied.

The theatre, however, recommends that only those aged 15 and over attend, with audiences warned: "The production contains scenes that some audiences might find difficult to watch."

This places it in a higher age bracket than Baz Luhrmann's 1996 gun-toting film starring Claire Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio, which featured several characters being shot, but only earned a rating of 12A.

A 1968 film adaptation directed by Franco Zeffirelli and narrated by Laurence Olivier broke an established British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) precedent, according to the board's website, whereby Shakespeare films were rated U for Universal.

John Trevelyan, then the BBFC secretary, shared concerns over nudity in "the love scene" and the sight of corpses in another. It was ultimately placed in the A (Adult) category, which advised that some scenes were unsuitable for young children, before being reclassified PG (Parental Guidance) in 2002.

In Luhrmann's version, set in modern California, swords were swapped for firearms, and Mercutio and Tybalt are both shot dead.

The BBFC rated it 12A, saying it contains "moderate violence" of stabbings and shootings with some blood visible, though "this is not dwelt upon".

By comparison, the new West End production is sparse, with no fight scenes taking place on stage and the audience instead being witness to the aftermath of suggested violence.

There are no prop weapons, and some bloodied costumes are the only signs that any fighting has taken place.

It is believed the warnings to sensitive audiences come as the tragedy concludes with the two lovers taking their own lives.

In the new version, there is no balcony scene, among the most famous in the Shakespearean canon, with the young lovers simply conversing side by side.

'The production contains scenes that some audiences might find difficult to watch'

The cast also openly wear microphones, breaking from a Shakespearean tradition of projecting the lines to the back of the theatre, and instead talking in subtle whispers.

Juliet's character in the play is 13 years old, with Romeo suggested as being a few years older.

The adaptation has already caused controversy with the casting of black actress Amewudah-Rivers drawing criticism from online trolls. In response, hundreds of actors signed a letter in solidarity with the actress.

Holland himself has become an international star, and lives in London with his partner, Zendaya, most recently known for her role in the *Dune* series.

The new production is not the first to give Shakespeare a trigger warning, with the Globe Theatre in London regularly issuing cautionary notes for its productions.



Web-slinger turned star-cross'd lover casts mesmerising spell

Theatre

Romeo and Juliet

Duke of York's Theatre, London WC2

★★★★★

By Dominic Cavendish
CHIEF THEATRE CRITIC

SPIDEY grapples with Shakespeare! Result: a frenzy at the box-office and the talk of the West End. Sure, 27-year-old Tom Holland – the London-born actor turned Hollywood A-lister – has other feathers in his cap besides his Peter Parker. And anyone who will

see him tread the boards in this Jamie Lloyd-directed *Romeo and Juliet* is treated to a bio in the programme that details other recent, gritty credits.

But it's his impact in the Marvel superhero series and heart-throb status that explains the hot-ticket hysteria. Before we see him or his Juliet (Francesca Amewudah-Rivers), the sense of adrenal anticipation is stoked with blasting electronica.

To cut to the chase – something this ruthlessly edited version does with verve – Holland's rite of passage in Shakespeare's swooniest tragedy doesn't disappoint. In fact it ravishes.

Amewudah-Rivers, 26, is a huge find, by turns understated, coy,

Ravishing: Tom Holland and Francesca Amewudah-Rivers as Romeo and Juliet

comically off-hand, and passionate. But eyes rivet to Holland – achingly tender, at times teary and then cheery, all hormonal vulnerability. Together, they help subvert expectations that the evening must be giddy and hectic.

Lloyd doesn't just strip things back, but slows things down, placing the language centre-stage. Mics on stands, and taped to faces, capture every utterance. The "two hours traffic" is a slo-mo succession of tableaux; live-captured video, relayed on a screen, adds to the meditative effect. During the balcony scene, given

Holland's association with wall-crawling, you expect his callow youth, in hooded top and baggy jeans, to move in leaps and bounds. But he simply perches at the edge of the stage and pictures his beloved from afar even as Amewudah-Rivers sits beside him.

It's a stark image, their insinuated proximity transcending prosaic reality. When they turn to acknowledge each other, our hearts jump too.

Although the urban aesthetic is monochrome, even dour, it never feels drab. The street-wise, star-cross'd lovers hold us in their spell, stamp the play with a 2024 freshness, and earn their Shakespearean spurs.
Until Aug 3; romeoandjulietdn.com



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Drinkers urged to call time on short measures

Up to 70pc of beer and wine orders in pubs are less than the prescribed quantity, watchdog finds

By Blathnaid Corless CONSUMER AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

PINTS of beer and glasses of wine are short-measured most of the time, research has found, as drinkers have been urged to demand top-ups at the bar.

About 70 per cent of servings are less than the prescribed quantity required by the Weights and Measures Order for pints, half pints and 175ml glasses of wine, the study by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) suggests.

Officers visited 77 pubs and bars and were served 96 short measures out of 137 orders. Of the short measures, 41 were under by 5 per cent or more. Eighty-six per cent of all beer ordered was short measured, as was 43 per cent

'Consumers shouldn't have to feel short-changed when supporting their favourite pubs, clubs and taprooms'

of wine. The average deficit for short-measured beer was 4 per cent, while for wine it was 5 per cent.

For the average beer drinker, this equates to a loss of £1.70 per week, or £88.40 a year, and for a wine drinker in the UK this jumped to £2.20 per week or £114.40 per year, the CTSI said.

Nik Antona, the Campaign for Real Ale (Camra) chairman, said consumers were "well within their rights" to ask for a top-up at the bar.

He said: "Consumers shouldn't have to feel short-changed when they support their favourite pubs, social clubs, and taprooms. The idea that 70 per cent of all beer bought at the bar is being short-measured in the UK is extremely concerning."

"For anything that is short-measured, and particularly anything more than 5 per cent short, you should ask the bar staff for an immediate top-up. You are well within your rights to do

this, and the staff should comply and fulfil this request.

"If you get a negative reaction when you do this, you can get in contact with Trading Standards to report the incident."

Trading Standards officers found the largest short measure was 15 per cent under on a £3.20 175ml glass of wine served in Walsall, West Midlands.

The next largest short measure was under by 13.4 per cent, found in Belfast for a serving of wine costing £7.20, while the third largest deficit was of 12 per cent and found with a 175ml glass of wine bought in Havering, east London, costing £5.75.

The findings come at a time when the price of alcoholic drinks is at an all-time high.

The average price of a bottle of red wine has increased by 8 per cent in the last year, while the average cost of a pint of lager is up 5.6 per cent, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Legally, the frothy head on a pint of beer is included in the measure.

The CTSI's survey found 35 per cent of the public felt the head should not be included in the pint measure and 23 per cent thought it should.

John Herriman, the chief executive of the CTSI said: "While this is a snapshot, it is the first time that we have been able to build a national picture of how widespread short measuring of alcoholic drinks are, and the potential detriment to the average consumer of around £115 every year suggests there is the need for more comprehensive research to better understand the impact of short measures, not just for alcoholic drinks but across a broader spectrum of consumer goods.

"Weights and measures is a key role for Local Authority Trading Standards, but right now we simply don't have the resources to allocate, and even the equipment to use, to undertake spot checks that ensure consumers are getting what they pay for.

"We are calling on the hospitality sector to ensure that consumers get value for money by making sure they are correctly measuring the drinks they are serving to customers in the nation's pubs and bars and for further research in this area."



Romeo broke records with a height of 6ft 4in, only 3in shorter than Peter Crouch. The steer was rescued by Misty Moore, above, and her husband Robert

World's tallest steer rescued from slaughter

By Nick Squires

HE was once destined for the slaughterhouse but Romeo was given a reprieve and has now been recognised as the world's tallest steer.

The bulky bovine, who dwarfs most ordinary cattle, has reached an imposing 6ft 4in. To put that into perspective, he is only slightly shorter than Peter Crouch, the 6ft 7in former England striker who was one of the tallest men ever to have played professional football.

Romeo, 6, has been acclaimed by Guinness World Records as "the tallest living steer" in the world and has the certificate to prove it. He seized the title

from a 6ft 1in steer named Tommy who lives in Massachusetts.

Romeo, a giant Holstein, lives at the Welcome Home Animal Sanctuary in Creswell, Oregon.

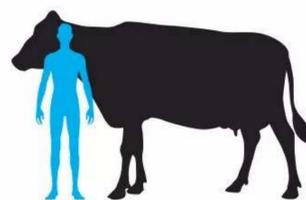
But it could all have turned out very differently.

When he was just 10 days old, he was destined for the slaughterhouse, before he was rescued by Misty and Robert Moore, who run the animal sanctuary.

"In the dairy industry, male calves like Romeo are often deemed as mere byproducts, their destinies predetermined by profit margins," said Mrs Moore.

"From the beginning he was a survivor, and we could tell that he was long-

Man vs Cow: how they stack up



ing for a fulfilled life. Romeo earned his name due to his deep affinity for love. He delights in both expressing affection and receiving it. His striking combination of handsomeness, intelligence and sensitivity made the name an ideal fit."

Given his vast bulk, it is no surprise he has a huge appetite: he chews his way through 100lb of hay and 15lb of grain each day and, according to Guinness World Records, "drinks an entire bathtub full of water". He also likes the occasional treat, with his favourite snacks being bananas and apples.

Mrs Moore said: "To keep up with the costs, we're always watching our pennies and getting creative with fundraisers to cover Romeo's hefty grocery bill."

Telescopic imagery sheds light on mystery dark matter origins

By Sarah Knapton SCIENCE EDITOR

THE dark matter-hunting telescope Euclid has sent back new images that hint at the origins of one of the most mysterious forces in the universe.

For the first time, scientists have pulled back the curtain on the Messier 78 nebula, a region that is usually shrouded by dense clouds of dust and gas, and impossible to penetrate.

The near-infrared camera on Euclid has allowed scientists to peer inside, where they have spotted brown dwarfs and rogue planets, both of which are candidates for "dark matter".

Although nobody knows what dark matter is, it is believed to make up about 85 per cent of the Universe's mass, keeping stars and planets in their galaxies. It cannot be seen but its impact can be viewed through telescopes because it bends light around galaxies, creating a ring of star light known as gravitational lensing.

Brown dwarfs are halfway between



Euclid's new image of Messier 78 - 1,300 light-years away from Earth

massive planets and stars, and emit radiation but have not burst into being full stars. Rogue planets are planets around four times the mass of Jupiter, but are not orbiting a star.

If brown dwarfs and rogue planets are responsible for dark matter there would need to be far more than have currently been spotted, but with Euclid,

scientists are now able to look into nebulae to see if there are enough.

Jerry Zhang, of the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands, said: "Dark matter, as we all know, is so mysterious, and it's invisible. But so far, brown dwarfs and planetary-mass objects are actually candidates for this missing mass. The individual object has so little mass that we have to find a significant number of them to support this idea. We still believe that we only found the tip of the iceberg."

The £1.2 billion Euclid space telescope is studying the impact of dark matter and dark energy on 1.5 billion galaxies - more than one third of the visible sky, and probe 70 per cent of cosmic time. Without dark energy, the universe would not continue to accelerate as it expands, while galaxies rely on the gravitational heft of dark matter to keep them together. Both have been notoriously difficult to pin down.

Messier 78 is around 1,600 light years away in the Orion constellation.

Vapes trap young 'who would never have started smoking'

By Sarah Knapton

VAPING is driving nicotine use in young people who would never have smoked, researchers have warned.

The use of e-cigarettes has tripled among 18 to 24-year-olds, while smoking has barely fallen, according to figures released on the same day as the Government mothballed its smoking Bill ahead of the general election in July. University College London (UCL), which compiled the new data, said people who would never have taken up smoking were now vaping, and urged the Government to help discourage the practice.

Under the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, disposable vapes were to be banned and it would have become an offence to sell tobacco products to those born on or after Jan 1 2009.

Penny Mordaunt, the Commons leader, yesterday confirmed that the smoking ban would not become law before the election, leaving the legislation in limbo.

The study, published in *The Lancet Regional Health*, found that 29 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds were vaping in May 2024, compared with just 9 per cent in

May 2021. At the same time, smoking declined from 25 per cent to 21 per cent in the same age group, while overall nicotine use increased from 28 per cent to 35 per cent.

Dr Harry Tattan-Birch, from the UCL Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care, said: "The rapid rise in vaping would be less concerning if smoking rates had come down more rapidly. The overall increase in the use of nicotine shows this has not happened."

"Instead, driven by the arrival of highly popular disposable e-cigarettes, vaping has become much more common among young people, some of whom would likely otherwise have avoided nicotine entirely."

There are fears that vaping may cause long-term damage to the lungs, hearts and brains of young people.

Nicotine harms developing brains, while chemicals and particulates found in e-cigarettes may cause lung disease and worsen respiratory conditions.

Researchers at UCL looked at survey responses from 132,252 adults in England between July 2016 and May 2023.

In the older age groups, there were smaller increases in vaping and smaller or no declines in smoking.

Court threats for ice cream man and his 'quiet as rain' chimes

By Ewan Somerville

AN ICE cream van owner could be taken to court over "overly loud" chimes, which he claims are quieter than moderate rain.

John Barton, 33, who runs Harrison's Ices, in Lincolnshire, received a council letter saying it had received complaints about his "Blue Peter-style" jingles.

East Lindsey district council said there had been reports of "undue noise" caused by the "misuse/overuse of the chimes" from his van. Officials warned he could face possible prosecution under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

The Tory-led council wrote: "It has been alleged the chimes are overly loud and are used excessively."

Mr Barton claimed the tones are 45 decibels, which, according to the American Academy of Audiology, is quieter than moderate rainfall. This is in line with guidance that permits chimes of up to 80dB. "They're not too loud, I can barely hear it in my van," he said.

A spokesman for the council said: "The council does not have a choice in whether or not to investigate."

Editorial Comment: Page 17

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Daily Mail

The Piano

Monkeys 'drop like apples' in Mexico heatwave

Animals suffer dehydration in extreme spell of weather as winds collapse election stage killing nine people

By Raoul Simons

THE heatwave that has killed dozens of people across Mexico has also resulted in the deaths of hundreds of monkeys, with reports they have been spotted falling out of trees in forests suffering from dehydration.

With temperatures soaring, at least 138 howler monkeys have been found dead in the state of Tabasco.

Gilberto Pozo, a wildlife biologist, said he saw them "falling out of the trees like apples" before they "died within a matter of minutes".

Others were rescued by residents, including five taken to a vet.

"They arrived in critical condition, with dehydration and fever," said Dr Sergio Valenzuela. "They were as limp as rags. It was heatstroke."

The monkey deaths was the latest example of the extreme weather that has been ravaging Mexico. It came after nine people died, including a child, when a stage collapsed in northern Mexico when strong winds gusted through a presidential candidate's campaign rally.

Images of the accident showed a crowd fleeing as the structure supporting the stage toppled and a giant screen fell where Jorge Alvarez Maynez, the presidential candidate, and members of his Citizens' Movement party were standing.

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the country's president, offered sympathy to the relatives of those killed at the campaign event near the town of San Pedro Garza Garcia in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon. According to Samuel Garcia, the state's governor, the victims were eight adults and one child. He said around 50 people had also been injured, with three needing surgery.

"I am fine and in communication with the authorities over what happened," Mr Maynez wrote on X, adding that the priority was to take care of the victims. He said he would remain at the



A veterinarian holds a monkey rescued from the jungle after dozens of deaths were reported amid a fierce heatwave

'I saw the monkeys falling out of the trees like apples'

scene until the last injured person had been taken to hospital.

Mr Maynez is in third place in the run-up to the June 2 presidential election, according to polls.

The Citizens' Movement party said "hurricane-like" winds had knocked the stage down, and announced it would be cancelling all further events in the

region. Weather reports before the event said tornados were possible in Nuevo Leon and nearby states during an unstable pattern of storms, with winds of up to about 43 miles per hour expected.

Jose Juan, who was at the rally, recounted how the structure came crashing down on the candidates and their supporters. "It hit me on the head and I

fainted. The rest was pure hysteria, pure panic," he told broadcaster Televisa.

Alongside the high winds, a heatwave has gripped the country since mid-March, causing at least 26 deaths, blackouts and the escalation of an existing water crisis.

Record-high temperatures have been registered in 10 cities, including Mexico

'It hit me on the head and I fainted. The rest was pure hysteria'

City, which hit 34.3C on May 17. Around 85 per cent of the country is expected to see highs of at least 40C this week, with around a third of the country reaching 45C or more. The aggressive heat has been caused by a heat dome, a persistent and powerful system of high pressure, whose edges of heat domes often generate severe storms.

Four killed, 30 hurt in first-floor collapse of Mallorca beach club

By James Badcock in Madrid

AT LEAST four people died and 30 were injured after the upper floor of a bar and restaurant collapsed in the Mallorca tourist resort of Palma Beach.

Emergency teams including firefight-

ers, ambulances and police arrived at the scene at around 8.30pm last night.

Local reports suggested that the first floor of the Medusa Beach Club gave way and collapsed on to the ground floor, trapping customers at the venue.

Attempts to reach victims continued

into the night and the local police asked people to stand back and keep noise to a minimum so that rescue workers could hear sounds from survivors who remained under the rubble.

The Foreign Office confirmed there were no reports of British nationals

being involved. No cause has been given for the collapse.

Palma Beach is a busy resort area of the Mallorcan capital with a large number of bars and nightclubs, popular with German and British tourists.

According to local reports, both the upper floor and the ground floor of the restaurant collapsed down on to the building's basement.

Four people are confirmed to have died, with seven described as very seriously injured and nine more seriously injured. The injured were taken to various hospitals in the Palma area. Raul Pursnami, owner of a fashion store next

to the affected premises, was quoted by newspaper *El Pais* as saying that a loud noise accompanied the collapse. "I was leaving the premises and everything has fallen down, it's a shame," he said.

"Theoretically, an inspection has to be done every year. We are terribly affected; I can't talk, they were my neighbours."

Pedro Sánchez, Spain's prime minister, responded to the roof collapse in Majorca and pledge to provide state resources to help.

"I am closely following the consequences of the terrible collapse that occurred on the beach of Palma," Mr

Sánchez said on X. He added that he had spoken to local and regional authorities, adding the government is ready to help "with all the means and troops that are necessary".

"I want to send my condolences to the families of the deceased and my wish for a speedy recovery to the injured," he said.

Pictures showed the injured being removed from the rubble on stretchers and people hugging nearby the scene.

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "We are aware of an incident in Palma, and there are currently no reports of British nationals having been involved."

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Macron: I'll keep police in New Caledonia 'as long as needed'

By Rebecca Rosman in Paris

EMMANUEL MACRON has said he will keep police forces sent to the riot-struck New Caledonia "as long as necessary" - despite French security being stretched with the Paris Olympics.

As he arrived on the island yesterday, the French president said: "I will be very clear here.

"These forces will remain as long as necessary. Even during the Olympic Games and Paralympics."

Mr Macron took a 24-hour flight from Paris as part of a last-minute visit to the French-ruled Pacific territory, where he called for calm. The president said he made the 10,000-mile journey "to be alongside the people and see a return to peace, calm and security as soon as possible", as the island continues to be shaken by riots over a highly controversial electoral reform.

He said the 1,000 security reinforcements brought in to assist the 1,700 local police forces and gendarmes would remain for as long as the island continued in under a state of emergency.

The violence, which began on May 13, has left six dead, dozens injured and hundreds of local businesses damaged, leading to the worst outbreak of violence in the territory since the 1980s.

The unrest stems from an electoral reform, already passed by lawmakers in mainland France but not yet ratified,



President Emmanuel Macron arrives in France's Pacific territory of New Caledonia

which would extend voting rights to the non-indigenous population. The indigenous Kanaks, who make up 40 per cent of the island's population of

'These forces will remain as long as necessary. Even during the Olympic Games and Paralympics'

270,000 people, fear the reform would hamper their political influence over the territory.

The reform still requires a meeting of both houses of parliament in Paris

before it can be ratified. During his 12-hour visit, Mr Macron met local officials to discuss the reform, including pro-independence Kanak leaders, who greeted him in person.

Under a 1998 agreement known as the Nouméa Accord, France agreed to give the territory more autonomy by limiting voting in local elections to those who were then residents.

The constitutional reform could extend voting rights in local elections to French residents who have lived in the territory in the last 10 years. More than 40,000 French nationals have moved to New Caledonia since the agreement was signed.

Milei vows to 'eat the elite' in punk concert

By Raoul Simons

JAVIER MILEI has performed at his own rock concert to launch a new book, after pulling out of Argentina's biggest literary fair over criticism from its "Leftist" organisers.

The Argentinian president, 53, donned a black leather coat for a rendition of a punk rock song in Buenos Aires on Wednesday, before leading a more conventional discussion on economic theory.

"I'm the king, I'm the lion!" sang Mr Milei during the musical opening, where he was joined on stage by Congressman "Bertie" Benegas Lynch, a political supporter, on drums. Mr Milei's biographer played bass.

"Eat the elite for breakfast!" Mr Milei added, performing a cover version of *Panic Show*, by Argentinian rock band

La Renga, to a 10,000-strong crowd at the city's Luna Park arena. Mr Milei has often targeted Argentina's political elite, whom he describes as the "caste" that has caused the economy to slide and annual inflation to balloon towards 300 per cent.

The libertarian politician had initially planned to promote his book *Capitalism, Socialism and the Neoclassical Trap* at the Buenos Aires International Book Fair, the country's top literary event, which began earlier this month.

But when Left-leaning organisers attacked his government for defunding the country's cultural institutions, he pulled out and switched to a downtown location for his own unique free-entry event. "With an attempted boycott, you gave us this party," the president told the crowd in a message to the literary fair organisers.

Mr Milei, who took office in December, is no stranger to singing in public. Performances of *Panic Show*, with reworked lyrics, have been an occasional feature at his campaign events.

Mr Milei has ignored objections from La Renga over its use.

The lyric about being "a lion" particularly resonates with Mr Milei, who often depicts himself as the animal, fierce in slashing the nation's budget and trampling on the political establishment. "I wanted to do this because I really wanted to sing," he told the crowd before removing his coat at the end of the performance to reveal a more conventional business suit.

At that point, he embarked on a more serious discussion about his book, which calls on governments to curtail state intervention and allow free markets to prevail.



I'll man front line to defend Taiwan, says leader

New president makes pledge as China surrounds island during drills of invasion by air and sea

By Nicola Smith ASIA CORRESPONDENT

TAIWAN'S new president has said he will "stand on the front lines" to defend his country after China surrounded it with surprise military drills.

The "punishment" air and sea manoeuvres are simulating direct attacks for an invasion, something Beijing has threatened for years.

During a visit to a military base, Lai Ching-te said: "I will stand on the front line with our brothers and sisters in the military to jointly defend national security. Faced with external challenges and threats, we will continue to defend the values of freedom and democracy, and safeguard peace and stability in the region."

Mr Lai, a moderate labelled a "separatist" by China, took power this week. At

his inauguration he warned China against further military intimidation and said: "Peace is the only option."

The Chinese military exercises began early yesterday, and involved aircraft and ships surrounding the island to "test" their combat capabilities, the People's Liberation Army of China said. Experts said the drills simulated a full-scale attack on Taiwan for the first time, rather than just a blockade, as in similar exercises in 2022. The previous exercises also came with advance warning. Launching the drills abruptly, the PLA put out a series of posters touting what it called its "cross-strait lethality".

These featured missiles, jets and boats next to blood-stained text, declaring: "The weapon aimed at 'Taiwan independence' to kill 'independence' is already in place."

The Chinese Communist Party, which claims Taiwan as its own despite never ruling there, has refused to renounce seizing the island by force. It has ignored Mr Lai's repeated invitations to talks. The drills are an early test for the Lai presidency, although Taiwan

has long been subjected to sustained Chinese military and economic coercion tactics.

In a defining speech on Monday to set the tone for his administration, Mr Lai told China to cease military and political intimidation of his country and respect its

Taiwanese troops load an 8-inch howitzer at a military base in Kinmen as China launched 'punishment' drills



democracy. Taiwan's defence ministry condemned the drills as "irrational provocation that has jeopardised regional peace and stability" and said it had put its forces on alert to protect its territory.

In a statement, the ministry urged citizens to "stand united" and added: "We seek no conflicts, but we will not shy away from one. We have the capacity, determination and confidence to safeguard our national security."

The PLA said the drills served as "punishment for the separatist acts of 'Taiwan independence' forces" and as a warning against "interference", in reference to Western support for Taiwan. Mr Lai, of the Democratic Progressive Party, was elected in January in a poll that Beijing portrayed as a choice between war and peace.

Officials in Taipei had indicated they were preparing for new Chinese military movements around the time of the inauguration.

In August 2022, China launched larger four-day live-fire exercises after it was angered by a visit to the island by Nancy Pelosi, the former US House

'We seek no conflicts, but we will not shy away from one'

speaker. A military expert told Chinese state TV that the drills were partly intended as a rehearsal of an economic blockade of the island.

Zhang Chi, a professor at China National Defence University in Beijing, said the drills aimed to "strangle" Taiwan's Kaohsiung port and "severely impact" its foreign trade.

They would cut off "Taiwan's lifeline of energy imports" as well as "block the support lines that some US allies provide to 'Taiwan independence' forces", he added.

Analysts, regional diplomats and senior Taiwanese officials said the drills were widely anticipated by Taiwan and overseas. They included mock air and sea strikes around the fortified Taiwanese islands of Kinmen and Matsu, close to the Chinese coast.

A senior Taiwanese military official said the drills so far appeared to be repeats of other operations, involving provocatively crossing the so-called median line of the Taiwan Strait and mock attacks on vessels close to Taiwan's 24-mile contiguous zone.

Ukraine releases convicts to shore up depleted military

By Joe Barnes

UKRAINE is releasing prisoners to serve in its army, as part of a scheme to replenish its battle-stricken forces.

A court in the western city of Khmelnytsky said it had freed on parole two men – one born in 2000 and the other in 1981, both convicted of theft – to join the country's national guard.

"The court granted their petitions and ordered the Khmelnytsky Deten-

tion Centre to release the men from their sentences on parole for contracted military service immediately," it said in a statement.

"Each of the men is fit for military service on health grounds, has passed a professional and psychological selection, and has a sufficient level of physical fitness."

The Khmelnytsky City district court said it was considering 50 other submissions for early release for convicts want-

ing to serve in the armed forces. The scheme was signed into law by Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, last week as his country grapples with a mounting manpower crisis.

With the war against Russia in its third year, Kyiv has struggled to find volunteers to replace injured and killed servicemen. Many of the most battle-hardened units have fought on the front lines for two years without a break. Ukrainian officials believe the

new measure could free up to 20,000 prisoners to be mobilised.

Russia has pardoned tens of thousands of convicts, including rapists and murderers, to help bolster its forces in Ukraine – a move for which Kyiv has largely mocked Moscow.

The law will enable Kyiv to partially follow suit, with much stricter criteria than in Russia. Only Ukrainian prisoners with less than three years left of their sentence will be allowed to apply to be mobilised to special units in the armed forces.

Politicians insist that anyone convicted of murder, rape or other serious offences will be blocked from service, as will former high-ranking officials found guilty of corruption. Convicts with infectious disease including HIV, tuberculosis or hepatitis have been

'Each of the men is fit for military service on health grounds, has passed a professional selection'

excluded from the mobilisation project and the courts will have the final say on whether prisoners are released.

Upon release, paroled soldiers will be placed under strict supervision and banned from any travel away from their military units without their commander's consent. This effectively means the men will remain mobilised until the end of the conflict.

Anyone caught evading their parole terms could be sentenced to an additional 10 years imprisonment. Despite initial predictions of mass mobilisation,

Kyiv said only 3,000 inmates had applied to join the military since the law was enacted.

The legislation comes alongside other efforts by the Ukrainian government to find new recruits. These include a law lowering the draft age from 27 to 25, more rigorous controls to catch draft dodgers and the suspension of consular services for military-aged men living overseas.

It came as Russia arrested its deputy head of army staff in a move that exposes Vladimir Putin's deepening shake-up of the military.

Lieutenant-General Vadim Shamarin was detained on suspicion of large-scale bribe-taking, state media reported on Thursday, making him the fourth high-ranking defence official accused of corruption in recent times.

Netanyahu told peace deal could deter ICC

By Paul Nuki in London and Jotam Confino

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU restarted ceasefire negotiations with Hamas on Thursday as it emerged the Israeli prime minister could avoid war crimes charges if he were to pursue a wider peace in the region.

At a briefing organised by the Israeli embassy in London yesterday, Prof Yuval Shany, co-director of the Centre for Transnational Legal Studies, at King's College London, and chair in public international law, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said an "amnesty" could be declared for Netanyahu and others facing charges if it served the wider interests of justice.

The ICC chief prosecutor announced on Monday that he is seeking arrest warrants against Mr Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, his defence minister, alongside three Hamas leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The court seldom turns down such

requests and the formal warrants are likely to be issued in a matter of days or weeks, said Prof Shany.

Although the Israeli leaders are highly unlikely to surrender themselves to the court at the Hague or be arrested at home, the warrants would have profound implications for the men themselves and Israel diplomatically.

Once issued, they would face arrest and detention if they travelled to or through any of the 124 states within the ICC's jurisdiction, including the UK.

On Tuesday, Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid said Mr Netanyahu should pursue the US plan for a regional peace as a means of avoiding the ICC's charges. This involves a ceasefire in Gaza and "normalisation" of relations with Saudi Arabia as part of a "credible pathway" to a future Palestinian state.

"In The Hague they will not prosecute a prime minister who is in the middle of an historic peace process," said Mr Lapid.

According to Prof Shany, there are

two possible "escape clauses" and legal precedents for each.

The first is where the ICC prosecutor is persuaded that the "interest of justice" is best served by dropping proceedings.

"This is often alluded to as the peace versus justice dilemma; where you have a situation where the only way to facilitate political transition is to recognise some amnesty," said Prof Shany.

The UN Security Council itself also has the ability to intervene and suspend proceedings under Article 16 of the Rome Statute if to do so promotes international peace and security.

"If you have a grand deal and the Security Council endorses that deal, part of the deal could imply suspension of proceedings," he said.

Prof Shany said neither mechanism was "likely" but the Security Council route was more probable and had been used on a number of occasions in the past in regard to investigations relating to peacekeeping forces.

Boy, four, tucks into Hamas birthday cake

By Nick Squires

AUSTRALIAN police are investigating a bakery in Sydney which made a cake featuring a Hamas terrorist and Palestinian flags for a four-year-old boy.

The cake, which featured an image of Abu Ubaida, a propagandist for the armed wing of Hamas, was made by a company called Oven Bakery by Fufu.

The bakery uploaded photos of its creation to social media but then removed them in the face of a furious backlash, shutting down its Facebook and Instagram pages.

Chris Minns, the premier of New South Wales state, called the images that adorned the cake "horrifying".

The politician described Hamas as "an evil terrorist organisation" and said that "kids' parties should be innocent and fun, not hateful".

Mark Speakman, leader of the opposition in New South Wales, described the cake as "shocking".

"Instead of baked goods celebrating



The boy and his cake featuring the propagandist for Hamas's armed wing

terrorists, we should be celebrating people in our community who are promoting a more cohesive society," he said. Abu Ubaida is a nom de guerre for the propagandist and spokesman of

Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. After Hamas's terror attack on Oct 7, when the group massacred around 1,200 people and took another 240 hostage, he appeared in propaganda videos, his face concealed by a keffiyeh scarf. Little is known about him but his real name is thought to be Hudhayfah Kahlot.

When the Israelis launched their attacks in Gaza, he threatened the execution of a captive each time a home in Gaza was bombed without warning.

Photos showed the boy, named Omar, standing beside the cake with his finger raised. He was dressed in a red and white headscarf and a camouflaged jacket, like the image of Abu Ubaida. The Hamas spokesman also appeared on a tray of cup cakes.

"Dressing up a child as a terrorist, including with what appears to be a Hamas headband, is a form of child abuse," said Robert Gregory, of the Australian Jewish Association. The bakery was contacted for comment.

Macron's supreme arrogance is now tearing apart the French empire

ANNE-ELISABETH MOUTET



When, in the small hours of Thursday, a bleary-eyed Emmanuel Macron emerged from 25 hours in the presidential plane flying from Paris to Nouméa, riots and looting had been raging for more than a week around the capital of the French overseas territory of New Caledonia, with six dead, including two gendarmes.

In this context, *le Président's* first words, on the tarmac of La Tontouta airport, may not have been the most tactful. "A return to calm cannot mean backtracking," he said, widely interpreted as a refusal to stop the constitutional amendment that started all the trouble.

Night after night, French news has shown torched houses and businesses, over the tiny voices of local residents on the telephone from their besieged homes. "We are afraid to get out; there is no food left to buy anyway, and if we leave, our homes will probably be looted and destroyed," one said.

In the ongoing blame game, it's hard not to point to Macron himself as the arsonist in chief. He's the one who set in motion a parliamentary vote in Paris, approving a constitutional amendment that would allow recent arrivals in the territory to vote in local elections. He then dismissed weeks of protest marches from Kanak citizens, the indigenous population of New Caledonia, remote as they were from the fulcrum of politics in the capital, 17,000 kilometres away. Last week, the marches turned violent.

Macron was not yet 11 years old in 1988 when, after several years of rising violence, including a bloody hostage-taking, François Mitterrand's then PM Michel Rocard hammered out accords that brought peace back to the islands, initiating a 10-year-long process. One of its mainstays were assurances to the Kanaks that they would not be

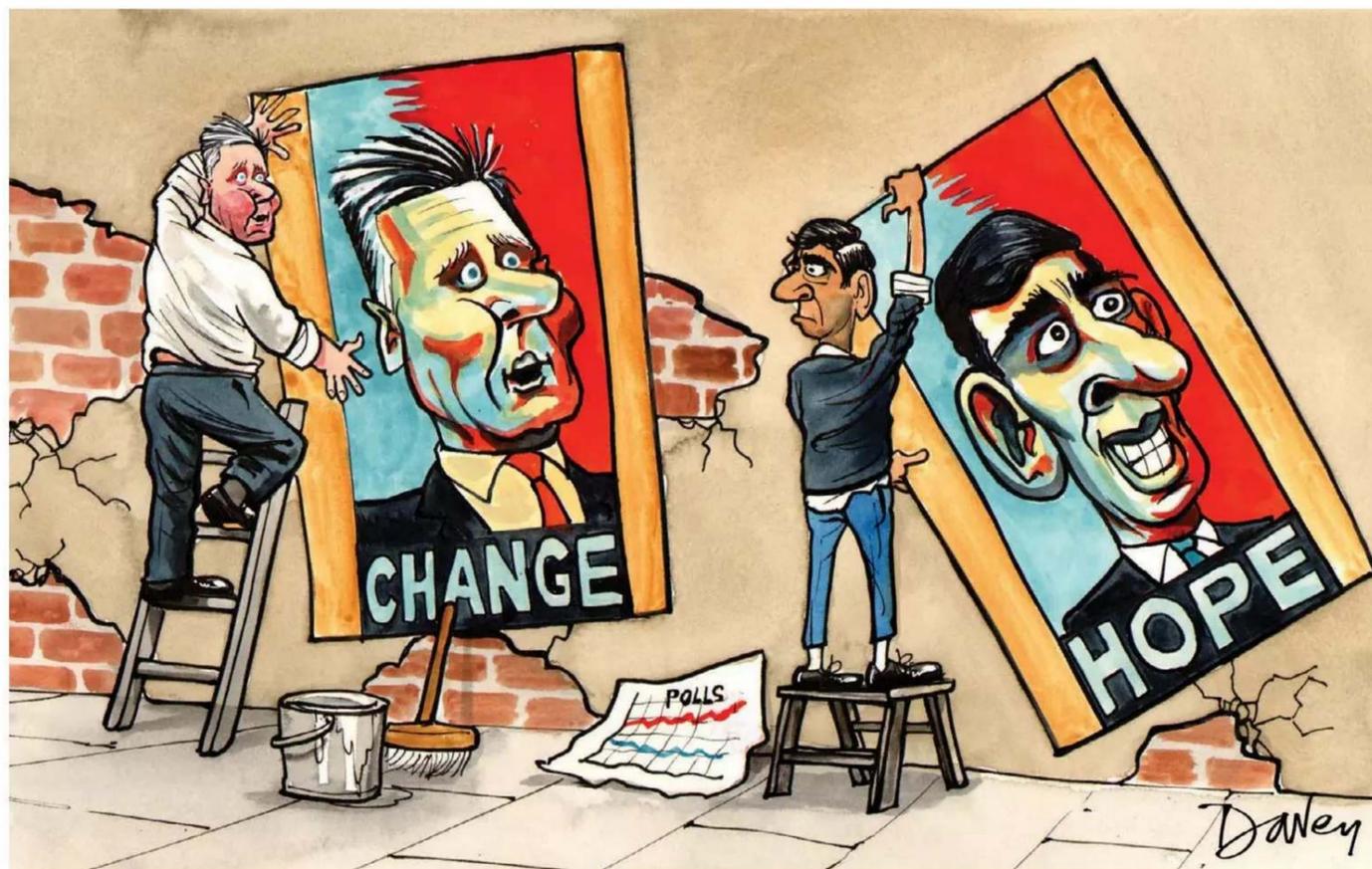
turned into a powerless plurality on their ancestral land. Hence the local voting restrictions. Their significant curtailing is now about to be turned into law: this is seen as a betrayal.

"There isn't a single mistake they haven't made," a top French civil servant familiar with the situation says. "It is inconceivable the president wasn't warned how unstable the islands are. Tourism, especially from cruise ships, has vanished over the years, scared off by reports of unrest as well as the lack of tourist infrastructure. So have the profits from the nickel industry, devolved to Kanak interests in 2008." Chinese interests are present in New Caledonia, ready to take over. "They are casing the joint," he jokes.

Paris's answers have been characteristic of Macron's top-down style. Instead of asking one of the few experienced French officials that the locals value, the 69-year-old former high commissioner Thierry Lataste, he was accompanied on his trip by a clone-like trio of 40-something technocrats guaranteed not to contradict him. Additionally, the upcoming Paris Olympics mean that most police and gendarmes are overworked in the mainland.

"This is November 1954, and Macron is no de Gaulle" a local politician says, referring to the All-Saints-Day assassination of French farmers in French Algeria, which started that colony's eight-year independence war. "Algeria was economically viable; we're not even that." He points out the 75-year-old Renaissance (Macron's party) mayor of Nouméa, Sonia Lagarde, is calling for the constitutional amendment to be dropped.

But Macron came from the other side of the globe to say the opposite. He believes his charm, persistence and technocratic savvy can convince the islanders. Right now, few would bet on his success.



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Rishi Sunak is playing a risky game by making this a presidential campaign

Ministers are dismayed by this early election. But the PM judged the situation would only get worse

FRASER NELSON



After announcing the general election to his Cabinet, Rishi Sunak's ministers banged the table with pretend approval as he walked out of the room. The feeling most had was of stunned disbelief, but worse was to come. They were all invited to stay in the room and watch the Prime Minister on a large TV as he popped outside No10 to announce the election. Blood drained from ministerial faces as Sunak's suit steadily soaked up the rain and his words were almost drowned out by nearby Labour campaign music. "We all had to pretend we weren't seeing what we all saw," says one present. "It was a shambles."

Sunak had gathered a few Cabinet members in advance to break the news. He told them he had already been to see the King to seek the dissolution of Parliament (traditionally, this part is done last), so he was presenting a *fait accompli*. This closed down discussion: it would be pointless trying to talk him out of it. Grant Shapps, the Defence Secretary, still told him that this was the wrong time for an election. David Cameron said it was "bold" which, as every *Yes Minister* fan knows, is Westminster-speak for "madness".

The Prime Minister had two other

points. One is the real answer to the "why now" question: he no longer thinks things will get better over the summer, so sees no advantage in waiting. He didn't say more, but internal forecasts envisage NHS waiting lists rising for at least two months, thereby breaking one of his now-infamous five pledges. The small boats situation is getting worse. Ministers also learnt that this is to be a presidential campaign, so Sunak vs Starmer rather than Tory vs Labour. It's not clear what role (if any) the rest of the Cabinet will play.

Lord Cameron was promised a seat next to Sunak at the main launch event in the evening, but ended up next to the placard-waving activists. He might have mused, as he watched, that Sunak's decision to run a presidential campaign is also "bold". A popular leader may run a personal campaign, but Sunak's approval ratings are worse than almost any prime minister in postwar history. "His last campaign was so bad that he lost to Liz Truss," says one Cabinet member. "If he can't win an election amongst Tories, how does he expect to win nationally?"

Sunak has positioned himself as someone who speaks by actions – specifically, the five pledges he made to great fanfare last year. "No tricks. No ambiguity," he said at the time. "We're either delivering for you or we're not." But debt has risen, not fallen. Ditto NHS waiting lists. The small boats have not been stopped. The economy, in the form of the all-important GDP per capita, has shrunk. Five pledges, four failures.

His sole success – the halving of inflation – was forecast to happen when Boris Johnson was prime minister. Holding an election in November created space for things to come good: waiting lists, migration,

even the Rwanda plan. But it seems Sunak thinks there's a greater chance of unpleasant surprises: mayhem in prisons; hospital implosion, more defections. Once you think the summer will have more bad news than good, an early election is logical. It's also a counsel of despair.

Sunak's original plan was to demonstrate that his leadership skills and his tao of government would yield hard results. He'd succeed where Boris Johnson failed. But one after one, such hopes evaporated. So he would be running a presidential campaign without very many personal achievements, his main hope being his ability to outclass the plodding Starmer in television debates.

His fellow MPs have personal reasons for dismay. Lord Cameron now finds the curtain falling on his Foreign Secretary act after just six months. Michael Gove will be turfed out of his £25 million grace-and-favour apartment. Chris Heaton-Harris, the Northern Ireland Secretary, was quite emotional during Cabinet as he's standing down and had been looking forward to his swansong. Most see this election as the charge of the Tory Light Brigade, with polls suggesting barely a quarter of Conservative MPs will be back after the election.

This is perhaps why, when Sunak called colleagues after the May local election disaster, most told him he should rule out a summer election. If there was a chance that things could improve by November, they said, best wait until then. That's why, when the rumours of an election circulated, Cabinet members were laughing it off as ridiculous gossip. Those who had spoken to the PM about election timing had thought he accepted their point.

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A popular leader may run a personal campaign, but Sunak's approval ratings are worse than almost any PM in postwar history

In ordinary times, there would now be mutiny – but there's no point if, as they all expect, the captain will be gone within six weeks. When Sunak first ran for leader, he joked about this. It wasn't true, he said, that he'd be on the next flight to California if he lost. Why not? The result came out on Monday, he said, and flights are cheapest on Wednesdays. As it turned out, he stayed and was ready when Liz Truss imploded. But few think he'll stay this time, so a shadow Tory leadership battle will be a sub-plot to this election.

My own feeling is that, while Sunak may not be one of the best prime ministers, he's one of the best people to have been prime minister. His ability, energy, sense of duty and basic decency are striking to those who know him. But admirers, like me, have to acknowledge that polls put us in a small, almost cultish minority. Johnson, Blair, Brown, Thatcher, Callaghan: none had such low job-satisfaction ratings. To fight a presidential-style campaign on such personal ratings is, as Cameron would say, bold.

Keir Starmer is less popular than Labour, so framing the debate around him in a presidential way will be tempting for the Tories. But the case still needs to be made for Conservatism – as a party and a worldview. Many of those voting Tory won't do so in the belief that Sunak will be back in No10 but to give the party a crash-landing it might recover from. The Prime Minister would do more to help in that aim by sharing the campaign limelight with his colleagues and party.

If an equally unpopular Prime Minister makes the election all about him, they could well end up with the latter option.

Labour would make Britain less secure in every way

We offer bold action, Keir Starmer doesn't. He'd make the UK a magnet for every illegal migrant in Europe

RISHI SUNAK



When I became Prime Minister, my most immediate task was to restore economic stability. Inflation was in double digits and our country had been rocked by Covid and then Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which sent energy prices soaring. Today, inflation is back to normal, energy bills are falling, and our economy is growing faster than anyone predicted, outpacing Germany, France and the United States in the first few months of this year.

With this economic stability created, it is right that you now make a choice: who can best lead this country to a secure future? Do we build on the progress we have made or do we risk going back to square one with Labour?

The world is increasingly uncertain. An axis of authoritarian states is threatening our national security and our economic future. Putin will not stop at Ukraine if he succeeds there – and his war has made all too clear the risks to our energy security.

In the Middle East, Iran and its Islamist extremist proxies threaten regional and, ultimately, global stability. These tensions are exploited by extremists here at home who seek to undermine our values and divide our society. China is looking to dominate the 21st century by stealing a lead in technology and creating a dominant position in the industries of the future, and migration is being exploited by our enemies to threaten the integrity of our borders.

In this increasingly uncertain world, it will take a clear plan and bold action to deliver the secure future that our country deserves. We Conservatives have that: Labour do not.

Labour offer only uncertainty. Indeed, the only certainty with them is that they will run out of your money, as socialists always do, and raise your taxes. There is already a black hole in Labour's spending plans that means every working household will have to pay £2,000 extra in taxes.

On issue after issue, the choice between us and Labour is clear. We offer bold action, they do not.

Take immigration: we are determined to reduce immigration and stop the boats with our Rwanda scheme. The plans are in place, the flights will go, but only if you vote Conservative on July 4, because Labour would stop the flights. What was their first policy announcement of this campaign? That they would cancel the Rwanda flights on day one.

Labour would scrap the whole Rwanda partnership and enact a de facto amnesty for illegal migrants. This

The only certainty with Labour is that they will run out of your money and raise your taxes

would make this country a magnet for every illegal immigrant in Europe. At just the moment when more and more of our neighbours are getting tough on illegal migration, Labour would make us the soft touch capital of Europe. Labour would make our country less secure in every way.

The uncertainty that Labour would bring is only compounded by the fact you simply don't know what you are

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going to get with Sir Keir Starmer. He has junked every pledge he made when he was campaigning to be Labour leader. How do you know he wouldn't repeat the trick if he became prime minister? If he hasn't got the courage to stand up and say what he believes in, how can he stand up for Britain?

There are big issues at stake in this election. Do we continue cutting taxes or raise taxes on working households as Labour would do? Do we prioritise energy security and your family's finances in our approach to net zero or put environmental dogma first as Sir Keir Starmer and Ed Miliband would. And, above all, how do we give this country the secure future it deserves?

I want to debate these issues with Sir Keir Starmer. But he doesn't want to because he doesn't have a plan and doesn't have the courage to say what he wants to do.

Ultimately, this election is about who you trust, in these uncertain times, to chart a course to a secure future. We Conservatives have a clear plan and are prepared to take the bold action necessary to deliver that secure future for our United Kingdom.

Rishi Sunak is the Prime Minister

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ESTABLISHED 1855

Keir Starmer can't run from scrutiny

The logic behind Rishi Sunak's decision to challenge Sir Keir Starmer to a record six head-to-head televised debates is to hammer home the message that this election is a straight choice between the two party leaders. The Conservatives, the Prime Minister argues, have a clear plan to keep the nation secure at a time of heightened uncertainty. Labour is a complete unknown.

This strategy may have been helped by Nigel Farage's decision not to contest a parliamentary seat for Reform. That party still says that it will stand candidates in the vast majority of constituencies, but it is unlikely to have anything like the same impact.

Pundits who imagine that the results of this election have already been written ignore the fact that Sir Keir has faced vanishingly little scrutiny of what he would actually do were he to find himself in No10 on July 5. The Labour leader has adopted a deliberate tactic of minimising political risk by keeping his agenda vacuous and shedding many of the pledges he made when he stood for his party's leadership.

But the dangers posed by a Labour government can no longer be seen as distant or purely theoretical. Sir Keir could be sitting in Downing Street in little more than six weeks' time.

The minds of parents with children at private school will have been focused by a July election taking place just a few months before the start of the new school year. A fortnight after the nation goes to the polls, the shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves could be standing at the dispatch box laying out the first budget of the new Parliament. The fact that it will contain swingeing new taxes on independent schools, which are likely to push up fees, can hardly be ignored.

Nor can Labour's reported plans to reintroduce the lifetime allowance on pensions savings, which was abolished by Jeremy Hunt, in part to stop so many senior doctors retiring early from the NHS. In just two months, thousands could face punitive new taxes on their savings.

The Labour Party has also said that it will abolish the Rwanda scheme on day one of a Starmer premiership, and has offered no realistic alternative to stopping the Channel crossings. It would hardly be surprising if the people smuggling gangs and illegal migrants are already encouraged that they will be able to avoid deportation should Sir Keir win the election.

Does Labour really think that vague promises of "change" will be able to withstand the rigours of a general election campaign? If the party is not willing or able to explain specifically what it would do differently to fix all of the problems that it identifies, voters are effectively being asked to trust that Sir Keir and his shadow cabinet colleagues have the right instincts to run the country wisely. His track record underlines what a risk this would be.

When Sir Keir announced his candidacy for the Labour leadership, his launch video gave the party membership a highlight reel of his achievements: defending the poll tax rioters, aiding the National Union of Mineworkers, and representing activists who protested the presence of United States military assets defending Britain. High on the list, too, was his part in taking the Blair government to court over its decision to deny asylum seekers benefits.

Now, of course, Sir Keir poses as the consummate moderate, the tonic to Tory "chaos". Which one is it?

Whoever wins the election is going to be confronted with a series of enormous challenges, not least the constrained state of the public finances. They will have to make hard choices on what to prioritise, difficult decisions on what to cut, and will have to be mindful that this is no longer a world of easy money and cheap credit, but one where the bond markets will punish recklessness and reward clear and sustainable fiscal plans. They will face the very real prospect of a major new war breaking out, as Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping seek to exploit Western weakness.

This is not the time for meaningless bromides in place of coherent plans for government. Sir Keir Starmer is going to have to tell the nation what he stands for, what he is going to do, and why. Otherwise the country really will be taking a gamble on an unknown.

Stiller than the rain

It is not only Rishi Sunak who has had to contend with the blare of irritating, intrusive jingles in recent days. Residents of Louth in Lincolnshire have complained to their council about having to endure the *Blue Peter*-style chimes emanating from an ice-cream van plying its seasonal trade. Perhaps the grumblers feel such auditory distractions are better confined to nearby Skegness and its bracing, seaside charms. The van's owner, John Barton, has received a letter from the council threatening potential prosecution. But Mr Barton contends that the melodious tones announcing the arrival of sugary sustenance resonate at only 45 decibels, quieter than the sound of moderate rainfall. This is certainly not something that could be said of the cacophonous broadcast of Labour's 1997 theme outside the gates of Downing Street on Wednesday.



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Voters are going to discover during the coming weeks that Keir Starmer is no Tony Blair

SIR – In 1997 Labour had a great salesman in Tony Blair. In 1992 it had Neil Kinnock and in 2015 Ed Miliband – and in both cases the wheels came off. Sir Keir Starmer has more in common with these two leaders, and I am waiting for an implosion.

Richard Marshall

Cobham, Surrey

SIR – I will not be voting Labour because it doesn't have enough talent to form a full Cabinet – or even to fill some of the top jobs.

J Meirion Thomas

London SW3

SIR – The best Sir Keir Starmer appears to be able to say about his policies is: "Time for change." Change to what?

JL Greenwood

London SW18

SIR – Many of your letters in recent years have been from longstanding Tory voters claiming they can no longer in good conscience support the Conservative Party.

Now, as we approach the election, I am reminded of my late father, who, when I once said I might choose a smaller party, told me in no uncertain

terms that it would be a waste. If we wish to avoid a Labour government, we must use our votes wisely. This is no time for protest.

Sally Prince

Barton-on-Sea, Hampshire

SIR – I have read numerous letters from Tory supporters explaining why they will not vote Conservative this time. Many give reasons relating to the Government's handling of the pandemic. But do they believe that any other party would have done better? I suspect Labour's response would have been even more draconian.

It is no good looking backwards. The key consideration is what each party offers for the future. I will continue to vote for the Conservatives as I believe they are more likely than Labour to sort out this country's problems to the benefit of all citizens. Rishi Sunak is beginning to show a backbone I didn't think he had.

John Davies

Towcester, Northamptonshire

SIR – At last a decision. Many of us put off the tasks least liked, particularly if the potential outcome is unpalatable. But let's now get on with this election,

have a fair fight and move the country forward, whatever the result.

Matthew Perkin

London SE4

SIR – Rishi Sunak came across on the *Today* programme yesterday as a sincere and honourable man.

Unfortunately, the position of prime minister is different to all other roles in government and requires a robust personality to contend with the slings and arrows. Despite his skills and intelligence, Mr Sunak sadly does not possess that winning personality.

Chris Learmont-Hughes

Caldy, Wirral

SIR – I remember the opprobrium heaped on Steve McClaren, the then England football manager, because he sheltered under an umbrella while standing on the touchline.

Perhaps that was indeed what is in Rishi Sunak's mind (telegraph.co.uk, May 23) as he got drenched while announcing the election. A man who allows his expensive suit to be ruined instead is surely the man to back.

Michael Oak

Stirling

SIR – When Boris Johnson was Tory leader he was only a few points behind Labour. Now the party is 20 points behind. Perhaps some MPs will rue the day they got rid of Mr Johnson.

Michael Pile

Bedford

SIR – I suspect one major omission will be obvious in both the Labour and Tory manifestos – neither will mention cutting public spending, reducing welfare or increasing public-sector productivity.

Mike Metcalfe

Butleigh, Somerset

SIR – Oh dear. We now have to endure six weeks of politicians' use of the word "deliver".

Paul Bendit

Arlington, East Sussex

SIR – Jane Oldroyd (Letters, May 23) looks forward to saving electricity over the next six weeks "because of not having the television or radio on". I am a regular Radio 4 listener in the car, but plan to re-tune to Radio 3 or Classic FM. I suggest others do the same.

Robin Thomas

Exeter, Devon

China's footprint

SIR – I recently bought a pair of sandals from a pop-up advertisement on Facebook, which said "free returns". The goods took a while to arrive and then they didn't fit, so I googled the returns policy and followed the instructions, which were in German, despite the company trading as Ali-fashion.

The return was not free and the address to send to was in Germany. Postage was £5.55, so I sent them back on a prepaid Royal Mail label.

Meanwhile I decided to contact the sender to say what I had done. I then received a very polite, remorseful and lengthy email telling me it would be too expensive to send the sandals back and that I could keep them and have a 20 per cent refund. If I still wanted to return them, I could – to an address in Shenzhen, China (Letters, May 22). The sender said the address in Germany was a distribution centre.

So now the sandals are wandering around Europe, I'm waiting for my 20 per cent refund, and the advertisement is still on Facebook misleading yet more customers.

Joanna Tattersall

Chelmsford, Essex

SIR – I go out of my way to avoid anything that supports the Chinese economy, and if I have no choice, I do without.

Jennifer Mackie

York

SIR – When I was growing up in the 1950s, many of the tin toys then available in Britain were stamped "Empire Made". It was only when I got older that I realised this was actually a euphemism for the likelihood that the product came from Hong Kong. Toys were exempt from duty, unlike those made outside the British Empire.

It was also rumoured that products from mainland China were routed via Hong Kong and so slipped into the UK under the radar.

Geoff Pringle

Long Sutton, Somerset

Acquiring an accent

SIR – I was born in Uganda. When I was 11 we came back to live in the UK, where I started at a local secondary school in Clitheroe. I had no noticeable accent (Letters, May 21).

It only took two weeks for me to acquire a Lancashire one.

Sue Hargreaves

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Labour's frontbench is the least impressive in history

As Starmer's team comes under the microscope, voters will find how few fresh faces or ideas it has

TIM STANLEY



With the election called and the PM hung out to dry, it's time to remember why we all hate Labour. Just take a look at the shadow frontbench! Most of them are anonymous. It must be one of the most underwhelming opposition squads in history.

In 1945, Labour offered Nye Bevan, Ernest Bevin and Stafford Cripps; even the desultory government of 1974-79 contained authentic characters such as Denis Healey or Barbara Castle. The argument goes that historic Labour teams were better because they had prior experience of government – ie, in the wartime coalition – whereas Sir Keir's lot have been locked out for 14 years. But Tony Blair's team spent 18 years in the wilderness – and still boasted the brains and swagger of Gordon Brown, John Reid or Peter Mandelson.

Labour, the self-styled party of modernisation, previously sought to embody the up-and-coming generation. Sir Keir, at 61, is 17 years

older than the PM. Hilary Benn (70) is tipped to run Ulster; John Healey (64) is in charge of the guns; and national campaign coordinator Pat McFadden (59) looks as if he was awoken from a mummy's tomb.

Experience is a plus, of course, but Starmer's appointments have been shaped by necessity, not virtue, drawn from a pool shrunken by successive defeats (hence ex-MPs such as Mary Creagh or Caroline Flint were unavailable). The party has also endured a bitter civil war that drove out moderates (Luciana Berger) and now precludes smart socialists from service (Rebecca Long-Bailey).

Fear not, there are still some proper Lefties who made the cut: never forget that Starmer and Angela Rayner took a knee for Black Lives Matter. Emily Thornberry (attorney general) crucified herself on an England flag. Ed Miliband (environment), nailed his manifesto to a gravestone and flirted with Russell Brand (now he's hawking a radical green policy that will likely reduce British GDP to that of the Dominican Republic).

Anneliese Dodds (party chair) refuses to give up on the trans religion. Bridget Phillipson (education) wants to use maths to tackle misogyny. Louise Haigh at transport will oversee the nationalisation of trains. She is one of three shadow cabinet members said to have warned Starmer that he's losing Muslim voters over Israel.

Haigh nominated Jeremy Corbyn for leader in 2015 and now regrets it, as does David Lammy, who blows from

Left to Right. He recently told a US think tank that he has been described as a "small-c conservative" (not, I'm sure by Benjamin Netanyahu: Labour has implied he should be arrested should a warrant be obtained). Several of Starmer's picks come from a Blairite vanguard called Progressive Britain: Liz Kendall, Lucy Powell etc. But what Starmer likes most is blandness and indifference to philosophy; political "meh".

What does shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves believe in? We have no idea, for Reeves is pure image-making – an educated, progressive woman in a pant suit, dashing from factory to factory, reciting the importance of fiscal rules (in the spirit of North Korea, her sister, Ellie, also sits in the shadow cabinet – and if you close your eyes, they sound exactly the same). The hair game of Labour women is strong: almost all wear an Uma Thurman fringe, except Ms Haigh whose trademark locks – red, candy, sometimes blond – give *Corries*' Rita Fairclough a run for her money.

When sketch-writers notice such things, they are automatically labelled sexist, but with Labour MPs one has to be visual, because they are allowed to say little of interest. The exception is Wes Streeting (health), the Labour MP who does the best impression of an ordinary bloke (in an extraordinary way: his grandfather was an armed robber who hung out with the Krays). If Starmer resembles Neil Kinnock – a Lefty pretending to be a centrist –

Streeting is his Blair, the authentic moderate waiting in the wings.

For now Labour must gamble on a landslide to fill its vacuum of talent, and it's possible many of the above names will be swapped out post-election. Starmer has controlled selections ruthlessly; his successful by-election candidates predict an incoming wave of mid-30s, middle-class boys who love football and Eurovision and have never read *Das Kapital*.

But is being inoffensive enough? If modern politics is devoid of ability and character, it's not only because we haven't been through a depression or a war: people of quality have simply stopped going into public service. Future academics will note that the day Rishi Sunak delivered the worst election launch in history – in the driving rain – Paula Vennells, the worst ever CEO, wept at the Post Office inquiry. It was as if the tears of one failure fell upon another.

As Starmer's frontbench comes under the microscope, the public will discover for itself how few fresh faces or ideas there are in Labour – that this is not a transformative election but another step down the road of decline.

"Hands up who is excited about the thought of Yvette Cooper becoming home secretary?" See: no one.



FOLLOW Tim Stanley on Twitter @timothy.stanley; READ MORE AT telegraph.co.uk/opinion



A vintage Massey Ferguson tractor at the Stoke Bliss annual ploughing match

The Irish origins of a world-beating tractor

SIR – I was surprised that Joe Barnes referred to the Massey Ferguson as an American tractor (report, May 21).

That company may have ended up in American ownership in comparatively recent times, but the "wee grey Fergie" tractor that was used throughout the developed and developing worlds was the brainchild of Harry Ferguson, who was born within walking distance of my home in Royal Hillsborough, County Down. Its universal appeal was that it was robust and simple to

maintain. Incidentally, Ferguson was also the first Irishman to construct and fly an aircraft. In addition, he designed the universal coupling system that enabled tractors to power ancillary attached devices.

To my knowledge, his only connection with America was that he sued Henry Ford II, who reneged on a gentleman's agreement that had been made with his predecessor.

Kenneth Preston

Royal Hillsborough, Co Down

Paula Vennells's failure to take responsibility

SIR – Watching Paula Vennells put her own spin on the Prince Andrew defence ("I was too honourable") and repeatedly insist that she was "too trusting" was unedifying in the extreme (report, May 23).

The waffling, obtuseness and evasiveness demonstrated what is so badly wrong with our mandarin class. This was a *mea culpa* to make one despair.

Dr Catherine Moloney

Liverpool

SIR – Civil servants and public sector managers like Paula Vennells enjoy six-figure salaries plus huge pensions and expenses. Why? They can't have all the benefits of senior management

without the responsibility and accountability that go with them. Until this changes, we will have more scandals.

We don't need more lessons, never to be learnt. We need proper accountability, including criminal charges where necessary.

Charles Jackson

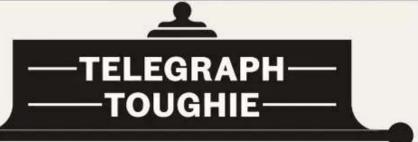
Newcastle upon Tyne

SIR – If Paula Vennells wants to prove that she is truly sorry, she has only to donate the considerable wealth she accrued while running the Post Office to those whose misery she is responsible for.

Bob Stebbings

Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

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 5030

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 **DTCODE** (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, 9pm - 5am. Helpline 0333 202 3390.

Notes

NO 3276 OSMOSIS

- Across**
- Open hosts, entertaining thousand, book first musician (10)
 - Period piece that's minimalist? (4)
 - Monetary bonus for the boozy bohemian? (4,6)
 - Order scarves having swapped sides (4)
 - One might get hooked using dealer's original crack (4)
 - Adorn passing van's bonnet possibly (9)
 - Keep boxed hits by speaker (4,4)
 - Multiple issues with unknown illness (6)
 - Bill and Audrey securing vehicle (6)
 - Telly's so horrendous...viewing Prime, Sky not so much (8)
 - Marcus spending half cricket match wearing leather guard (9)
 - One's blue bike docked (4)
 - Californian never rails against own continent (4)
 - Charlie before noon entering leaderless colouring task (10)
 - Each lying about married male - it's fiction (4)
 - Main seaman swivelled and split smalls; seam on both sides gone (7,3)
- Down**
- Lock empty flat below group of workers (4)
 - Writer in toga, Piero, regularly describing gladiatorial contests? (4-3)
 - Actor ruined episode, reciting initially parrot fashion (6,6)
 - Virginia's mate Nick picked up underlying sound of bay? (8)
 - Plonk cropped top on middle of blazer (6)
 - Surprised cries over e.g. worker Henry's belly flop (3-4)
 - Degenerate broadcaster is consumed by dry red (10)
 - Maybe mid-morning drive, gold model uncovered, lifted artist (7,5)
 - Wrong recruits left in charge in store (3-7)
 - Jurgen's sure and cool making complaint (8)
 - Relief as body of maps conserved by National Trust eccentric (7)
 - Kiss for Mike in Victoria perhaps daily (7)
 - Sleep with most intimate American, missing company (6)
 - Walk the full extent of Swansea (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 6600

4			6	2				
6	1		2					5
	5							
3		1		5				
	9		7			4		
		8		9			3	
			7		3			
1		4			5	7		
	3	2						1

TOUGH NO 6600

		1					5	7
		4	2	6				
8	7							2
					4	8		
	5						6	
		8	9		1			
9	5						4	
				7	5			
7	6						1	

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, 9pm - 5am. 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 6 words - Word Finder, 7 - Wordsmith, 15 - Word Wizard, 22 - Word Master, 30 - Word Genius, 38 - Word Perfect

ANAGRAMS

Each of the anagrams below spells out a term relating to teeth. *Solution on Monday.*

I DUB PICS
UNDERSET
ORAL PERM

MIND GYM

NO 4330
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.*

BEGINNER		INTERMEDIATE		ADVANCED		ANSWER				
13	x6	x1.5	-54	+9	X BY ITSELF	TRIPLE IT	-51	HALVE IT	7/8 OF THIS	
182	+13	x11.5	TRIPLE IT	-291	HALVE IT	7/8 OF THIS	225% OF THIS	-61	+8	
306	8/9 OF THIS	TRIPLE IT	-432	2/3 OF THIS	√	x8.75	165% OF THIS	-78	+9	

Toughie No 3275

Help with clues
Single clues 0905 757 0126.
All Across/Down clues 0905 757 0127.
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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 4097

4					
2			1		
	5		6		
		3			
		6		1	
					3

PLUSWORD

NO 733

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

- Rocky peaks
- air, Scottish airline
- Astound
- Grab
- Underwater detection device

Down

- Category; group of pupils
- Quebec follower, in the Nato alphabet
- Once more
- Paul Gascoigne, familiarly
- Look of contempt with a curled lip

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.*

- HIGH, DAMAGE, ERRAND, ORDERED, NEGOTIATE

GOLD
TUSK

THE SOLUTIONS

Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku Regular and Tough No 6599

1	6	8	4	7	9	5	2	3
4	3	2	6	1	5	7	8	9
9	7	5	2	8	3	4	1	6
5	1	6	9	3	7	8	4	2
8	4	9	5	2	6	3	7	1
7	2	3	1	4	8	6	9	5
2	8	4	3	6	1	9	5	7
3	9	7	8	5	2	1	6	4
6	5	1	7	9	4	2	3	8

Word Ladder: Milk, silk, sift, soft, sofa, soda.

Anagrams: 1. Snakebite 2. Ginger beer 3. Irish coffee.

Panagram: Leviathan, vahine, inhale, hiatal, hantle, halite, thine, thane, neath, lithe, lathi, lathe, haven, halve, hawa, thin, then, than, lath, hive, hint, hit, heat, heal, have, hate, halt, hale, hail.

PlusWord No 732

A	N	G	U	S
T	A	U	N	T
S	K	A	T	E
E	E	R	I	E
A	D	D	E	R

Train Tracks

Killer Sudoku

2	6	8	7	9	3	5	4	1
4	1	5	2	8	6	9	7	3
9	3	7	5	1	4	2	8	6
1	9	2	3	4	7	8	6	5
7	8	4	1	6	5	3	2	9
3	5	6	8	2	9	4	1	7
5	4	3	6	7	2	1	9	8
8	7	9	4	5	1	6	3	2
6	2	1	9	3	8	7	5	4

Mini Sudoku No 4096

3	4	6	5	2	1
5	1	2	3	6	4
4	5	1	2	3	6
2	6	3	4	1	5
1	2	4	6	5	3
6	3	5	1	4	2

Codewords 1 and 2

V	G	S	J	C	W	V	K	Y	R	H	Z	M
E	O	D	A	I	N	F	L	X	T	B	O	
P	I	X	Z	J	B	H	F	A	S	E	W	M
B	K	T	L	N	C	V	R	U	O	Y	G	O

Kakuro No 5029

	3	5	2	6	1		2	6
9	5	7	6	8	3		4	1
8	2	1	5	6	8	3		4
2	1		7	9		3	1	2
		3	9		1	9		
8	4	9		4	9		9	7
6	3	1	7	2	4		2	1
9	7		8	7	5	9	4	3
2	1		4	3	2	7	1	

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MARKETS		CURRENCIES		COMMODITIES		
FTSE 100 8339.23 -31.10 (-0.37pc)	BIGGEST RISER St. James's Pla 488p +22¼ (+4.77pc)	BIGGEST FALLER Natl Grid 1005p -122½ (-10.86pc)	DOW JONES 39065.26 -605.78 (-1.53pc)	FTSE 250 20631.30 -78.77 (-0.38pc)	£\$ Rate 1.2712 Change -0.13c	GOLD \$2330.49 (£1833) -47.92 (-2.01pc)
FTSE All Share 4543.84 -16.71 (-0.37pc)	FTSE All Share Yield 3.56 -0.01	FTSE Eurotop 100 4106.78 +7.11 (+0.17pc)	Nikkei 225 39103.22 +486.12 (+1.26pc)	EURO STOXX 50 5037.60 -12.43 (-0.25pc)	€£ Rate 1.1741 Change -0.04c	BRENT CRUDE \$81.36 (July) -0.54 (-0.66pc)
S&P 500 5267.84 -39.17 (-0.74pc)	Nasdaq 16736.03 -65.51 (-0.39pc)	52WkHigh 8474.41 52WkLow 7215.76 Yield 3.59pc +0.01 P/E Ratio 14.01 -0.20	52WkHigh 40077.40 52WkLow 32327.20	Page 24	Page 24	Anti-Tory influencers As a Labour government looms, can leading critics of the Conservatives maintain their income? Page 20
						Post Office inquiry Paula Vennells' tears are too late – they are for herself, not the victims of the Horizon scandal Ben Marlow Page 22

Life is messy, says Lynch as he fights US fraud charges

British founder of software firm Autonomy appears in San Francisco court over \$11bn Hewlett Packard sale

By James Titcomb

THE British technology tycoon Mike Lynch told a US courtroom that "life is messy" as he denied charges that he masterminded a "massive" multibillion-dollar fraud.

Taking the witness stand in San Francisco, two months into his US fraud trial, Mr Lynch admitted that his software company Autonomy was not "perfect" but insisted that it was an "extremely successful company".

Mr Lynch, once dubbed Britain's Bill Gates, is fighting claims that he oversaw fraudulent accounting at Autonomy that inflated the former FTSE 100 company's value before it was sold to Hewlett Packard for \$11bn (£8.7bn) in 2011.

"Of course it wasn't perfect," Mr Lynch, 58, said when asked by his law-



Mike Lynch, who founded Autonomy in 1996, denies fraud. He could face up to 25 years in prison if found guilty

yer Christopher Morvillo if he would describe Autonomy as perfect. "The reality of life is that it's nuanced and it's messy and sometimes you do your best to get through it, and companies are just like that. If you take a microscope to a spotless kitchen you'll find bacteria."

However, he insisted: "I think Autonomy was an extremely successful company. From a financial point of view, it was highly profitable."

Mr Lynch, who founded Autonomy in 1996, could face up to 25 years in prison if found guilty. His testimony is expected to run into next week.

Mr Lynch's legal team had pushed for the court to declare a mistrial earlier on Thursday, claiming US prosecutors had brought up evidence the previous day that should have been excluded from the trial and was intended to prejudice Mr Lynch. The motion was denied by

the court. A mistrial could have seen Mr Lynch tried at a later date.

During the trial, US lawyers have interviewed customers, observers and former employees, seeking to tie Mr Lynch to an alleged pattern of accounting misconduct, such as sham deals in which customers were paid by Autonomy to buy software from the company. Mr Lynch told the court yesterday that the evidence he had heard had come from people he had never met and concerned agreements he was unaware of.

"I've had lots of reactions to what I've heard but I guess it's summed up by one word: It's surreal," he said. Mr Lynch's lawyers have said that he had been focused on developing Autonomy's technology and that he was not involved in accounting. Yesterday he said he could write code "but not sell toffee".

On Wednesday, Jonathan Bloomer, the former chief executive of Prudential who served on Autonomy's board, alleged that Mr Lynch had largely ignored Autonomy's accounting. "Mike was mostly interested in the strategy, new products, new areas to look at, potential acquisitions," said Mr Bloomer. "For example, he didn't come the audit committee and wasn't particularly interested in the finance side."

Meanwhile, prosecutors have portrayed him as a "controlling, dominating, intimidating boss" and the "driving force" behind the "massive" fraud.

Autonomy executives including Mr Lynch left HP shortly after the British company. A year after the deal, HP wrote down the majority of the takeover's value and said there were accounting improprieties at Autonomy. Mr Lynch has said HP's then-chief executive Meg Whitman, who was brought in after the Autonomy deal and pursued a different strategy to her predecessor Leo Apotheker, mismanaged the takeover.

Mr Lynch and Stephen Chamberlain, Autonomy's ex-finance director, were charged in 2018. Both deny fraud. Sushovan Hussain, the firm's ex-chief financial officer, was sentenced to five years in prison over the sale in 2019. Mr Lynch and Mr Hussain have been found liable in a civil trial in the UK over the deal.

The prosecution and the defence are due to provide their final pieces of evidence next week before closing arguments and a decision by a jury.



Going for a song The US attorney general is suing Live Nation, Ticketmaster's owner, after its "dynamic pricing" led to Bruce Springsteen tickets being sold for \$5,000 (£4,000). Live Nation said "the bulk of its fees go to venues".

Nvidia gains value of AstraZeneca in single day of AI boom

By James Titcomb

THE US microchip giant Nvidia has gained the entire value of Britain's biggest listed company in a single day as the artificial intelligence (AI) boom sent shares to a record high.

Nvidia's shares rose by 10.5pc in early trading yesterday, adding \$245bn (£193bn) to its market value. It came after the company said on Wednesday night that sales had more than trebled in a year. The one-day gain is more than the entire market value of AstraZeneca, the FTSE 100's most valuable constituent, which is worth around £192bn.

Nvidia's shares have risen by 240pc in the past year as its advanced computer processors have become the bedrock of AI systems such as ChatGPT.

Its market value of \$2.58 trillion now puts it within touching distance of the size of the entire FTSE 100, which is around \$2.77 trillion.

The growth of Nvidia and other so-called "magnificent seven" stocks have propelled US stock markets in the past year, and created an uncomfortable parallel with the London Stock Exchange, which fast-growing technology companies are largely avoiding. US stock indices jumped to a record high

\$245bn

Increase in Nvidia's market value in a single day yesterday, after shares rose by 10.5pc following a trebling of its sales

yesterday after they were boosted by Nvidia's results and optimism surrounding future demand for AI.

Nvidia said on Wednesday night that revenues in its fiscal first-quarter had risen to \$26bn, up 262pc against a year earlier. Profits rose by 462pc to \$15.2bn.

The company said it would carry out a stock split, in which existing shares are divided into multiple shares, which makes it cheaper to buy individual stock. Jensen Huang, its chief executive, also predicted that the company's momentum would continue as it introduces more advanced chips.

Mr Huang, who founded Nvidia in 1993, is now worth more than \$90bn.

The company has spent most of its life designing microchips for video game graphics, but the processors have proven to be adept at handling artificial intelligence tasks, leading demand for the chips to outstrip supply.

Economy slows sharply before election Extra 6,000 pylons as Grid rewires UK

By Szu Ping Chan, Madeleine Ross and Chris Price

ECONOMIC growth is slowing sharply, according to a closely watched survey that throws fresh light on Rishi Sunak's decision to call a snap election.

Activity in Britain's dominant services sector fell to its slowest rate in six months, according to S&P Global, putting the economy on course to grow at just half the 0.6pc rate seen in the first three months of the year.

Economists said the Prime Minister had called the election during an economic "sweet spot" where growth was going "gangbusters" at the same time as the end of the cost of living squeeze. Chris Williamson, chief business econ-

omist at S&P Global, said the "Goldilocks" combination of robust growth and low inflation was unlikely to last. S&P's barometer suggests the economy is likely to expand by just 0.3pc in the second quarter.

He said: "We're probably in a bit of a sweet spot at the moment. We've got strong growth with declining inflation. I question how long that combination is going to last."

Mr Sunak began his election campaign by highlighting that the economy "is growing faster than our major competitors", saying "we have turned a corner and brought economic stability back". He said inflation was falling "back down to normal" after dropping to 2.3pc in April. However, high infla-

tion in the services sector prompted traders to push back bets on interest rate cuts from as early as June to as late as November.

A separate barometer showed consumer confidence rose to its highest level in more than two years in May. GfK's poll showed households were becoming increasingly confident about the prospects for the economy and their personal finances.

Joe Staton, at GfK, said: "The trend is certainly positive after a long period of stasis. Consumers are clearly sensing that conditions are improving. This good result anticipates further growth in confidence in the months to come."

Analysis: Page 23

By Jonathan Leake

NATIONAL GRID is to install as many as 6,000 electricity pylons across the English countryside as part of plans to invest £31bn in the nation's transmission networks.

John Pettigrew, chief executive of National Grid, said the 1,000 miles of overhead lines connecting the pylons will prepare the UK for electricity demand which is expected to double over the next 25 years.

Bill payers are to fund the £31bn overhaul of the electricity network as the National Grid "rewires the nation" to reach net zero.

Mr Pettigrew said the infrastructure will also help the nation decarbonise by

ditching fossil fuels in favour of electricity from low-carbon sources such as wind farms and nuclear power stations.

National Grid will fund the new pylons by adding £10 to households' annual energy bills.

It also plans to raise £6.8bn by issuing 1bn new shares to help fund its network expansion, while selling off assets including its Grain liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal – the largest in Europe.

Mr Pettigrew said: "We're announcing a transformational step up in our energy infrastructure investment."

"It is at a scale that I think is fair to say is unprecedented, and it will make National Grid one of the biggest investors in the energy transition in the FTSE 100 list of companies."

National Grid runs the high-voltage electricity transmission network for England and Wales, comprising 4,400 miles of overhead cable suspended on 22,000 pylons.

Mr Pettigrew said that the network was ageing fast and needed to be upgraded, firstly to cope with the expansion of renewable energy, but also because of the predicted surge in demand fuelled by heat pumps, electric vehicles and gigafactories.

He added: "All of that is pushing load up, which is something we've not seen on the network for a long time."

The planned upgrade will result in 2,400 miles of high-voltage cables being laid offshore, carrying power along coastlines or from wind farms.

Hargreaves Lansdown shares surge

By Micheal Bow

HARGREAVES Lansdown's share price jumped by the most in a decade yesterday after a consortium's surprise takeover bid sparked speculation of a bidding war.

Shares in the FTSE 250 company jumped by nearly a fifth, the biggest one-day rise since 2014, after the company rebuffed an initial £4.7bn approach from CVC Capital, Abu Dhabi and Nor-

dic Capital. Hargreaves Lansdown's board rejected the 985p per share offer, saying it undervalued the company.

However, the move prompted market hopes of a higher bid and raised the possibility that another suitor may emerge.

US investment giant Charles Schwab was named as a possible counterbidder, while rival private equity firms and banks were also touted as possible suitors.

Shares hit a peak of 115p yesterday, up from 979p at the open and well above the rejected offer price. The stock closed at 1120p.

The Abu Dhabi-led consortium has until June 19 to mount a firm offer. A takeover would hand the fund supermarket's co-founder Peter Hargreaves, who owns 19.7pc of the company, a near £1bn payday.

Analysis: Page 21



Election threatens the end of a lucrative era for the Tory-bashing influencers

If Labour returns to power, Left-leaning pundits may need another business model, writes James Warrington

This is the post-Boris Johnson election, where the Conservatives are going to triple down on lying through their teeth about everything," said James O'Brien in typically hyperbolic fashion this week.

"The only question really, the only mystery facing the population, is whether or not the client media retains enough power to let them."

For regular listeners of the LBC host, the comments follow a familiar trend of monologues decrying what he sees as the decline of Britain under the Conservatives. O'Brien isn't alone. Fourteen years of Tory rule have given rise to a vocal – and often lucrative – subset of publications and pundits who have made it their mission to oppose the Government, as well as parts of the media that have shown it support. But with a general election six weeks away, and a Labour victory looking all but certain, the game may soon be up.

With the Conservatives no longer in power, will the

anti-Tory business model need a re-think? "Commentators are responding to events," says former ITN editor Stewart Purkiss. "When the target doesn't seem to matter any longer, their appeal lessens."

O'Brien is among the best-known anti-Tory pundits, thanks largely to his vocal presence on X, formerly Twitter, where he has 1.2m followers. Clips from his mid-morning show often go viral as he rails against government policy or his favourite topic – Brexit. This prominence has proved to be lucrative for the radio host, who has spun out his brand of opinionated broadcasting into two books – *How to Be Right* and *How They Broke Britain* – as well as live shows.

Other commentators have followed suit. Marina Purkiss, whose Twitter profile states "I'm not always having a go at this Government... sometimes I'm sleeping", has used social media to build her anti-Brexit and anti-Tory brand and is now a regular guest on daytime TV shows including *Good Morning Britain* and *Jeremy Vine* on Channel 5.

Purkiss says her output is "based on holding politicians to account, no



From far left: Rory Stewart, Owen Jones, Marina Purkiss, James O'Brien and Alastair Campbell have all profited from pulling the Government apart

matter what colour scarf they're wearing". She adds: "That's the joy of being an independent commentator with no reliance on, or allegiance to, any party – unlike some newspapers."

Still, there is little doubt about which side of the spectrum Purkiss sits on: this week she branded Rishi Sunak a "lying b---end".

Tory opposition can also be found in the burgeoning field of so-called "centrist dad" podcasts.

The Rest Is Politics, hosted by Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart, which is part of Gary Lineker's Goalhanger group, is one of the most downloaded podcasts in the UK. The pair's success has translated to the stage, too, with their live shows selling out the Royal Albert Hall.

Recent political turbulence and the division created by upheavals such as Brexit have also given rise to specialist publications that occupy a powerful position on the Left of British politics. *The New European*, which was launched in July 2016 in direct response to the Brexit vote, raised £1m from readers in 2022 and turned its first profit last year.

Novara Media was founded in 2011 and soon became one of the most vocal outlets supporting Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership. It has almost 15,000 monthly donors.

"The story of media before was that you had to be big to make money – that was the basic lesson of media," says Douglas McCabe, chief executive of

Enders Analysis. "But

'When the target doesn't seem to matter any longer, their appeal lessens'

actually, the story of the internet is that when companies or publishers do one single thing much more narrowly, but do it really well, they will tend to succeed." Bashing the Tories has become so attractive that even Joe Media has got in on the act. The company began life in 2010 as a male-focused social media publisher, focusing on football and amusing memes. However, it has since found a new life as a Left-leaning news outlet, although it has failed to make the strategy pay and was rescued from administration last month.

Staunchly Left-wing publications and commentators have enjoyed large audiences by offering critiques – fair or otherwise – of the ruling government of the day. The procession of once-in-a-generation crises that the Tories have had to face have thrown up ample ammunition for their critics.

"It's in the nature of news that no news is good news and good news is no news," says Patrick Barwise, professor of management and marketing at the London Business School. "A lot of journalism is about things that have gone wrong."

Purkiss draws comparisons with the feeble political atmosphere in the US and cites the example of *Pod Save America*. The podcast, which is hosted by former Barack Obama aides, surged in popularity during the Trump presidency, but interest waned when Joe Biden entered the Oval Office.

Now, with a second Trump administration on the cards, there has been a revival of interest in the show. In January, it increased the number of weekly episodes from two to three, saying there was "too much going on".

There are already signs some commentators are starting to change tack. Owen Jones, a *Guardian* columnist and erstwhile Corbynista, has already begun to turn his fire on Sir Keir Starmer, insisting that neither the Tories or Labour have the answers to Britain's problems.

McCabe believes even some of the anti-Tory publications may have a future as those on the Left curate their own content bubbles. "The

options for individuals to create their own content, and for consumers to go out and find news in different ways, all of that will just become a little more common," he says.

Stride blames pornography for worklessness among young men

By Szu Ping Chan and Eir Nolsøe

MEL STRIDE has blamed pornography and video games for a surge in worklessness among young men.

The Work and Pensions Secretary said that easy access to online pornography and video games were causing a mental health crisis among young men, which was prompting many to drop out of the workforce.

It came as official figures showed there were 900,000 young people aged between 16 and 24 who were not in edu-

cation, employment or training (Neet) in January to March 2024. This was up from 812,000 a year earlier, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

Mr Stride said social media and technology had led to a "very worrying" increase in mental health conditions among young people, which was fueling economic inactivity.

The minister said technology was having a different effect on boys' and girls' mental health.

Women's mental health has been suffering because of unrealistic ideals por-

trayed on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

"For boys ... things like gaming, and certainly pornography and things like that, is a more prevalent factor," Mr Stride told the work and pensions select committee.

A 2023 study published in the *US Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* found that "stressful experiences, anxiety, and depression are strongly related to pornography consumption". Links with gaming are less clear, with a 2022 Oxford study finding that video games

'We haven't explored what this technology means for young people's mental health'

only harmed mental health if people struggled to stop.

Mr Stride said 16 to 24-year-olds had seen "a very marked increase in mental health [conditions], which is very worrying not least because they are young people with futures ahead of them".

While he said lockdowns were a clear factor, he suggested social media and technology played an even bigger role.

Mr Stride said: "I do think probably as a society we haven't explored and fully opened up exactly what this technology means for young people's mental health because I think the impacts are actually very profound and probably an area where there needs to be more research."

The ONS figures showed that young men were behind the continued rise in worklessness. There were 99,000 extra 16 to 24-year-old men out of work by the

end of March, whereas the number of women of the same age classed as a Neet fell by 11,000.

About one in seven young men is now considered a Neet, according to the ONS, compared to one in 10 young women.

Britain is grappling with one of the worst sickness crises on record, with more than 2.8m people of working age not in the workforce due to ill health, including mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. This is up from about 2m before Covid.

Western nations moving to war footing, says QinetiQ

By Christopher Jasper

WESTERN nations are taking steps to put their armed forces on a war footing for the first time in decades, according to the boss of defence-technology company QinetiQ.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, concerns about China's ambitions in the Pacific, Iran's escalation of the Israel-Hamas conflict and Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea have spurred Britain, the US, Australia and their allies to invest time and money in testing the readiness of air, sea and land forces, said Steve Wadey, QinetiQ's chief executive.

The push to ensure that countries are war-ready has picked up pace in recent months, Mr Wadey said yesterday, leading to more demand for services offered by QinetiQ's Test & Evaluation and Training & Mission Rehearsal divisions. He said: "As you come to realise that the world is a scary place, you have to train and be operationally ready to fight." That has spurred demand for both "physical and virtual" testing and training equipment produced by the company.

QinetiQ's revenue and underlying operating profit rose 20pc in the 12 months through March, prompting it to upgrade sales and earnings expectations for the current year. Production of aerial target systems, which enable

naval vessels and warplanes to hone their ability to track and down enemy missiles, aircraft and munitions, reached record levels.

Among the most in-demand products are Banshee target drones, which feature two jet engines, fly for up to 45 minutes at speeds close to 450 mph and have been sold to 40 countries.

Banshee featured in Operation Formidable Shield, which took place off the Hebrides last year and involved one of the most complex ever tests of naval and missile defences, with more than 20 ships, 35 aircraft and 4,000 allied personnel participating in live-fire mission rehearsals.

Another product, Rattler, emulates advanced missile threats, including supersonic capability, and is being evaluated by the Pentagon as it tests US laser-tracking technologies. QinetiQ also provided aircraft and targets for the Talisman Sabre training exercise in Australia that involved 13 nations and 30,000 military personnel.

Mr Wadey said that QinetiQ is well placed to win testing and evaluation work for Australia's planned nuclear submarine fleet as part of the new Aukus defence pact spurred by Chinese expansionism.

The tests would seek to ensure that the vessels are not leaving telltale signatures that allow them to be tracked.

Musk attacks Biden plan for 100pc tariff on Chinese EVs

By James Titcomb

ELON MUSK has attacked Joe Biden's plans for a 100pc tariff on electric cars made in China despite Tesla potentially being poised to benefit from the levy.

Mr Musk told a technology conference in Paris that he preferred "no tariffs" when asked how the US president's recent policies would affect Tesla.

Earlier this month, Mr Biden said he would raise import duties on Chinese electric vehicles from 25pc to 100pc as well as increasing taxes on components such as batteries.

The move could boost Tesla, the US's biggest seller of electric cars, and protect it from competitors such as BYD, the Chinese manufacturer that has threatened to dramatically undercut Mr Musk's company.

"Neither Tesla nor I asked for these tariffs. In fact, I was surprised when they announced," Mr Musk told the Viva Tech conference.

"Tesla competes quite well in the market in China with no tariffs and no differential support; in general, I'm in favour of no tariffs. I'm also actually in favour of no tax incentives for EVs, provided also that the tax incentives for oil and gas must also be eliminated.

"I'm in favour of no tariffs and no incentives for electric vehicles or for oil and gas and if they were all taken away,

I think that would be for the best. Things that inhibit freedom of exchange or distort the market are not good." Mr Musk, a frequent critic of Mr Biden, has benefited from incentives on electric cars introduced by the administration.

China accused the White House of "undermining fair trade and environmental protection" after the tariffs were confirmed last week. It has threatened to retaliate, although it is unclear if this could affect US car makers like Tesla.

Companies such as BYD charge

'Tesla competes quite well in the market in China with no tariffs and no differential support'

under \$10,000 (£7,870) for their cheap cars in China, well below Western manufacturers.

Mr Musk is keen to maintain good relationships with Beijing, and recently visited China in an attempt to push through approval for Tesla's self-driving system. The company's sales in the country have suffered in recent months amid growing competition.

Tesla recently said it would speed up plans to launch a cheaper, mass-market vehicle that would be more capable of competing with Chinese rivals.

EU fines Cadbury owner for limiting biscuits' movement

By Hannah Boland

THE owner of Cadbury has been fined €337m (£287m) after it admitted restricting the movement of chocolate, coffee and biscuits within the EU to push up prices.

The EU antitrust watchdog said Mondelez, which also makes Oreo cookies and Ritz crackers, had struck anticompetitive agreements with distributors to "illegally restrict retailers from sourcing these products from member states where prices are lower".

Margrethe Vestager, EU competition chief, said deals to carve up the EU market and stop sellers from trading across borders allowed Mondelez "to maintain higher prices" between 2015 and 2019.

Prices were as much as 40pc higher or lower in certain countries.

Ms Vestager said its practices had been "blatantly illegal", adding: "We are determined to uphold fundamental freedoms in the European Union and to ensure that European citizens have access to the biggest variety at the lowest prices that the market can offer."

Mondelez had initially been set a higher fine, but the EU said it had granted the company a 15pc reduction after the company "co-operated with the commission under the co-operation procedure and expressly acknowledged its liability for the infringement of EU

competition rules". A spokesman for Mondelez said: "This historical matter is not representative of who we are and the strong culture of compliance for which we strive."

The US company said the settlement related to isolated incidents, "most of which ceased or were remedied well in advance of the Commission's investigation", adding: "This accounts for a very limited part of Mondelez International's European business."

The fine comes at a delicate time for Mondelez, which has faced a shareholder backlash over its decision to keep operating in Russia.

Dirk Van de Put, the Mondelez chief executive, previously claimed investors did not "morally care" about its business in Russia, despite the war in Ukraine.

However, Wespeth Benefits & Investments, a US-based investor, has claimed Mondelez's continued operations in Russia expose it to "material human rights risks".

Wespeth tabled a proposal at the company's annual investor meeting on Wednesday to require Mondelez to commission a third-party report into its human rights policy.

The proposal, which went to a vote, was ultimately rejected but received backing from more than 30pc of voting shareholders at the meeting.

Fat fees put Hargreaves Lansdown in crosshairs

Emergence of firms offering lower rates has left FTSE 250 giant struggling to attract customers, writes *Michael Bow*

When entrepreneurs Peter Hargreaves and Stephen Lansdown set up their company in a spare bedroom of a property in the Bristol suburb of Clifton the early 1980s, they could have scarcely dreamt the venture would one day make them billionaires.

Over the past 40 years, Hargreaves Lansdown has grown into a FTSE 250 giant, a major employer with 2,000 staff and has become so ubiquitous that one in two UK retail investors uses it to buy and sell shares.

But in recent years the emergence of low budget alternatives offering lower fees has left the business struggling to attract customers on the same scale.

A £4.7bn takeover offer from a consortium of investors led by Abu Dhabi, and including buyout barons CVC Capital and Nordic Capital, has crystallised the company's fall from its perch and prompted questions over its future. Hargreaves yesterday rejected the £9.85 per share bid, saying it undervalued the group and it was focused on its strategy.

Shares soared 20pc to £10.90, above the offer price, amid hopes the consortium or a rival bidder would table a counter offer.

Any takeover of Hargreaves would herald the end of its 17 years on the London stock market, and confirm that the champion of the investment world had been brought low by a price war as firm vie for investors' cash.

"Hargreaves Lansdown has been a phenomenally successful platform since its inception but now they've got a problem," says Stephen Barrett, of financial services firm Cavendish.

"They're a premier product and charge higher platform fees than pretty much anyone else in the market, and those platform fees are under attack."

Low-cost operators such as AJ Bell and Interactive Investors have managed to lure long-standing Hargreaves customers by undercutting prices. According to Citi, AJ Bell and Interactive Investor charge £5 and £4, respectively, for each equity trade made on their platform while Hargreaves charges £12. For some hard-headed armchair investors taking a punt on the stock market, such fees have prompted many to look further afield for their investments.

Despite adding thousands of customers in previous years, higher fees triggered a slump in Hargreaves' market share from 42.7pc to 40.7pc between 2020 and 2023.

Given the investing market has grown rapidly in recent years, the reduction in customers placing investments through Hargreaves has been even more pronounced. But some experts say the fee issue is only at the margins, and most customers are not worried about paying more for a



'It still has that premium perception about it – but underneath the bonnet the business isn't right'

more premium funds supermarket service.

"If you buy a packet of biscuits at Waitrose you won't be crying your eyes out that Aldi also sells biscuits," says Panmure Gordon analyst Rae Maile. "If you shop at Waitrose, you shop at Waitrose. The kind of people who choose Hargreaves Lansdown are not particularly fussed about the last few basis points. They want somewhere where it's easier to invest."

Aside from fees, part of Hargreaves' challenge lies in its higher costs. A £175m three-year investment plan to upgrade its creaking infrastructure, causing costs to outstrip revenues and uneasiness among some investors.

"It still has that premium perception about it but underneath the bonnet the business isn't right," says Cavendish's Barrett.

Before the price war kicked off things were very different for the

company. Shares soared to a peak of nearly £24 in May 2019 under the leadership of then-chief executive Chris Hill, nearly two-thirds above their £10 level today. The Covid lockdown also spurred more activity as home workers became armchair investors. But under-investment and regulatory run-ins have taken the shine off the firm.

Hargreaves had also been a significant promoter of the former star stock picker Neil Woodford. When his funds empire imploded in 2019, Hargreaves took a reputational hit that left it vulnerable. An attempt to push into the broader wealth management industry and a £175m IT upgrade plan under Mr Hill triggered a rebuke from Mr Hargreaves.

He called the plan "completely unnecessary" and launched an attack on Hargreaves' then-chairman Deanna Oppenheimer. A new chairman, Alison

Platt, and chief executive, Dan Olley, have recently been drafted in to put the firm on an even keel but the bid may underscore the need for a larger reset.

According to Citi's analysts, being in private ownership would make it easier for Hargreaves to embark on a "fee reset" and allow it more time to invest in its IT infrastructure. They point to Nordnet, the Nordic version of Hargreaves, which was taken private by Hargreaves' co-bidder Nordic Capital in 2017 and was successfully overhauled.

But what would the loss of Hargreaves, a bastion of retail share ownership and great British success story, mean for the London Stock Exchange? With nearly 2m customers, it is one of the primary ways that normal people interact with the City. Would going private deprive the public of an important barometer for retail share investment?

'Brand recognition is incredible. About 50pc of new customers come in through word of mouth'

"It would be a shame if it went [private]," says one analyst.

"It's been one of the longest listed stocks in the financial sector as a whole and it's the market leader in day-to-day investing.

"The brand recognition is pretty incredible. Around 50pc new customers generally come in through word of mouth, which tells you how strong that is."

According to Investec, the offer price is too low compared to its potential.

The bid is worth 2.9pc of Hargreaves' assets under administration and the group is trading much more cheaply than rivals such as AJ Bell and Integraft, analysts at the broker say.

The consortium has until June 19 to make a formal bid or walk away for six months. For Hargreaves, everything is on the line.

Activist investor urges Rio Tinto to downgrade its London listing

By Lucy Burton

RIO TINTO is being urged to downgrade its London listing in a move that would force it to quit the FTSE 100.

Activist investor James Smith, the founder of Palliser Capital, has argued that the FTSE 100 mining giant should ditch its "clunky" primary London listing and unify its structure in Australia, where it has a secondary listing.

The current dual-listed structure is "extremely clunky and outdated" and the "root cause of the undervaluation",

Mr Smith said. A by-product of ditching its primary London listing would be that the mining giant is no longer eligible to be a constituent of the blue-chip index, although it would still be listed in London.

However his comments, made at an investor conference in Hong Kong, will likely spook the City as it comes as a raft of companies flee the struggling UK stock market either through defections to rival exchanges or takeovers.

BHP announced plans to ditch its primary London listing in favour of the

Australian market in 2021, while mining giant Glencore last year chose to spin off and list its coal business in New York rather than London.

Mr Smith's presentation, seen by the *Financial Times*, argued that "this is an Australian business" as the vast majority of Rio's earnings are generated in the country.

It added that the complexity of the dual-listed structure prevents the company from pursuing all-stock takeovers, at a time of growing consolidation in the mining sector. London-listed

£71bn

Rio Tinto's market valuation on the London Stock Exchange, making it one of the biggest companies in the FTSE 100

Anglo American this week agreed to further talks with mining rival BHP over a possible takeover, despite rejecting a fresh £38.6bn approach from the Australian mining giant. The FTSE 100

index has traditionally been dominated by oil and gas companies, as well as mining and commodity stocks, but a growing number are delisting for rivals such as New York.

Shell last month threatened to quit London if its valuation did not improve. Wael Sawan, the chief executive, said it was looking at "all options" amid concerns it is under-appreciated by investors. It has since said it is not actively considering a shift to New York.

One concern in the mining and oil and gas sectors has been about the

growing focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) measures in the UK, as well as fears that there is a negative perception of these industries in Europe, particularly among climate activists.

Earlier this month, Jeremy Hunt sought to play down fears that the Square Mile is in terminal decline, instead arguing that the demise of London's stock market was "massively overstated" and claiming that seven tech giants will be listed in the UK over the next decade.

Bonuses for Boohoo bosses despite missed sales targets

By Hannah Boland

BOOHOO has overridden the rules of its bonus scheme to hand Mahmud Kamani, its co-founder, and two senior executives £1m each despite failing to hit agreed targets.

The retailer claimed Mr Kamani, along with John Lyttle, the chief executive, and Carol Kane, the executive director, all deserved the bonuses despite missing performance targets.

The fast fashion retailer said it had decided to ignore its bonus criteria, which would have meant Mr Kamani, who is also chairman, Mr Lyttle and Ms Kane would have received no annual bonus based on performance targets. Boohoo said this would not be "an accurate reflection of the excellent work carried out during the year to set the business up for future success".

It said it would also not "ensure that the management team is motivated and retained throughout the next financial year which will be pivotal for the group's long-term success."

The bonuses will boost Mr Kamani and Ms Kane's total pay packages for the year to £1.5m compared with about £1m a year earlier. Mr Lyttle's total remuneration for the year was up 27pc to £1.7m from £1.3m last year. Part of the bonuses will be paid in cash, with the remainder in shares. The decision comes despite

shareholder frustration over executive pay-outs in recent years. Boohoo faced a backlash at its annual general meeting last year, when it similarly opted to increase executives' bonuses despite missing financial targets.

Shareholders have also been critical of its long-term incentive plans. When Mr Lyttle was announced as chief executive in 2018, Boohoo said he was in line to receive a £50m bonus if he boosted the company's share price by



Boohoo co-founder and chairman Mahmud Kamani's total pay package for the year was boosted to £1.5m

180pc over a five-year period, giving it a £6bn price tag. The company is now worth just £439m, having lost 91pc of its value since the middle of 2020.

A spokesman for Boohoo said: "The board has granted these awards to reflect the strong operational performance of the executive directors in setting the business up for future growth."

"Over the past 12 months considerable progress has been made, including the growth of Debenhams marketplace and the delivery of significant cost savings."

Royal Mail results late as Kretinsky mulls takeover bid

By James Warrington

ROYAL MAIL has failed to publish its financial results on time as it gears up for a £3.5bn takeover by a Czech billionaire.

Its parent company, International Distributions Services (IDS), was expected to issue figures for its latest financial year to the stock market at 7am yesterday, but failed to do so.

In a statement just before 2pm, the company said it had delayed publication after KPMG requested additional time to carry out its audit.

IDS said this related to "usual standard procedures" but did not say when the results would be published.

It is understood that the delay does not relate to any material financial issues.

Shares in the company fell almost 4pc yesterday. The timing of the delay is unfortunate given Royal Mail is on the brink of a controversial deal that would hand control of the 500-year-old postal service to a foreign investor.

The company has said it is minded to accept the £3.5bn offer from Daniel Křetínský, known as the "Czech Sphinx", subject to undertakings on public interest matters.

Mr Křetínský's EP Group, which is the largest shareholder in IDS, has until May 29 to make a firm bid or walk away from the deal.

NS&I interest rate changes

→ Higher variable interest rates on Direct Saver and Income Bonds

On 23 May 2024, NS&I changed the interest rates on the following accounts:

Variable rates			
NS&I account	Minimum balance	Previous rate	New rate from 23 May 2024
Direct Saver	£1	3.65% gross/AER	4.00% gross/AER
Income Bonds	£500	3.59% gross/3.65% AER	3.93% gross/4.00% AER

Definitions

Gross is the taxable rate of interest payable without the deduction of UK Income Tax.

AER (Annual Equivalent Rate) illustrates what the annual rate of interest would be if the interest was compounded each time it was paid. Where interest is paid annually, the quoted rate and the AER are the same.

Find out more online

You can also find out more about our accounts and investments, and apply for most of them online.

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Vennells' tears are for herself, not the victims

BEN MARLOW

The disgraced former Post Office boss's half-hearted apology comes far too late to repair any of the damage

If the King gave out honours on the basis of acting skills alone then surely Paula Vennells would be handed back her CBE in a heartbeat. Or perhaps an Oscar would be more appropriate after the disgraced former Post Office boss was hauled in front of the Horizon IT inquiry for a grilling lasting three days.

Her appearance was always going to be a tense affair – furious sub-postmasters had waited years for this, and more than 100 campaigners had turned up to watch her interrogation – but Vennells laid it on so thick at times, one wondered if she had been attending amateur dramatics classes at the local village hall in

preparation. You could imagine a gaggle of handsomely paid advisers on the side of the stage wincing as Vennells broke down repeatedly in an apparent display of true remorse at her part in one of the worst miscarriages of justice in modern history.

"Oh God, not again, Paula. No one's going to fall for this. We agreed once would be enough," is how a seasoned public relations guru would probably have reacted to this uncomfortable spectacle.

The overwhelming conclusion after watching Vennells' wholly unconvincing performance is that these were carefully crafted crocodile tears straight out of acting school. "Quite well-rehearsed... a PR apology" was how former sub-postmaster Mark Kelly dismissed Vennells' attempts at atonement.

There's an argument that there is nothing Vennells could have said to satisfy some of those that were wrongly convicted. The sense of injustice and anger that many rightly still feel at what happened, particularly given the inescapable impression of an establishment cover-up, must be overwhelming at times.

But at the very least she needed to come across as authentic. Instead, this was someone who seemed content to apologise as long as she didn't incriminate herself. It is a tactic we see time and again these days from public figures: hollow apologies for "what happened", or if people are upset, offended and angry, but not for their part in it. This is what happens when lawyers and communications specialists become too involved in important inquiries.

But the second day of Vennells' evidence revealed an organisation that has long been obsessed with managing its public image and risk avoidance, to the extent that it came at the expense of doing what was right for the accused postmasters.

A trusted lieutenant from the Post Office PR department advised her not to review historical cases involving Horizon because it would be "front page news". There was also a meeting she claims not to have known about where lawyers dismissed the possibility of commissioning an independent report on the basis that it would be the "highest" risk.

Her case has hardly been helped by

the concerns of Dame Moya Greene, the former Royal Mail boss, revealed in a series of damning texts to the inquiry in which Dame Moya suggests "there was some conspiracy", as Vennells put it to the inquiry.

"I don't know what to say. I think you knew," Dame Moya said. Vennells replies "that isn't the case" – yet to lose the backing of someone who worked alongside her for years at the most senior level is a serious blow.

Even if this was genuine sorrow on display from Vennells, then there are two points to make.

First, her tears have come far too late to be in any way meaningful or to even get close to undoing the suffering that hundreds of former Post Office workers experienced.

As Kelly, a sub-postmaster in Swansea from 2003 to 2006, asked: "All these years she could have made an apology like that. Why did she have to wait until today?"

Perhaps Suzanne Sercombe, partner of campaigning national hero Alan Bates, sums it up best: "It's meaningless, because she did not do anything in years gone past when

she should have done something. It's like, 'Sorry I got found out.'"

The second is that if her tears were genuine then it seems more likely that they were for herself, not the many victims of this nightmarish wrongdoing, many of whom sadly did not live to see the truth come to light.

Britain's national institutions are rightly admired around the world but this, and the infected blood scandal, is an indelible stain that no amount of belated, half-hearted apologies can ever put right.

It all points to a deeper and more troubling issue at the heart of the British state and how it is run.

Too often people like Vennells, who build careers in public service over decades, become totally unaccountable. This enables genuine travesties of justice such as these to first go uncovered and then take a lifetime to be properly investigated.

Part of the problem is that those tasked with scrutinising the system are public servants too. It is a culture where everyone is deemed to be acting with the best intentions, so it is assumed that mistakes were made in

good faith by people who are essentially honest and decent.

This is how cover-ups happen. Too many people – including those with the power to step in – convince themselves that it would be unfair to punish someone who got it wrong but did so with everyone's best interests at heart.

They don't think of themselves as having messed up. They believe they were doing the right thing in difficult circumstances. In the Post Office's case, the priority was protecting the interests of the company at the cost of accountability.

These grave errors occur because there is no proper external or independent oversight, which is why there is a lot to learn from the private sector. It's not that mistakes aren't made, or that cover-ups don't happen – they do. But they tend to be quickly unearthed. Mistakes show up in the share price and investors are quick to punish if things go badly wrong.

Until these fundamental shortcomings in the public sector are addressed, scandals will keep occurring.



The priority at the Post Office was protecting the interests of the company at the cost of accountability

The second day of Paula Vennells' evidence at the Horizon IT inquiry revealed an organisation that has long been obsessed with its public image

Neither Labour nor the Conservatives have a plan to break Britain out of its stagnation

AMBROSE EVANS-PRITCHARD

Sunak and Starmer do not possess the dynamism to lift the country out of its spiral of slow decline

Rishi Sunak has impeccable timing. Today's Goldilocks moment for the British economy is as good as it gets. Headline inflation has carved a near perfect round-trip to almost 2pc, as it was bound to do given the collapse in natural gas prices and the deflationary trade shock coming from China.

Markets have homed in on the ugly detail of sticky services inflation but as a matter of electoral politics, the mix of cheaper imported goods and dearer home-grown services is ideal. Real

wages are rocketing for millions of people. Labour cannot keep saying that this is the worst slide in living standards since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Its biggest gun has been spiked.

Economic growth smashed consensus by coming in at 0.6pc in the first quarter. The early evidence is that April and May will come in "hot" as well. The International Monetary Fund has upgraded its forecasts – but only to 0.7pc for 2024, *nota bene* – and given the all clear on a British soft landing. A second Labour gun has been spiked. We will learn only after the election whether it is a real recovery or a dead cat bounce.

The good news is that UK service exports are booming. They have lifted the UK three notches in the UNCTAD league to fourth largest global exporter in total value terms, surpassing Japan and France. It is an unsung success story of post-Brexit trade. The bad news is that business bankruptcies are still near a 30-year high, companies are

shedding labour fast, and more councils are sliding into "section 114" insolvency. The upward creep in UK unemployment is not far from triggering the recession Sahn Rule.

Slippage in public finances is eating up any budget space that the Chancellor might have had for a pre-electoral give-away in the autumn, leaving aside the mystery of how the Government intends to pay for a rise in defence spending to 2.5pc of GDP. "This goes some way to explaining the decision to call a snap election," said Citigroup.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that "non-ringfenced" spending will have to be cut by 1.9 to 3.5pc in real terms each year under the current economic structure – or be covered by tax rises – in order to bring the public accounts under control.

As it happens, the rating agency Scope warned hours before Mr Sunak called the vote that the UK's public debt is on an unsustainable trajectory towards 110pc of GDP by 2029. The

deficit will remain above 3pc of GDP every year this decade, and net interest payments will rise to 7.2pc of revenue. It accused the UK of abusing its reserve currency privilege to push its luck, concluding that there could be a "sudden reappraisal" by the capital markets.

My answer to this dismal picture is that we must elect a government that goes to the root of the matter and overthrows the current economic structure. Neither the Tories nor Labour offer any way out of our stagnation trap in this election, and neither have my vote at this juncture.

This country is lucky in one sense. Both leaders respect our institutions. Both are one-nation politicians at heart. There is not the slightest threat to Britain's values or liberal democracy. That is not the case in the US where, Donald Trump is already drawing up post-inauguration plans that would, if enacted, amount to the end of the Great Republic as we have known it since Lincoln. Nor is it the

case in much of Europe, where the political centre is collapsing and identity politics is running rampant.

The persistent failing of British economic management is that the country invests too little, and consumes too much. The recent Stern II report by the London School of Economics says public and private capital formation has lagged behind the G7 average by 4.7 percentage points of GDP for three decades. The savings rate is half the OECD average.

The country has been living beyond its means with a chronic current account deficit. Its net international investment position is a trillion dollars in the red. The tax burden is the highest since the 1940s but little money is being used to raise the speed limit of the economy. It is being spent on transfers and welfare. Nations that do this fail over time.

Labour talks a good game on industrial strategy. It promises a "golden rule" to exempt public investment from spending limits. But it also has a long shopping list of party pieties that will crowd out all else. Sir Keir Starmer dropped his £28bn pledge for clean tech investment as soon as the plan drew political fire. He did not drop his pledges for social spending.

Rishi Sunak has quietly developed a hi-tech industrial strategy of sorts,

leveraging areas of strength where the UK is a world player. You can see it in nuclear fusion, ultra-fast compound semiconductors, and AI. He has backed gigafactory plants because without these we will not be able sell EV's in Europe under the trade deal.

The Prime Minister has not enjoyed the credit he deserves for these policies but they are too little to lift the UK out of its spiral of slow decline. Neither party is heeding the lessons of the US and China. Neither plans to lift public investment to world-class levels, or go big with a British version of the US Inflation Reduction Act.

The Stern II report calls for extra public investment of 1pc of GDP annually, sustained through thick and thin. I would push it even higher. To the extent that it is spent on projects that draw in private capital and pay for themselves with a fiscal multiplier above 1.0, this spending will lower the debt-to-GDP ratio over time.

Mr Sunak does not think in such terms, and Sir Keir is too scared of the bond vigilantes to do much beyond tinkering. The Truss episode taught Labour the wrong lesson.

My advice to Mr Sunak: ignore the siren voices, regain your composure, and accept the coming loss with dignity. You could still save an extra hundred seats if you go down with honour.

Thames Water debt talks on ice for election

By Jonathan Leake

TROUBLED Thames Water has been forced to put debt talks with its creditors on hold following Rishi Sunak's announcement of a general election – increasing the risk of a total collapse.

The company had been expected to progress talks with creditors about its £18bn debt pile – equivalent to £1,125 for each of its 16m customers.

Creditors to Thames Water Kemble Finance, the holding company for Britain's largest water utility, had appointed a legal team to oversee debt talks.

That process depends on Thames drawing up a business plan, which must

first be approved by Ofwat, the water regulator. Ofwat was scheduled to announce a draft decision on June 12 as part of its five-year review of bill-increase proposals from all the water companies, including Thames.

However, election rules mean government bodies are not allowed to make announcements that could be politicised, so the decision will now be delayed till after the July 4 polling day.

Thames's precarious financial position threatens to become a major political crisis for whoever wins the election.

The debt talk delays risk pushing Thames even deeper into the red, and so increase the risk of it failing com-

pletely in the autumn, potentially forcing a taxpayer-funded bailout.

Bosses have previously claimed the company has enough money to see it through the next 15 months. Thames is the UK's largest water company, providing water and sewerage across London and the Thames valley. Thames Water has asked Ofwat for permission to increase bills by 44pc to £608 a year to help raise £20bn by 2030.

Thames issued an update to its proposed business plan earlier this week, in the hope of gaining Ofwat's approval. Chris Weston, chief executive of Thames Water, said: "Our business plan focuses on our customers' priorities."

Biden seeks \$85k social media 'meme lord'

By James Titcomb

NOVEMBER'S US election between Joe Biden and Donald Trump will feature the two oldest presidential candidates in history, with both expected to struggle with younger voters.

How can they reach this key demographic? The Biden campaign is betting on memes.

The US President's re-election campaign team is hiring an internet meme expert to reach potential voters who do not pay attention to political news.

Mr Biden's campaign is seeking a "partner manager" for content and meme pages, according to a job advert

posted earlier this week. The role, which pays a salary of up to \$85,000 (£67,000), will involve "engaging the internet's top content and meme pages" from the campaign HQ in Delaware.

"The ideal candidate for this role is passionate about bringing political content to voters where they already are on the internet," the job advert states.

The partner manager will be tasked with forming relationships with internet personalities, popular podcasters and so-called "meme pages" in an attempt to promote President Biden's reelection bid.

Meme pages are accounts that typically post jokes or observations, often

lifted from other social media sites such as Twitter and Reddit, or viral images poking fun at news items or celebrities.

They can often attract millions of followers, some outstripping the president's own 17m Instagram followers.

The job advert has led commentators to refer to the job as a paid "meme lord" position. "Meme lord" is internet slang for someone who is skilled at both understanding and using memes.

The US president has said he is not a fan of social media himself, and his staff handle his online presence – in contrast to Mr Trump, who was known for spontaneous tweeting during his time in office.

Why voters do not feel better off under Sunak

Rising prices and higher mortgage costs threaten the Prime Minister's election hopes, writes *Tim Wallace*

Growth is going "gangbusters". Wages are surging. And inflation is back under control. Rishi Sunak knows good economic numbers when he sees them and has seized on signs of recovery to launch his election campaign.

The Prime Minister is particularly proud of the victory over inflation. He entered No10 at the peak of the cost of living crisis, shortly before inflation peaked at more than 11pc.

Sunak pledged to cut that in half in 2023, and sure enough inflation has tumbled. The latest figures show the rate of price rises stood at 2.3pc in April - effectively back to the Bank of England's 2pc target for the first time in almost three years.

Better still, average wages are growing faster than prices as the economy rebounds from recession. Britain is now growing at the joint-fastest rate in the G7.

Grant Fitzner, the chief economist at the Office for National Statistics (ONS), used the word "gangbusters" to describe the performance.

The typical family is becoming better off as wages rise, price pressures ease and the benefits of two cuts to the National Insurance rate hit people's pay packets. Pensioners are also doing well after being insulated from the cost of living crisis by the triple lock.

So why doesn't everyone feel better off? The reason is that prices are still rising and mortgage costs remain far higher than they were before the inflation crisis began. While wages are finally rising faster than prices, there is a lot of ground to make up and most of us are worse off compared with a few years ago.

The official target for inflation, given

by the Government to the Bank of England, is to keep consumer prices rising by 2pc per year. This is meant to ensure there is enough impetus for growth in the economy, preventing stagnation. In normal times, wages should roughly keep pace with inflation, ensuring living standards remain stable. But after a period of breakneck price rises, expenses are still much higher than they were a few years ago even as inflation cools.

In August 2021, the typical worker earned £544 per week in regular wages, before bonuses. Today, they receive £637, an increase of 17pc.

That is not so bad, one might think, but prices have risen faster. The consumer price index (CPI) has risen by more than 19pc since August 2021.

As a result, real earnings in March, adjusted for inflation and living costs, were 1.8pc lower than they were in August 2021, according to ONS figures.

On that basis, workers are £9 a week worse off compared to three years ago: their spending power has gone down, even as their monthly pay has gone up.

There are also taxes to consider. Here, the effects have been mixed, depending on your earnings.

This is because of the variety of changes: there have been threshold freezes - a classic stealth tax - but also cuts to the headline rate of employee National Insurance.

The bottom 40pc of earners and the top 10pc are paying more tax this year than in 2021, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies. In some cases, people are paying up to £500 more.

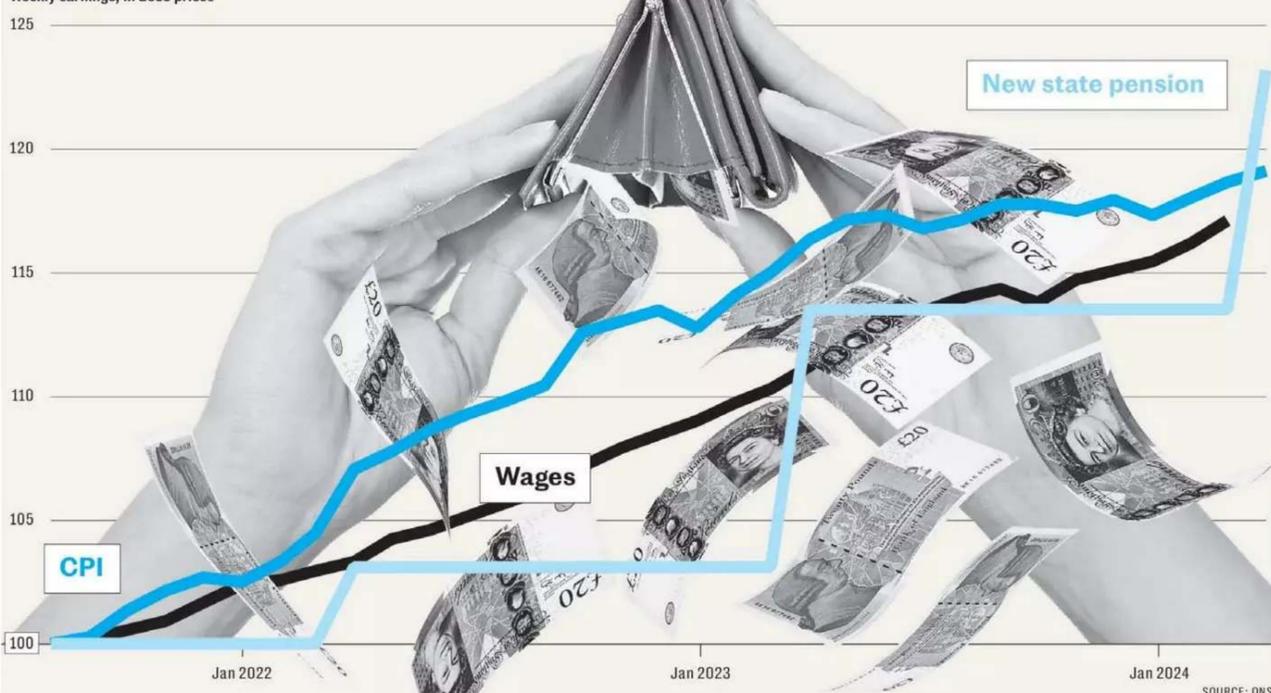
The remaining 50pc are paying less tax. Those who earn around £50,000 per year are the biggest beneficiaries of recent policy changes, which have saved them around £1,000 compared with 2021.

Pensioners are also doing well. They have benefited from the triple lock, which increases the state pension by the highest of inflation, average earnings or 2pc each April. This has in effect insulated them from the cost of living crisis: the state pension has risen by more than 23pc since August 2021, outstripping the 19pc rise in prices over the same period.

Another reason why some people

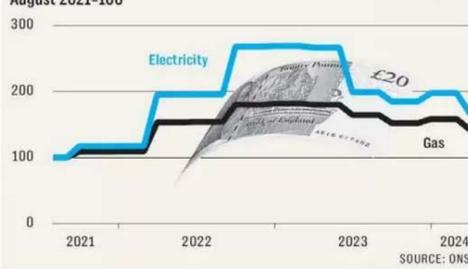
Prices have risen faster than pay

Weekly earnings, in 2015 prices



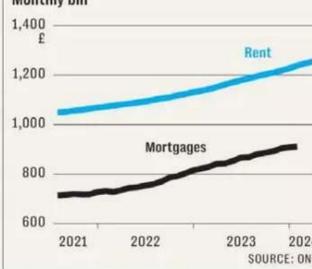
Household bills are higher than in 2021

August 2021=100



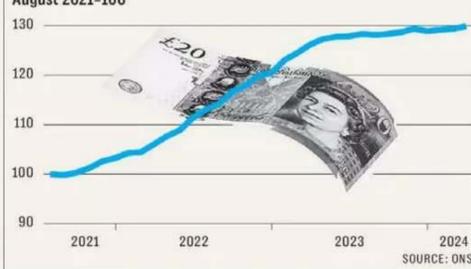
Housing costs are up sharply

Monthly bill



Food prices are up by almost one third

August 2021=100



Individual prices that people pay a lot of attention to remain elevated'

may not feel better off is because individual prices that people pay a lot of attention to remain elevated.

Household gas bills are still two-thirds higher than they were three years ago and electricity is up 42pc.

It is a similar story with petrol: a litre now costs £1.57 on average, down from the peak of £1.99, but still 20p above the £1.37 typically seen in August 2021.

In the supermarket aisles, some items are now cheaper than they were a year ago. Two pints of semi-skimmed milk costs £1.24, down 6p on the year. A standard 250g block of butter sells for £2.16, down 18p from April last year. A jar of jam is 4pc cheaper, and the price of a packet of frozen fish fingers has fallen by 6pc. But average food prices are still almost 30pc above where they were in August 2021. The jump in price for some items seems

particularly deranged. The price of olive oil, for instance, has more than doubled. A typical bottle now costs £8.40, according to the ONS. A kilogram of sugar costs £1.19, up more than 70pc in less than three years.

The headline inflation number that Sunak pointed to is also somewhat narrow. CPI only tracks products, but other costs have also increased. Housing is the most critical. Average mortgage payments have risen from £714 a month in August 2021 to £911, a rise of more than one-quarter.

Rents are also rising fast with the typical payment by tenants up almost one fifth to an average of £1,254 per month, according to the ONS.

Offering hope on housing costs before the election requires an interest rate cut from the Bank of England. This would lead to lower mortgage rates.

'Offering hope on housing costs requires an interest rate cut'

Since the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street was given operational independence in 1997, decisions on borrowing costs have been out of the Government's hands, precisely because it was considered dangerous to have politically motivated rate cuts before elections.

Now that inflation has dropped almost to the Bank's 2pc target, and with further falls expected, June's policy meeting might seem the perfect time to cut the base rate from its 16-year high of 5.25pc.

It would certainly reinforce the Sunak's case that the crisis is over and things are heading in the right direction. Yet with the benefits of a rebounding economy and falling inflation not yet totally apparent in people's pockets, the Prime Minister's strategy is a risky one.

An URGENT appeal to Daily Telegraph readers

In just **one day**, people can lose everything and become refugees...

MAKE TODAY THE DAY YOU DECIDE TO HELP.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, exists to protect refugees. The number of people needing protection is growing rapidly, leaving UNHCR's lifesaving humanitarian work seriously underfunded. Recent years have seen multiple emergencies where, in just one day, people's lives have changed forever as they were forced to flee their homes and become refugees.

On **24 February 2022** Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, displacing millions of people. Tatiana, from Kharkiv, describes the scene she woke to:

"We looked out the window and saw smoke, fire, explosions. In an hour or two there were tanks under our windows. We realised we had to leave but had nowhere to go. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where we were going."

On **6 February 2023**, a series of earthquakes killed over 55,000 people in Türkiye and Syria, and destroyed tens of thousands of homes. UNHCR teams on the ground sprang into action, providing items such as 31,600 tents, 45,000 sleeping bags and over 100,000 thermal blankets in Türkiye.

Just two months later, on **15 April 2023**, the escalation of conflict in Sudan saw millions forced to flee in fear of their lives. UNHCR's emergency response teams welcomed refugees at Sudan's borders, providing them with shelter and lifesaving essentials.



A UNHCR team member leads Rohingya refugees to safety after they were forced to flee their homes in Bangladesh to escape violence.

Türkiye/Syria and Sudan were amongst 43 emergencies declared in 2023. Many, such as Sudan, are continuing to force more people from their homes. That's why **UK for UNHCR is asking Daily Telegraph readers if you will make today, 24 May 2024, the day that you take action to help refugees.**

A gift of £96 today could provide a family of four with a lifesaving Emergency Rescue Kit containing the essentials they need to survive far from home.

When bombs are falling and bullets flying, people often escape with only the clothes on their backs. Your support today can ensure that the next day people are forced to flee, UNHCR can be there to provide the humanitarian aid that could save their lives.

£96 could help provide a family of four with a lifesaving Emergency Rescue Kit, containing essentials such as warm clothes, shoes, bottled water and high-energy food.



Give now at **unrefugees.org.uk/oneday-telegraph**

Call **0800 029 3883**, or fill in the form below

I would like to give: £96 £192 £288 Other £ _____

I enclose a cheque made payable to **UK for UNHCR** OR

I would like to make a donation by debit/credit card

Card no. _____ Expiry date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Tick here, if you don't want to receive an acknowledgement by post P24ODADT1

Title _____ First name _____ Last name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Provide your details below to receive updates by email and/or phone on the impact of your support and how you can donate and help in other ways.

Email _____

Phone _____

Please return this form along with your cheque to:

Freepost UK FOR UNHCR (you don't need a stamp)

Increase your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate

giftaid it

I would like UK for UNHCR to claim Gift Aid on this donation (currently 25p for each £1 donated), as well as any donations I make in the future and have made in the past four years to UK for UNHCR, until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand that council tax and VAT do not qualify. If your circumstances change or you have any questions, please contact our **Supporter Care Team** on **0800 029 3883** or email **supportercare@unrefugees.org.uk** The Gift Aid claimed will be used to fund the whole of UK for UNHCR's work.

Respecting your personal data: We will use your details to process your donation and to keep you up to date with our work, fundraising activities and other events. You can read more about how we use your data in our Privacy Policy unrefugees.org.uk/privacy-policy You can opt out of any communications at any time by contacting our **Supporter Care Team** using the details above.



Scan this QR code to donate online



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
United Kingdom for UNHCR

Markets

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Government securities

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
102.30	99.20	Treas 5% 25	100.03	-0.04	5.00	5.00
112.21	100.63	Treas 6% 28	107.46	-0.22	5.58	4.18
106.59	90.79	Treas 4% 32	100.82	-0.22	4.22	4.13
106.09	94.06	Treas 4% 36	98.98	-0.29	4.29	4.36
110.73	96.88	Treas 4% 38	102.70	-0.27	4.63	4.49

Index Linked Securities

385.22 371.32 Treas 2% 1L 24 384.79 +0.01 6.15 2.16

352.43 325.85 Treas 4% 1L 30 343.11 -0.45 1.20 4.02

243.64 239.45 Treas 2% 1L 35 246.54 -0.30 0.81 2.72

10-year Government Bonds

Yield% Spread vs Bunds Spread vs FTSE100

	Yield%	Spread vs Bunds	Spread vs FTSE100
France	3.07	-0.47	-1.42
Germany	2.60	-	-1.89
Japan	0.99	-1.61	-3.50
Great Britain	4.26	-1.66	-0.23
United States	4.49	-1.89	-

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 +2.52%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
559%	266%	Babcock Intl	557	+9%	0.3	80.7
1406%	883%	BAE Systems	1397	+23%	2.1	22.8
426%	292%	QinetiQ	424	+50%	1.9	15.3
446%	142%	Rolls-Royce	400%	+12%	-	17.5
183	146%	Seznam	170%	+2	1.3	22.7

Banks -0.34%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
216%	128%	Barclays	215	-3%	3.7	7.8
998%	278	Credit Bios	457	-4%	-	8.4
725%	572%	HSCB	691%	+1%	6.9	7.6
57%	39%	Lloyds Bk Grp	55%	-4%	4.9	7.3
329%	168	NatWest Group	307%	-6%	5.4	6.5
423%	142%	Rolls-Royce	400%	+2%	3.0	23.8
786	571	Standard Ch	775%	+2%	2.8	9.1

Beverages -1.31%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
3569%	2676	Diageo	2709%	-36	2.9	16.4

Chemicals -1.89%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
6394	4018	Croda Intl	4594	-109	2.4	37.5
1926%	1428%	Johnson Mat	1786	-21	4.3	30.5
1632	1152	Victrex	1296	-20	6.6	5.0

Construction +1.26%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
394%	291%	Balfour Beatty	367%	-%	3.1	10.4
582%	384%	Barratt Dev	506%	+7%	5.5	9.5
2898	1903	Belvoir	2714	+30	4.1	21.1
5360	3634	Berkeley Grp	5235	-	1.8	12.3
249	170	Booth H	206	+2	3.6	10.5

Oil & Gas +0.31%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
562%	384%	Barratt Dev	506%	+7%	5.5	9.5

Media +0.20%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
340	266%	CT UK Cap S & C	335	-1	3.7	35.1
95%	71	CT UK HighInc Ltd	95%	+4%	5.9	9.9
590	448%	Dunelm Intl	493	-2	2.0	62.5
742%	612%	Edinburgh Inv Tr	734	-	3.7	81.6
157%	120%	Edin Worldwide	143%	+4%	-	104
865%	682%	Europa Assets	90%	+%	6.5	16.3
1058	825%	F&C Inv Trust	1024	-	1.4	112.6
548%	473%	Fidelity Asian V	528	-2	2.7	58.7
246	181%	Fidelity China Sp Sits	230	-4%	2.7	257
412%	311%	Fidelity Euro Tot	402	-1%	2.1	41.6
187	151	Fidelity Japan Tot	171%	-3%	-	133
311%	252	Fidelity Sp V	307%	-1	3.1	33.8
920	788%	Fidelity Growth	856	+1	2.3	92.6
168%	128%	GMI Small Co Trust	165%	-1	1.4	18.4
177	136	Hand High Inc	167	-	6.3	183
178	148%	Hand Intl Inc	167	+%	4.6	191
877	626	Hand Smaller Co	875	-2	3.0	100.1
227%	169	Hand Op	224%	+2	2.0	258
2225	1590	Herold Inv	2200	-	-	248.8
504	348%	HighCapital	482%	+1%	1	508
151%	111	HIC Infrastructure	+120%	-3%	6.8	157
1276	1046	IGC Enterprise Tot	1206	-6	2.7	191
748	623	JPm ClearView	736	+7	3.1	77.4
110%	84%	JPm Eur G&I	108%	+2	4.0	120
553	435	JPm Japan S&I	554	+1	3.1	56.5
337	283%	JPm Jpn SmCo G&I	282	-4	3.9	33.0
729%	551%	Land Secs	645%	+5	6.1	6.1
131%	103%	Lancashire Hldg	129%	+%	4.9	149
254	179	Majidie	242	-1	3.1	27.0
399	294%	Mtn Currie Port	379	+5	1.1	38.2
245%	177%	Mercantile Inv Tr	224%	+2	3.8	12.2
593	476	Merchants Tr	582	-5	4.9	59.6
1218	880	Monks	1182	+10	0.3	130.7
904	766%	Murray Income	875	-2	4.3	98.1
269%	218%	Murray Intl	252	-2	4.6	27.9
64%	52	Northern VCT	54%	-4%	5.7	59
1823%	1302%	Northern VCT	84%	-	5.3	9.2
60%	54	Nhn Venture	57%	-	6.3	63
390	338	Pacific Assets	376	+2	1.1	41.5
336	245%	Pantheon	206%	-	-	488
149	87	PrimerMortGib	126	-	7.1	12.5
2030	1696	RIT Cap Ptnrs	1650	-36	2.1	251.1
290	260%	Ruffer Inv Pnt	276	+%	1.3	29.0
454	382	Schroder Asian TR	454	+2	5.5	42.5
542%	450	Scot American	512	-7	2.8	56.8
902%	622%	Scot Mortgage	900	+3	0.5	96.4
145%	101%	Shafterbury Capital	139	-3	2.3	1.1
1451	1182%	Smithson Inv Tot	1400	-6	-	1584
227	207	STG Global Income	220	-1	3.0	22.5
167%	140%	Templeton Em Mt	162	-1	3.1	189
345	253	TR Property	329	-3%	4.7	36.5
134	121	UHL Fin ZDP 2024	132	-	-	136
120	105	UHL Fin ZDP 2026	116%	+%	-	136
241	203%	Ullico Emerg	228	-1	3.8	27.7
270	209	Witan	262%	+3	2.4	28.4
429%	318	Worldwide Health Tr	347%	-1	0.9	38.7
355%	286	Worldwide Health Tr	347%	-1	0.9	38.7

Healthcare -1.24%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
371%	306%	Haleon	328%	-2%	1.8	28.9
1284	887	Smith & Neph	982%	-32%	3.1	41.4

Household goods -0.47%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
2321	1034	Burberry	1051	+2	5.8	14.2
123%	24%	McBride	120	+3	-	-18.2
199	81%	PZ Cousins	109%	-2%	4.8	12.6
2489%	682%	XP Power	1566	-86	1.1	-34.5

Information technology +0.11%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
370%	234%	Aptitude Sftware	340	-7	1.6	41.1
1285	839%	Sage Op	1078%	+2%	1.8	52.0
205	79%	Sprint	185%	-%	1.7	54.9

Insurance -1.33%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
238	134%	abrdn	156	-3%	8.4	-
2870	2010	Admiral	2705	-51	3.8	24.3
501%	386	Aviva	482%	-13%	6.9	12.8
699%	485%	Beazley	666%	-%	2.1	5.3
240%	132%	DirectLifeIns	200%	-1	2.0	12.6
1277%	926	Hiscox	115%	-4	2.6	2.1
690	525	Lancashire Hldg	614	-6	2.6	5.8
259	203%	Legal & General	245%	-3%	8.3	33.4
497	436%	Phoenix	496	-9	10.6	-35.9
1188%	684%	Prudential	768%	-13%	2.1	15.7
1185%	353%	St. James's Place	488	-22%	4.9	-271.1

Engineering / Industrial -0.26%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
89%	63%	Coats Group	87%	+%	2.6	31.7
910	212	Cropper J	355	-	2.0	65.7
7300	4200	Goodwin	6260	-130	1.8	30.3
1911	1429	IMI	1880	-12	1.5	20.5
1739%	1291	Mondi	71%	-1	4.9	17.2
76%	48%	Seymour	75%	+1	4.9	10.2
1776%	1517%	Smiths Grp	1733	-4	2.4	26.5
41%	260%	Smith (DS)	376%	-%	1.8	4.8
3954	2529	Smurfit Kappa	3830	-24	3.4	15.3
11480	7900	Spirax	9130	-50	1.8	36.6
2200%	1652%	Weir	2134	-26	1.8	24.2

Food producers +0.76%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
2765	1804%	Ass Brit Fds	2714	-26	2.0	20.2
2300	2065	Coca-Cola HBC	2768	-8	2.9	18.8
4480	3136	Cranwick	4400	-30	2.0	20.9
957	614	Hilton Food	937	+5	3.4	-3.1
101	48	REA Hldgs	88%	+1	-	23.4
4357	3680%	Unilever	4312	-37	3.4	19.6

Gas & Water -4.35%

52 week High Low (p) Stock Price (p) +/- Yld P/E

52 week High	52 week Low	(p) Stock	Price (p)	+/-	Yld	P/E
173%	112%	Centrica	143%	-3%	2.8	2.0
810	522%	Pepono Grp	618			

First-quarter growth rate is a sure sign that the economy has finally turned the corner

ROBERT STEPHENS
QUESTOR
IHT PORTFOLIO

The country is no longer in recession, inflation is down and interest rate cuts are likely soon, boosting operating conditions for a wide range of companies

Read Questor's rules of investment before you follow our tips: [telegraph.co.uk/go/questorrules](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/go/questorrules)

The "green shoots" of economic recovery have finally made their long-awaited appearance.

Although there is a very long road ahead, with the full impact of previous interest rate rises yet to be felt due to time lags, the first quarter's growth rate of 0.6pc is highly encouraging.

It means that the economy is no longer in recession. And with inflation down from 8.7p to 2.3pc, the prospect of interest rate cuts is firmly on the near-term horizon. That should have a positive impact on GDP growth, after time lags have passed, and provide improved operating conditions for a wide range of UK-focused companies.

For example, Brooks Macdonald's financial performance is highly dependent on fees it generates from funds under management that ebb and flow with changes in asset prices. The wealth management firm stands to benefit from a stronger economy that creates improved trading conditions that lead to a rising stock market and greater fee income for the firm.

A looser monetary policy that positively catalyses the stock market is also likely to prompt greater risk-taking among investors. This should encourage them to buy, rather than sell, risky assets and further boost the firm's funds under management and fee income.

Indeed, it could be argued that Brooks Macdonald is akin to a geared

Brooks Macdonald
HOLD

Wealth management firm's stock is well placed to benefit from expected interest rate cuts that will boost the wider economy – and investor sentiment

play on the stock market. This partly explains why its share price performance has been disappointing since the company was added to our inheritance tax (IHT) portfolio in August 2018. Since then, it has produced a 1pc capital loss as the UK stock market has come under sustained pressure amid a period of rapid monetary policy tightening that has prompted a material slowdown in the rate of GDP growth.

However, it has significantly outperformed the FTSE AIM All-Share index, which is down 27pc over the same period. Our holding has also paid dividends amounting to 19pc of our notional purchase price so its total return stands at 18pc.

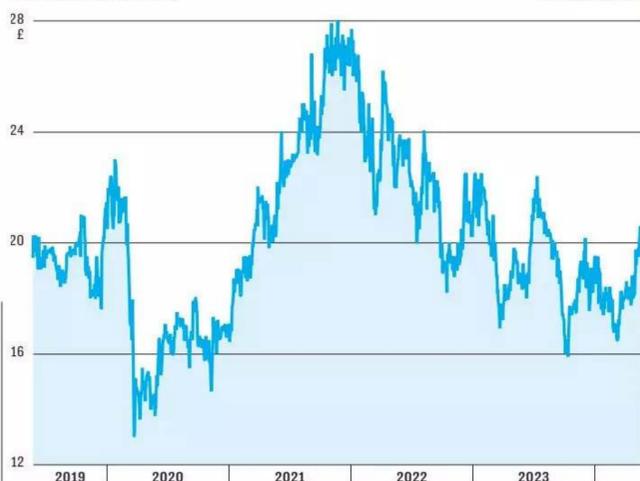
The company's latest quarterly update showed that funds under management rose by 2pc. This, though, was due to the impact of positive investment performance that boosted funds under management by 3.7pc, with net outflows of 1.7pc recorded. In Questor's view, both measures are likely to improve in the long run as interest rates fall, the economy's growth rate gathers pace and investor sentiment becomes more bullish.

Brooks Macdonald also reported in its quarterly update that it continues to realise cost savings prompted by organisational changes. It remains on track to meet financial guidance for

Brooks Macdonald

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Key numbers



- ◆ Market value: £327m
- ◆ Turnover (Jun 2023): £124m
- ◆ Pre-tax profits (Jun 2023): £22m
- ◆ Yield (Jun 2023): 3.8pc
- ◆ Most recent year's dividend: 75p
- ◆ Net debt (Jun 2023): £53m net cash
- ◆ Return on capital (Jun 2023): 11pc
- ◆ Cash conversion ratio (Jun 2023): 117pc
- ◆ P/E ratio (Jun 2023): 13.1

the full year, with the market consensus forecasting a rather modest 4pc rise in earnings.

Trading on a price-to-earnings ratio of 13.1, the stock offers fair value for money on a long-term view. Alongside a dividend yield of 3.8pc, its total return prospects remain relatively upbeat.

Certainly, elevated political risk could prompt heightened share price volatility in the short run.

The stock also requires further patience as the impact of interest rate cuts on the economy's performance and investor sentiment take time to filter through. But as it is well placed to become a beneficiary of this process, it deserves more time to deliver on its potential.

Update: Inspects

Another of our IHT portfolio holdings, Inspects, recently released full-year results. They indicated that the eyewear designer and manufacturer

‘Trading on a price-to-earnings ratio of 13.4, the stock offers fair value for money and its returns prospects look upbeat’

experienced a slight increase in revenue, versus the prior year, and its £203m in annual sales was a record.

It generated pre-tax profits of £0.2m, versus a £7.7m pre-tax loss in the previous year, and was able to reduce net debt by around 11pc. Its net debt-to-equity ratio is roughly 40pc.

Since being added to our IHT portfolio in July 2022, the company's shares have fallen 71pc. This represents a 63 percentage point underperformance of the FTSE Aim All-Share index over the same period, which is thoroughly disappointing.

Given that the prospects for consumer-related stocks are likely to strengthen as interest rates fall and the economy's performance improves, in the UK and elsewhere, the stock will remain in our portfolio.

The company's price-to-book ratio of around 0.7 highlights its low market valuation and scope for a recovery, should its financial performance continue to improve.

Boost for Rolls as long-haul travellers return to the skies

Engineering giant Rolls-Royce received a major boost after the key long-haul travel market recovered to pre-Covid levels in the first four months of the year.

Flying hours for large jet engines covered by its lucrative long-term service agreements returned to 100pc of 2019 levels between January and April, up from an average of 88pc last year, the Derby-based company said yesterday.

Flying hours are a key metric for Rolls as the bulk of its profits come from servicing the large turbines used to power inter-continental jets. More hours in the air mean more maintenance and hence more revenue.

Rolls expects 2024's flying hours to be as much as 10pc up on 2019 levels.

Morgan Stanley's chairman to stand down at end of year

The chairman of Morgan Stanley has said he will step down at the end of the year as investors consider whether the bank can keep generating bumper profits amid fierce competition with Goldman Sachs.

James Gorman, who announced his plan at the bank's annual shareholder meeting yesterday, helped rescue the lender from the brink of failure after the global financial crisis. He is credited with transforming it into a wealth management powerhouse.

The announcement came after giving up the chief executive position to Ted Pick in January, which he said on Thursday had been a "successful transition". Mr Pick has predicted a boom in mergers and acquisitions that he said would last three to five years.

HSBC fined by FCA for failing to treat customers fairly

HSBC has been fined £6.2m for failing to treat customers fairly, the Financial Conduct Authority said yesterday.

The regulator imposed the penalty because in 2017 and 2018 the bank failed to carry out proper affordability assessments and sometimes took disproportionate action when people fell into arrears.

HSBC has paid £185m in compensation to 1.5m customers.

The FCA said the costs HSBC had incurred "should be a warning to all lenders that they need to understand their customers' circumstances so as not to make a bad situation worse".

An HSBC spokesman said: "We have invested in our processes since these matters came to light and are pleased to have resolved these historic issues."

'Romantasy' novels boost Harry Potter publisher's profits

The publisher behind Harry Potter has posted record profits after a jump in demand for "romantasy" novels.

Bloomsbury reported pre-tax profits of £49m in the year to the end of February, an increase of almost 60pc on the previous 12 months. Revenues increased by a third from £264m to £343m.

The business, which is best known for JK Rowling's Harry Potter series, has enjoyed booming trading in the past few years owing to the rise of the romantic fantasy genre.

Bosses hailed "extraordinary" demand for novels by Sarah J Maas, whose latest title *House of Flame and Shadow* was released in January and became a global number one bestseller.

Investec sets aside £30m over car finance mis-selling

UK lender Investec has set aside £30m for a car finance mis-selling scandal, making it the latest bank to book a provision over the review.

The FTSE 250 group, one of the UK's largest challenger lenders, took the accounting hit to deal with the cost of dealing with the review and any possible redress schemes.

The Financial Conduct Authority is investigating discretionary commissions paid to second-hand car dealers over fears customers were mis-sold loans. It could set up a compensation scheme after delivering a verdict on the review due in September. Ruth Leas, the chief executive, said: "We've included the litigation costs, operational costs, legal costs, and an estimation for redress."

Goldman plans to move Middle East HQ to Saudi Arabia

Goldman Sachs is preparing to put its Middle Eastern headquarters in Saudi Arabia after the kingdom told multinational companies move there if they want a chance of winning government contracts.

The Saudi government is also offering multinationals who comply a 30-year exemption from corporation tax and easier access to visas.

Goldman is the first Wall Street bank to take a step towards taking up Saudi Arabia's offer, Bloomberg reported.

The measure is part of the kingdom's strategy to make it one of the top 15 economies and diversify from oil. It plans to lift private sector participation in the economy to 65pc of GDP.

Goldman Sachs was approached for comment.

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Professor Barry Kemp

Egyptologist whose excavations helped to dispel myths about the 'Christ-like' pharaoh Akhenaten

PROFESSOR BARRY KEMP, who has died the day after his 84th birthday, was an eminent Egyptologist who directed the excavations at the site in Middle Egypt known as Amarna, the city founded by the mysterious pharaoh Akhenaten in around 1344 BC, and about which he wrote *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti - Amarna and its people* (2012).

In about 1353 BC a pharaoh called Amenhotep IV decided that everyone should worship one god, the Aten, represented as the sun's disc, and changed his name to Akhenaten. Then he moved his court from Thebes, for centuries the seat of pharaonic power, 175 miles north to a new capital, Akhetaten (named Amarna by 19th-century archaeologists), on a previously uninhabited shelf of desert above the eastern bank of the river Nile. Akhenaten ordered more than 20,000 people to move to the site from elsewhere in Egypt and embarked on a massive building programme. Palaces, temples and government buildings were constructed at an astonishing pace. One place of worship, the Great Aten Temple, was half a mile long.

Within a few years, Akhenaten's desert city became home to somewhere between 30,000 and 50,000 people. Eventually the pharaoh would ban the traditional gods altogether, making Isis, Osiris and up to 2,000 other deities redundant.

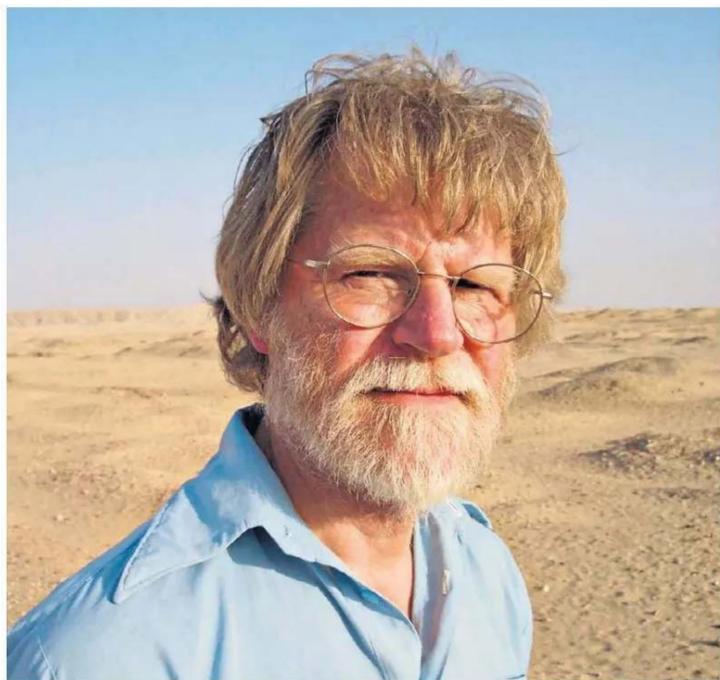
Akhenaten's revolution was not only religious but artistic. For more than a thousand years, representations of people in Egyptian art had been rigid and idealised. Under Akhenaten they became more individualised and informal. In sculptured reliefs and paintings the pharaoh was portrayed with his famously beautiful wife, Nefertiti, in unusually intimate and natural poses; one scene even features the couple about to get into bed together. In portraits they were depicted kissing and caressing their children.

But Amarna was occupied for less than two decades. Not long after Akhenaten's death in about 1336 BC it was almost completely abandoned. Subsequently, images of Akhenaten - carved all over Egypt - were systematically destroyed by his successors. The campaign of obliteration was so successful that Akhenaten disappeared from history for 31 centuries - until his name was rediscovered by archaeologists in the mid-19th century.

Egyptologists had traditionally focused on pharaohs, priests and other elites, and Akhenaten proved particularly fascinating, some viewing him as a Christ-like figure, a philosopher and prophet of the true God before his time. By the time Kemp was a student at the University of Liverpool, however, there was a new emphasis on investigating the lives of ordinary people.

Amarna, the best-preserved capital from ancient Egypt, was the perfect site for such a study, being, as Kemp put it, "essentially a replicated mud village containing a few isolated monuments". And Kemp did much to dispel the saintly myth around its founder.

One obvious reason why Amarna was abandoned so quickly was that the site was ill-suited for a settlement in the first place. There was no easily available fresh water; crops could not grow there; local well water



would have been too saline for drinking, so residents would have been forced to haul water from wells further away or from the Nile. "The danger of being an absolute ruler," Kemp observed drily, "is that no one dares tell you that what you have just decreed is not a good idea."

Meanwhile, although carvings and hieroglyphs from the site often emphasise themes of abundance and prosperity, excavations of burial sites by Kemp and others tell a story of child labour, severe malnutrition, bone malformation and early death.

They also tell a story of people alienated from Akhenaten's cult of the Aten. At a cemetery where workers who erected Akhenaten's palaces and temples were

Kemp and, right, Akhenaten and Nefertiti depicted with their children under the solar disc of Aten: Kemp spent many more years digging through the city of Amarna than Akhenaten had spent building it



buried in shallow graves, excavations found numerous amulets and votive objects depicting popular minor deities interred as grave goods, but not a single representation of the Aten, nor mention of Akhenaten on finger rings or scarabs.

Beneath the surface, Kemp argued, the people worshipped their old gods, in spite of official diktats demanding otherwise: "Atenism offered little to people who wanted the comfort of a god who could be approached by anyone, even in their own home. Akhenaten's message was just too austere to gather widespread support." After Akhenaten's death there was nobody to uphold his religious revolution.

Tall and softly spoken, with a full beard, Kemp spent many more years digging

through the city than Akhenaten had spent building it. During that time he lived for much of every winter and spring in a basic dig house located on the southern edge of the site.

In 1996 he enjoyed an amusing diversion from the normal routine of excavation when he and Delwen Samuel, an archaeobotanist, worked with the brewers Scottish and Newcastle to brew an ale according to a recipe inferred from sediment from old jars found in a brewery housed inside the Sun Temple of Nefertiti. The beverage, reported *The New York Times*, was "slightly cloudy with a golden hue" and according to Delwen Samuel, was "very rich, very malty and has a flavour that reminds you a little of chardonnay".

Although his main interest was in the ordinary people of ancient Egypt, Kemp worked tirelessly to save the "elite" temple and palace sites at Amarna from pressures of environmental degradation and population growth, carrying out restoration work to protect them from further decay.

At the time of his death he was tackling the re-excavation of the enormous Great Aten Temple, threatened by the expansion of a modern cemetery.

Barry John Kemp was born on May 14 1940. After graduating in Egyptology from the University of Liverpool in 1962, he was appointed an assistant lecturer at the University of Cambridge, where he rose to Professor of Egyptology in 2005 and trained generations of Egyptologists and archaeologists. He was a Fellow of Wolfson College from 1990 to 2007.

From 1977 to 2008 Kemp directed the survey and archaeological excavations at Amarna for the Egypt Exploration Society. In 2008 he was appointed a senior fellow of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at Cambridge. From then on he continued and expanded his work at Amarna, funded by private donations to the Amarna Project, which he had established, working in association with the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt.

Kemp was a prolific writer. His *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation* (1989, now in its third edition) remains a core text of university courses. In *Think Like an Egyptian: 100 Hieroglyphs* (2005), he observed that, contrary to popular belief, Egyptian hieroglyphic writing was not like "a piece of cinema or a strip cartoon", most hieroglyphs requiring the mental substitution of concepts quite different from the image.

In *How to Read the Egyptian Book of the Dead* (2007), he sought to explore, through an analysis of ancient Egyptian spells designed to overcome the dangers lurking in the Otherworld, how the Egyptians viewed the relationship between the individual and the divine.

Ancient Egypt: All That Matters (2015) was a lively account of why and how ancient Egypt was able to thrive with such stability for such a long time.

Kemp was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1992 and was appointed CBE in 2011 for services to archaeology, education and international relations in Egypt.

Barry Kemp, born May 14 1940, died May 15 2024

Hugh Jenkins

Manager of Coal Board pension funds who clashed with Scargill

HUGH JENKINS, who has died aged 90, was one of the City of London's most powerful investors as director-general of the National Coal Board's pension funds and chairman of the Prudential's investment arm.

Originally a property specialist, Jenkins - sometimes known in the Square Mile as "Hugh the Coal" for his Welsh origins - was not yet 40 when he was promoted in 1973 to take charge of the portfolio of equities, bonds and real estate interests that funded miners' pensions.

As markets crashed later that year, he was the youngest key player in the drama of Wednesday December 19, when bankers and investment institutions were closeted overnight in the Bank of England under orders from Governor Gordon Richardson to save Cedar Holdings, a "secondary bank" in which NCB held shares but whose imminent failure threatened a domino collapse across the City.

Acutely conscious of his duty to protect pensioners' interests, Jenkins had "an overwhelming feeling that we should not be putting good money after bad". But in the early hours, after stormy negotiations, he agreed to join a £72 million support package to which Barclays and other lenders had committed.

Buoyed by that breakthrough, Richardson and his deputy Jasper Hollom - "remarkable for their sangfroid," said Jenkins - launched the Bank of England's "lifeboat" scheme, marshalling City forces to sustain other vulnerable lenders through the crisis.

An observer noted Jenkins's "dark Celtic good looks", describing him as "formidable, strong-minded... and endowed with native wisdom; woe betide any person who disagreed with him without having done his homework... and woe betide any person who attempted to persuade or dissuade him without solid argument."

That reputation made Jenkins a force to be reckoned with in innumerable corporate deals in which NCB had an interest. It also helped him defeat a campaign by Arthur Scargill, the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, to prevent the pension funds investing in overseas companies and oil and gas ventures that might compete with coal.

Hugh Jenkins, born November 9 1933, died March 7 2024



Nicknamed 'Hugh the Coal'

A 1984 High Court ruling confirmed that the fund managers' duty was to maximise returns for their beneficiaries rather than follow any political agenda. Scargill and other union officials duly stood down as trustees of the funds.

By the time Jenkins left the NCB in 1985 its funds had grown under his stewardship to £6.4 billion - and no City investor carried more personal clout.

Hugh Royston Jenkins was born in Port Talbot on November 9 1933 to Hubert Jenkins, a railway worker, and his wife Violet, née Aston. Educated at Llanelli grammar school, he qualified as a chartered surveyor and did national service with the Royal Artillery before starting his professional career as a valuer for London County Council. He became assistant controller of the Coal Board's property interests in 1962, rising to managing director in 1968.

Jenkins denied that the row with Scargill had been a factor in his surprising decision, after resigning from NCB, to take charge in Los Angeles of the US interests of Heron Corporation, the property and financial services empire of his friend Gerald Ronson. But he did admit that distance from London soon made him feel like "a remittance man": he returned in 1986 to become investment director of Allied Dunbar and, from 1989 to 1995, chairman of Prudential Portfolio Investors.

He was also chairman of the electrical manufacturer Thorn, and a director of Rank Organisation, Johnson Matthey and the pension funds of IBM and Unilever.

Hugh Jenkins was appointed CBE in 1996. He married first, in 1956, Jennifer Hawkins; the marriage was dissolved and he married secondly, in 1988, Beryl Kirk, née Barnes, who survives him.

Pat Buckley

Turbulent 'independent Catholic' priest who ministered to Bobby Sands and came out as gay

BISHOP PAT BUCKLEY, who has died aged 72, was a self-styled independent Catholic priest. The Church described Buckley's episcopal consecration as "valid but not licit". To his fans, he was an Irish rebel who ministered to the excluded and humiliated the hierarchy. To his critics, he was a publicity-hungry hypocrite who, in 2013, was found guilty of conducting sham marriages.

Buckley smelt a conspiracy and reported on his blog - infamous as an exchange for clerical gossip - that before proceedings began, "a very senior RC cleric met a very senior policeman in a Belfast Indian restaurant." He saw himself as Christ pursued by the Pharisees.

Patrick Buckley was born in Tullamore, Co Offaly, Ireland, on May 2 1952, to Jim, a factory worker and union official, and Josephine. He was one of 17 children of whom 11 survived to adulthood.

Not cut out for school, something he blamed on the psychological stress of growing up poor, Buckley was determined to become a priest, and entered Clonliffe seminary, Dublin, at the age of 18. It was, he recalled, a "virtual prison" and Buckley was considered a trouble-maker.

Ordained at St John's College, Waterford, in 1976, he served two unhappy curacies in Cardiff - followed by a period on the dole, volunteering and studying for a degree in social science (awarded by Queen's University, Belfast, in 1989).

He was told he would never find a parish willing to take him, but a sympathiser secured him a curacy at St Peter's Cathedral, west Belfast, at the height of the Troubles, where Buckley was "transformed" by the deprivation and violence. He told a journalist that he was called to give the last rites to a suspected IRA member who had been shot in the street. As Buckley accompanied him in the ambulance, they were stopped by British troops; the priest and paramedic were forced to lie on the ground while they listened to the patient struggling for breath.

"He's dying," said Buckley. "That's the idea, mate," replied the soldier. He arrived at the hospital dead.

Buckley organised a residents' association, started a campaign against joyriding and scandalised his fellow clerics by throwing blue overalls over his clerical garb to clear rubbish.

Perhaps the final straw was his decision to minister to Bobby Sands, the hunger striker, at the Maze Prison - even, against orders, to



Buckley in 2006 at his house in Larne: having won squatters rights, he renamed it 'The Oratory'

attend his funeral. The priests in his house refused to share meals with him. A battle of wills arose between Buckley and Bishop (later Cardinal) Cahal Daly, who reportedly told him: "When I look out into the ocean of priests, I don't want to see your head sticking up."

Daly relocated Buckley to Kilkeel in County Down, an area of such sectarian tension that loyalists intimidated Mass attendees with guns. One evening, during a parish disco, Buckley was called to the door by men in balaclavas who demanded protection money. He refused and escaped across a field. Local Protestants came to offer sympathy and invited Buckley to attend their churches.

Daly next moved him to Larne, where he not only visited a branch of Ian Paisley's church - the minister of which reasoned that if he were to serve all sinners, this must surely include Catholic priests - but also spoke out against teaching Catholic children separately from Protestants, openly contradicting Daly's position.

It was as if the two men were re-litigating the Reformation. Daly believed acceptance of authority meant obedience to Church teachings and structure; Buckley saw it as obedience to one's conscience, a theme he would expound upon in a growing volume of letters, columns and interviews naming and shaming any cleric who fell short of his standards (including Daly himself).

RTE footage from the period captures Buckley knocking out another missive at his typewriter, hammering the machine as if, too, had done him some injustice.

In 1986 the bishop called Buckley in and informed him that his time at Larne was over. Buckley refused to go. Thus began a war of attrition between cleric and church. Buckley lost a case against unfair dismissal - although he made history by daring to bring it - but won "squatters rights" in 2012 to remain in his Larne house for good. He grandly renamed it "The Oratory".

From this pebble-dashed Vatican, he launched a ministry aimed at others who felt abandoned by the Church, offering to marry divorcees; Catholics to Protestants; later to bless gay unions (he was spotted socialising with the famous Belfast transvestite Titty von Tramp).

Buckley argued for letting women be priests and that priests should be allowed to marry. He set up a community for clerical housekeepers. In 1989 he was elected to Larne Borough Council as an independent, but lost the seat in 1993.

In 1999, aware that a story was about to be published about his sexuality, he came out as gay - breaking the news to his mother on a tour of Lourdes. In 2010 he married his boyfriend, Eduardo Yango, a 32-year-old from the Philippines. His sexual awakening was covered in his memoir *A Sexual Life, a Spiritual Life* (2004), one of four books that

met with mixed success. In 1998 Buckley was ordained a bishop by Dr Michael Cox, another renegade Catholic who had also ordained the singer Sinead O'Connor.

The official photo featured Buckley in full Roman regalia: one of the ironies of his stubborn vocation was that although he scorned the Catholic hierarchy, he passionately asserted the legitimacy of his own title and enjoyed wearing the vestments, even if they did not always suit the surroundings.

In 2000, the *People* newspaper reported that he married a priest who had eloped with a woman parishioner betrothed to another man - the ceremony conducted at 7am in a hotel near Belfast airport. There was no family present, just "staff from a downmarket tabloid newspaper that had paid a five figure sum to witness the event".

In 2013 Buckley appeared in court accused of conducting sham marriages for Bengali immigrants who claimed to have fallen in love with girls from Portugal, a service for which he received £300 to £350 a time, plus expenses.

The judge praised his charity work and suspended three years of his three-and-a-half year sentence out of sympathy for his long list of physical and mental ailments: the public discovered that at some point in his colourful career, Buckley had contracted HIV. But this was a serious crime "for which you obtained a financial reward," concluded the judge. "The loss of your reputation is bound to hit you hard."

Shorn of his Messianic image, Buckley retreated into running a muckraking blog that received numerous complaints and was briefly taken down. Although he claimed to be detailing the sexual hypocrisy of the Church, the clerics he outed as gay found it bizarre that a man who was himself gay was happy to throw them to the wolves.

He formed an unexpected alliance with homophobes to do so, providing a forum for people who frequented gay bars in hopes of spotting a priest. Revenge on Daly was served cold: Buckley declared him to be a repressed homosexual. But between the title-tattle, his faith remained sincere.

Speaking to a newspaper before his death - sitting in his kitchen in Spiderman pyjamas - he said: "I feel I've beaten the Catholic Church on my own terms. I challenged them as they challenged me... Their problem with me was that I was never afraid."

Bishop Pat Buckley, born May 2 1952, died May 17 2024

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Television & Radio

Television review Neil McCormick



Bittersweet film mixes bad vibes and good vibrations



Let's go surfin' now: The Beach Boys at Paradise Cove, California in August 1962

There is something ominous about the opening of Disney+'s slick documentary about classic US pop band **The Beach Boys**. Perhaps it is the disjunction between the sounds of the young Wilson brothers with cousin Mike Love and neighbour Al Jardine singing sweet harmonies to a nostalgic 1960s montage with the sudden intrusion of gaudily lit concert footage from a stadium in 1976.

"Would you please welcome... America's band!" roars a presenter as a group of middle-aged, overweight, scruffily bearded men in loud shirts shuffle on stage, looking confused and fretful. Only Love seems to be having a good time, skinny and glittery, leaping about bare-chested in a sailor's cap.

Cut to a talking-head shot of the 83-year-old singer, baseball cap pulled down tight, face frozen behind clipped white goatee. A screen credit describes him as The Cousin, as if introducing a gangster in a Scorsese Mafia biopic. "There's definitely been ups and downs," growls the unsmiling Love.

The Beach Boys are a fascinating subject but you have to ask which narrative of "America's band" would Disney dare (or care) to tell? Would this officially sanctioned film offer a rose-tinted celebration of a handsome Californian family exploding the parameters of popular music? Or

might it dig deep into the strained saga of misfit brothers managed by their abusive father (Murry Wilson) who became trapped in an image of perpetual youth that stunted personal and artistic growth, splitting into factions while their brilliant leader Brian Wilson's mental health disintegrated and their pin-up drummer Dennis Wilson befriended serial killer Charles Manson?

Perhaps predictably, Disney tries to have its cake and eat it. The tragedies and ironies are not glossed over (albeit there is no mention of Dennis, their only actual surfing member, who became an alcoholic and drowned aged 39, in 1983). We hear studio recordings of Murry berating his sons, while Brian's mental health issues are a constant presence, acknowledged by Brian himself in archive footage ("I did LSD and it totally tore my head off," he chuckles in an interview conducted while lying in bed, where he apparently spent much of the late 1960s). Yet the tone is almost relentlessly upbeat and reverential, drawing on glorious music and brilliantly edited archive footage to put a positive spin on events.

By the mid-1960s, the Beach Boys had effectively divided into two, with sweet-natured guitarist Carl Wilson (who died of cancer in 1998) leading a live touring band, while Brian stayed

in Los Angeles writing and producing their astonishing, groundbreaking albums. Much effort is made to emphasise a contrived rivalry with the Beatles, glossing over the reality that it was Brian's productions that stirred the competitive instincts of Paul McCartney. The rest of the band were never in the Beatles' league, which still seems to rankle.

The Beach Boys' astonishing rise was followed by precipitous creative decline as their record company, the public and the band themselves failed to align with the erratic Brian's dazzling musical ambitions. Footage of The Who at Monterey Festival (after the Beach Boys had pulled out) is potently contrasted with Love dressed as Captain Haddock leading a goofy grinning sailor band on a corny TV show performing *California Girls* to bikini-clad young women. The Beach Boys' fortunes rose again only after Capitol Records released the *Endless Summer* compilation in 1974, embracing their harmonic past as purveyors of an idealised American dream of sleek cars, beautiful girls and blue-eyed boys.

There is something fascinatingly graceless about the hard-eyed Love, who still leads a touring version of the Beach Boys with no other original members and can't quite contain a lingering grievance about the way Brian's compositional genius was exalted above his own modest lyric writing efforts. (Wilson spent four months and tens of thousands of dollars recording *Good Vibrations*. Love made up lyrics in a car on the way to the vocal session.) As is so often the case, it all ended in lawsuits. Love visibly wrestles to control his emotions as he admits he doesn't "talk much" to Brian anymore.

The Disneyfied ending contrives a reunion at the California beach where they shot the cover of their 1962 debut album, *Surfin' Safari*, but after several strokes and a lifetime of health problems, Brian seems disconnected from proceedings. Waves wash on the shore as sweet harmonies play us out. The implication is that the Beach Boys' music is eternal but the subtext of this tale is that the Endless Summer was always a nostalgic illusion.

The Beach Boys ★★★★★

What to watch

THE CANCELLATION OF JIM DAVIDSON

Channel 5, 10pm



The comedian looks back at his long career and reflects on how he survived controversies

Once named the "funniest man on television", the comedian and former *Generational Game* host's racial caricatures and right-wing views rendered him an industry pariah. In this feature-length documentary, Davidson looks back at his working-class childhood in south London and his rapid ascent to household name status in the 1970s and 1980s. His comedy earned him his own flagship programme,

The Jim Davidson Show (which ran from 1979 to 1982), as well as hosting duties on various other primetime hits. However, his career waned even before criticisms were levelled at certain elements of his comedy, while his (wrongful) arrest under Operation Yewtree in 2013 temporarily darkened his public image. A year later, having cleared his name, Davidson found newfound fame in the *Celebrity Big*

Brother house, and left as the unlikely winner (beating N-Dubz's Dappy). A raft of fellow comedians, industry figures and journalists offer their thoughts on why Davidson's career has survived so many setbacks, but it's his own testimony – and insistence that his refusal to conform to "woke" societal pressures has made him successful – that forms the heart of the 90-minute deep-dive. **Poppie Platt**

DOCUMENTARY

Unreported World

Channel 4, 7.30pm

High suicide rates, eating disorders, online trolling – these are "the dark side of the [K-pop] industry," says former boyband star Min Su. He quit music after fans complained about his tattoos and smoking. Krishnan Guru-Murthy looks at the underbelly of the \$8 billion-dollar industry that has exploded out of South Korea, and how teenagers at elite music schools chase fame – at the cost of starving themselves and eradicating any semblance of individuality.



Unreported World dive into the dark side of K-pop

DRAMA

Rebus

BBC Scotland, 10pm

Brotherly interference leads to jeopardy in the second episode of Gregory

Burke's reboot, as John (Richard Rankin) deals with the aftermath of Michael's (Brian Ferguson) altercation in Fife, and Siobhan (Lucie Shorthouse) digs for answers. The episode is also on BBC One tomorrow (9.25pm).

ENTERTAINMENT

The Nevermets

Channel 4, 10pm

Dawn French narrates this romance-reality series following couples who are in love and looking to take the next step – but have never actually met in real life. In tonight's opener, we meet a 17-year-old Briton who is preparing to shell out



thousands to fly to India to meet a girl he met online on a *Game of Thrones* fan forum.

Tina Turner Night

BBC Four, from 10.10pm

Today marks exactly one year since the "Queen of rock 'n' roll" died. Over a career spanning five decades, the US singer captivated audiences with her powerful voice. This tribute kicks off with a selection of her greatest performances at the BBC, filled with hits including *The Best* and *River Deep Mountain High*. It's followed at 11.10pm by documentary **When Tina Turner Came to Britain**, featuring footage of her support slot for the Rolling Stones, before Turner tells her own story in a 2018 interview (12.10am).



BBC Four celebrates the late, great singer Tina Turner

FACTUAL

The Big Steam Adventure: Here We Go Again!

Channel 5, 8pm

Peter Davison, John Sergeant and Paul "Piglet" Middleton conclude their Scottish rail odyssey in the Highlands with a scenic ride along the river Spey (complete with a helping of neeps and tatties) and a trip to Loch Ness that's almost ruined by dire weather.

Hidden Treasures of the National Trust

BBC Two, 9pm

Tonight's informative episode of the behind-the-scenes series takes us to the grand Palladian villa in Stourhead, where curators are eagerly awaiting the return of Angelica Kauffman's neoclassical masterpiece *Penelope and Eurycleia*, last seen in public in the early 1990s. **PP**

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A new Telegraph podcast

Radio choice

Add to Playlist
Radio 4, 7.15pm

Providing a lovely end to the week, the musical connections series returns, although without

co-presenter Cerys Matthew who is taking time out "to pursue other musical projects" (she'll be back, we're told, in November). So Jeffrey Boakye has a brand new co-host for this

series, violinist Anna Phoebe, who certainly brings a fresh perspective to tonight's opener which takes us from the pop music of the Bangles to disco pioneer Giorgio Moroder, via Prince, John Williams, Prokofiev and Blondie, with the help of guests Natalie Duncan and Neil Brand. Wide-ranging and delightfully absorbing. **Gerard O'Donovan**

RADIO 1
FM 97.6-99.8MHz

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** Radio 1's Big Weekend **12.45pm** Newsbeat **1.00** Radio 1's Big Weekend **3.00** Radio 1's Big Weekend **4.00** Radio 1's Big Weekend **5.45** Newsbeat **6.00** Radio 1's Big Weekend **6.20** Radio 1's Big Weekend **7.05** Radio 1's Big Weekend **7.45** Radio 1's Big Weekend **8.15** Radio 1's Big Weekend **9.00** Radio 1's Big Weekend **10.00** Radio 1's Big Weekend **11.00** Pete Tong **1.00am** Radio 1's Essential Mix **3.00** Radio 1 Dance Presents **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. Rylan organises a surprise for Scott **3.30** Scott Mills' Wonder Years **4.00** Sara Cox **7.00** Michelle Visage. A selection of hits from across the pop music genre **8.30** Michelle Visage's Handbag Hits. Feelgood party classics **9.00** The Good Groove with DJ Spooky. Joyful floor fillers and lyrical garage tunes **11.00** The Rock Show with Johnnie Walker **12.00** Ranges Ranganathan: For the Love of Hip-Hop **1.00am** Mica Meets Gladys Knight **2.00** Mica Meets Gladys Knight **3.00** Eagles at the BBC **4.00** Sophie Ellis-Bextor's Kitchen Disco **5.00 - 6.00am** Radio 2 in Concert: Bruce Hornsby and the Range

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:

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: A Body Made of Glass **12.00** News **12.04pm** AntiSocial. The issues of the day **12.57** Weather **1.00** The World at One **1.45** Shadow War: China and the West. The possibility of war between China and the West. Last in the series **2.00** The Archers. Emotions run high for Tom **2.15** Drama: Money Gone. By Ed Sellek. Last in the series **2.45** Child. India Rakusen considers attachment **3.00** Gardeners' Question Time. Experts answer listeners' queries at the Chelsea Flower Show **3.45** Short Works. Dwr, by Catrin Kean **4.00** Last Word **4.30** More or Less. The suggestion it will take 685 years to clear NHS waiting lists in England **5.00** PM. Anita Anand presents news headlines **5.57** Weather **6.00** Six O'Clock News **6.30** Dead Ringers. Comedy impressions **7.00** The Archers. Fallon reaches the end of her tether **7.15** Add to Playlist See Radio choice **8.00** Any Questions? **8.50** A Point of View **9.00** Free Thinking **9.59** Weather **10.00** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Making Amends **11.00** American **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.00** News and Weather **12.30am** Book of the Week: A Body Made of Glass **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.00** As World Service **5.20**

RADIO 5 LIVE
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** Holly Hamilton **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport: The Friday Football Social **9.00** 5 Live Sport. Gloucester v Sharks **10.00** Stephen Nolan **1.00am** Lisa McCormick **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** Tim Lihoreau **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Classic FM at the Movies with Jonathan Ross **9.00** Traditional Tunes with Iona Stephen **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 Newsroom **9.30** Science in Action **10.00** News **10.06** Unexpected Elements **11.00** The Newsroom **11.30** The Global Story **12.00** News **12.06pm** Outlook **12.50** Witness History **1.00** The Newsroom **1.30** Heart and Soul **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 Newsroom **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

RADIO 4 EXTRA
DIGITAL ONLY

6.00am Massachusetts Avenue **6.45** The Resistance of Mrs Brown **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** Owing Colour **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Soul Music **10.30** Bombay's Beatle **11.00** Massachusetts Avenue **11.45** The Resistance of Mrs Brown **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** The Late Mr Shakespeare **4.00** Soul Music **4.30** Bombay's Beatle **5.00** Massachusetts Avenue **5.45** The Resistance of Mrs Brown **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** The Late Mr Shakespeare **10.00** Michael Spicer: No Room **10.15** The Maltby Collection **11.00** Absolute Power **11.30** Tez Talks **11.45** Irish Micks and Legends **12.00** Music **12.30am** Bombay's Beatle **1.00** Massachusetts Avenue **1.45** The Resistance of Mrs Brown **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** 'Til You Hear From Me **5.00 - 6.00am** The Late Mr Shakespeare

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Today's television

Main channels

BBC One

6.00 am Breakfast (S) **9.30** Rip Off Britain (S) **10.15** The Moment of Proof (R) (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 (S)

3.00 Escape to the Country (R) (S)

3.45 RHS Chelsea Flower Show (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 RHS Chelsea Flower Show The winner of this year's BBC RHS People's Choice Award is announced (S)

8.00 Would I Lie to You? With Claudia Winkleman, the Rev Kate Bottley, Sara Barron and Ed Gamble (R) (S)

8.30 Outnumbered Ben auditions for the school musical (AD) (R) (S)

9.00 Have I Got News for You Satirical quiz, hosted by Phil Wang (S)

9.30 The Young Offenders Healy plans a fishing trip to where he grew up (AD) (S)

10.00 BBC News at Ten (S)

10.30 Regional News; Weather (S)

10.40 FILM: Spider-Man: Far from Home (2019) Superhero adventure sequel starring Tom Holland (AD) (S)

12.40 am Rebus 1.35 - 6.00am News

BBC Two

6.30 am Homes Under the Hammer (R) (S) **7.30** Marcus Wareing Simply Provence (R) (S) **8.00** Sign Zone: Antiques Roadshow (R) (S) (SL) **9.00** News (S)

12.15 pm Politics Live (S)

1.00 Impossible (R) (S)

1.45 Mastermind (R) (S)

2.15 Great Coastal Railway Journeys (AD) (R) (S)

2.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown (R) (S)

3.15 Yellowstone (AD) (R) (S)

4.15 Who Do You Think You Are? (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 Beechgrove Garden (S)

7.30 Grand Tours of Scotland's Rivers Paul Murton explores the River Oykel in Sutherland. Last in the series (AD) (S)

8.00 RHS Chelsea Flower Show Monty Don and Joe Swift review the winning garden in the People's Choice Award (S)

9.00 Hidden Treasures of the National Trust A missing masterpiece returns to its stately home after two centuries See What to watch (AD) (S)

10.00 QI With Tom Allen, Cariad Lloyd and Jamie MacDonald (R) (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: Andi Oliver's Fabulous Feasts **2.05** Sign Zone: Great British Railway Journeys **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 Women (S)

1.30 News; Weather (S)

1.55 Regional News; Weather (S)

2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal (AD) (R) (S)

3.00 Lingo (R) (S)

4.00 Tipping Point (R) (S)

5.00 The Chase (R) (S)

6.00 Regional News; Weather (S)

6.30 News; Weather (S)



Coronation Street

7.30 Emmerdale Caleb is delighted to see Chas back from Scotland (AD) (S)

8.00 Coronation Street Abi accuses Dean of distributing videos of her (AD) (S)

9.00 Beat the Chasers Contestants from across the UK take on a team of five Chasers (R) (S)

10.00 News; Weather (S)

10.30 Regional News; Weather (S)

10.45 ITV Studio Sessions Clara Amfo is joined by Sekou, one of the UK's biggest new talents (S)

11.15 FILM: Dr No (1962) James Bond spy thriller starring Sean Connery See Film choice 1.05am Shop on TV **3.00** The Larkins **3.50** 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) **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) **10.10** Frasier (AD) (R) (S) **10.40** 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)



The Nevermets

7.00 Channel 4 News (S)

7.30 Unreported World Krishnan Guru-Murthy explores South Korea's K-pop dance schools See What to watch (AD) (S)

8.00 Double the Money The remaining eight teams are given two weeks to double their £2,000 stake (AD) (S)

9.00 Gogglebox The households' opinions on recent TV (AD) (S)

10.00 The Nevermets See What to watch (AD) (S)

11.05 Joe & Katherine's Bargain Holidays **12.10am** Micky Flanagan: Back in the Game **1.35** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **2.20** Come Dine with Me **2.45** Come Dine with Me **3.15** Come Dine with Me **3.40** Come Dine with Me **4.05** Come Dine with Me **4.30** Location, Location, Location **5.20** Sunday Brunch Best Bits **5.40 - 6.05am** 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: Lies Between Friends (2022, TVM) Thriller starring Zibby Allen (S)

4.00 Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (R) (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 singer explores Osaka. Last in the series (R) (S)

7.55 5 News Update (S)

8.00 The Big Steam Adventure: Here We Go Again! John, Peter and Piglet explore the Scottish Highlands. Last in the series See What to watch (S)

9.00 Sue Perkins: Lost in Thailand Sue visits the country's heady capital, Bangkok. Last in the series (S)

10.00 The Cancellation of Jim Davidson The comedian and presenter offers an in-depth exploration of his life See What to watch (S)

11.30 When 80s TV Goes Horribly Wrong **1.25am** PlayOJO Live Casino Show **3.25** 10 Years Younger in 10 Days **4.10** Tesco: Panic in the Aisles **5.00** House Doctor **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.30** Peppa Pig **5.35** Thomas & Friends: Big World! Big Adventures! **5.45 - 6.00am** Paw Patrol

Film choice



Atlas (2024) Netflix ★★★

Best known for his films with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson (*San Andreas*, *Rampage*), Brad Peyton here directs popstar-slash-actress Jennifer Lopez in a sci-fi flick more than a little in debt to Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*. Lopez is Atlas Shepherd, a brilliant data analyst with a mistrust of AI who gets sucked into a mission involving a mysterious robot. *American Fiction's* Sterling K Brown co-stars.



Three Thousand Years of Longing (2022) Film4, 9pm ★★★

Mad Max genius George Miller directs this curious adaptation of AS Byatt's 1994 short story *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. Idris Elba plays an ancient genie unleashed from a bottle by Tilda Swinton's frazzled academic, who then regales her with stories from his thousands of years of existence. It's dreamlike and beautifully shot, if slightly too whimsical.



Dr No (1962) ITV1, 11.15pm; not STV ★★★★★

Sean Connery was transformed from gruff Scottish bit-part actor (and former milkman) to suave gentleman for this first Bond film, directed by Terence Young. He brings just the right blend of light touch and inner steel to the martini-necking spy, as he swans around the tropics of Jamaica with white-bikined Ursula Andress, on the hunt for the titular villain. It's considered a classic for a reason.

with **Camilla TOMINEY** and **Kamal AHMED**

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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: 1988

8.30 TOTP: 1978

9.00 TOTP: 1984

9.30 TOTP: 1984

10.10 Tina Turner at the BBC See What to watch

11.10 When Tina Turner Came to Britain See What to watch

12.10 am Tina Turner: Simply the Best See What to watch

12.55 The 80s - Music's Greatest Decade? With Dylan Jones

1.55 TOTP: 1988

2.25 TOTP: 1984

2.55 - 3.35am TOTP: 1984

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

2.35 Classic Coronation Street

3.10 Classic Coronation Street

3.45 Agatha Christie's Marple

5.55 Heartbeat

6.55 Heartbeat

8.00 Doc Martin

9.00 Shetland

10.20 Shetland

11.35 Lewis

1.15 am Upstairs, Downstairs

2.10 Unwind with ITV

2.30 - 6.00am Teleshopping

ITV4

FV 26 FS 117 SKY 120 VIRGIN 118

11.30 am BattleBots

12.30 pm Magnum, PI

2.40 Kojak

3.45 Minder

4.50 The Sweeney

6.00 BattleBots

7.00 The Grand Fishing Adventure

8.00 The Motorbike Show

9.00 FILM: Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1985) Sci-fi adventure sequel starring Mel Gibson

11.15 All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite

1.25 am The Chase Celebrity Christmas Special

2.20 The Protectors

2.45 Unwind with ITV

3.00 - 6.00am Teleshopping

Sky Arts

FV 36 FS 147 SKY 130 VIRGIN 140

Noon The Joy of Painting

12.30 pm The Joy of Painting

1.00 Tales of the Unexpected

1.30 Tales of the Unexpected

2.00 Julie Andrews Forever

3.00 The Big Design Challenge

4.00 Discovering: Morgan Freeman

5.00 The Joy of Painting

5.30 The Joy of Painting

6.00 Australian Ballet: Cinderella

7.35 Eric Clapton: Concert by the Lake - Band du Lac

10.00 Grand Ole Opry

11.00 Guy Garvey: From the Vaults

12.00 Billy Joel Live at Yankee Stadium

1.45 am Live from the Artists Den

3.00 - 4.00am Classic Albums

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

6.50 Billions

7.55 Game of Thrones

9.00 The Pacific

10.00 The Tattooist of Auschwitz

11.05 The White Lotus

12.35 am House of the Dragon

1.45 Euphoria

2.50 - 4.00am Game of Thrones

Film4

FV 14 FS 300 SKY 313 VIRGIN 428

11.00 am Two Way Stretch (1960, b/w)

12.45 pm Payroll (1961, b/w)

2.55 Men in Black: International Interview Special

3.00 The Nevada (1950) Western starring Randolph Scott

4.35 The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1974) Fantasy adventure starring John Phillip Law

6.50 The Italian Job (2003) Crime thriller remake starring Mark Wahlberg

9.00 Three Thousand Years of Longing (2022) See Film choice

11.10 A Banquet (2021)

1.05 - 4.00am The Handmaiden (2016)

Drama

FV 20 FS 158 SKY 143 VIRGIN 116

11.40 am The Bill

12.45 pm Classic EastEnders

1.20 Classic EastEnders

2.00 Pie in the Sky

3.00 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: 8.00pm Suzie Lee: Home Cook Hero **8.30 - 9.00pm** Restoration Rescue

BBC Two: No variations

UTV: 7.00 - 7.30pm UTV Life **9.00 - 10.00pm** UTV at the Show

Scotland

BBC One: No variations

BBC Scotland: 7.45pm Icons of Football **8.15** The Lost Final **9.00** Josh Taylor: Portrait of a Fighter **10.00** Rebus See What to Watch **10.45** Still Game **11.15** Two Doors Down **11.45** Growing Up Scottish **midnight** Close

STV: 7.00 - 7.30pm What's on Scotland **11.15** Mr Bates vs the Post Office: The Real Story **12.10 - 3.00am** Shop on TV **3.50 - 5.00am** Night Vision

Wales

BBC One: 7.00 - 7.30pm Iolo's Valleys **8.00** Our Food, Our Family with Michela Chiappa **8.30 - 9.00** Kirri's TV Flashback **10.40** Rewind: 60 Years of Welsh Pop **11.10** FILM: Spider-Man: Far from Home (2019) **1.10am** Rebus **2.00 - 6.00am** BBC News

BBC Two: 7.00 - 7.30pm The One Show **BBC News** 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: Digi Draig **4.20** Awr Fawr: Bendibwnbws **4.30** Awr Fawr: Pentre Papur Pop **4.45** Awr Fawr: Awyr Iach **5.00** Stwnsh **6.00** Garddio a Mwy **6.57** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **8.00** Cymru, Alabama a'r Urd **8.55** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **9.00** Rybisch **9.30** Rybisch **10.00** Welsh Whisperer - Ni'n Tethlio Nawr! **10.35 - 11.40pm** Ni Yw'r Cymry

Dave

Noon Storage Hunters UK **2.00pm** Gadget Man **3.00** Top Gear **5.00** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.00** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **7.00** QI XL **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **9.00** QI XL **9.40** Would I Lie to You? **11.00** Taskmaster **12.00** Mock the Week **12.40am** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** QI XL **2.00** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **2.25** Secrets of the Supercars **3.25-4.00am** Gadget Man

GOLD

11.25am Last of the Summer Wine **12.40pm** Keeping Up Appearances **1.20** Ever Decreasing Circles **2.00** Porridge **2.40** Dad's Army **3.20** Are You Being Served? **4.00** Last of the Summer Wine **5.20** Porridge **6.00** Keeping Up Appearances **6.40** Dad's Army **8.00** Only Fools and Horses **8.40** Blackadder II **9.20** dinnerladies **10.00** The Fast Show **10.40** Mrs Brown's Boys **12.00** Blackadder II **12.40am** dinnerladies **1.15** Only Fools and Horses **1.55** The Fast Show **2.40** Billy Connolly Does **3.25-4.00am** The Rebel

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: Horrible Bosses 2 (2014) Comedy starring Jason Bateman **11.15** Family Guy **12.15am** American Dad! **1.15** Bob's Burgers **2.10** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.50** Unwind with ITV **3.00-6.00am** Teleshopping

More4

11.25am Find It, Fix It, Flog It **12.30pm** Come Dine with Me **3.10** For in a Bed **5.50** Chateau DIY **6.55** PopMaster TV **9.00** The Twelve: Cinderella Murder **10.05** 24 Hours in A&E **12.10am** 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown **1.15** 24 Hours in A&E **3.25-3.55am** A Place in the Sun

PBS America

11.55am Mafia's Greatest Hits **1.00pm** Beautiful Serengeti **1.30** American Dynasties: The Kennedys **2.30** Auschwitz in 33 Objects **3.35** Battle of Little Bighorn **4.35** Surrender on the USS Missouri **5.50** Mafia's Greatest Hits **6.50** American Dynasties: The Kennedys **7.45** Auschwitz in 33 Objects **8.50** Battle of Little Bighorn **9.55** Mafia's Greatest Hits **10.55** Auschwitz in 33 Objects **12.00** Battle of Little Bighorn **1.10am** Beautiful Serengeti **1.40** American Dynasties: The Kennedys **2.25** Mafia's

Greatest Hits **3.20-4.20am** Surrender on the USS Missouri

Talking Pictures TV

24 hours, including at:

11.20am FILM: Bullet Scars (1942, b/w) Gangster drama starring Regis Toomey **12.30pm** The Four Just Men **1.00** Mervyn's Talking Pictures **1.10** FILM: Rich and Strange (1931, b/w) Romantic comedy starring Henry Kendall and Joan Barry **2.50** Mervyn's Talking Pictures **3.00** Automatic Fare Collection and You in 1969 **3.05** FILM: The Gallant Hours (1960, b/w) Fact-based Second World War drama starring James Cagney **5.25** One Mile Square **6**

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TOMINEY**

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**Kamal
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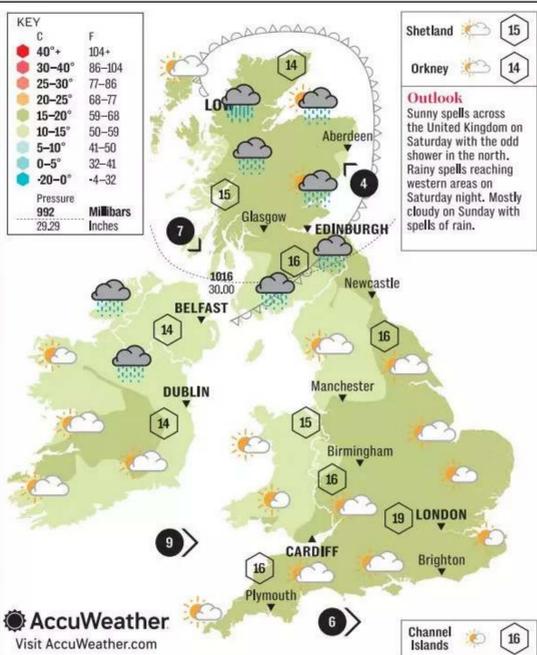
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On older phones, you may need to download a QR code reader first.

Forecast

General situation

Slow-moving low pressure will bring cloud and showers to Scotland, northern England and Northern Ireland today. Sunny periods in southern England and Wales with the odd shower.

- ♦ London, Cent S England, Channel Is, SW England, E England, SE England, E Anglia, Midlands: Broken cloud today and tonight with the odd shower in the Midlands. A light SW wind. Max 60-66F (16-19C). Clear spells and largely dry tonight. Min 45-50F (7-10C).
- ♦ NW England, Lake Dist, IoM, Cent N England, NE England: Sunny periods today with a couple of showers. A light SW wind. Max 46-62F (8-17C). Mainly dry tonight. Min 40-48F (4-9C).
- ♦ Wales: Sunny spells today with the odd shower. A light E to SE wind. Max 46-60F (8-16C). Generally dry tonight. Min 38-52F (3-11C).
- ♦ N Ireland: Broken cloud today and tonight with showers. A light variable wind. Max 45-57F (7-14C). Min 41-52F (5-11C).
- ♦ SW Scotland, NW Scotland, Glasgow, Cent Highlands, Argyll, W Isles, SE Scotland, NE Scotland, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, Orkney, Shetland: Mostly cloudy today and tonight with scattered showers. A light variable wind. Max 45-65F (7-18C). Min 40-52F (4-11C).



Four day forecast

- Saturday**
Sunny spells across the United Kingdom on Saturday with the odd shower in the north. Rainy spells reaching western areas on Saturday night. Mostly cloudy on Sunday with spells of rain.
- Sunday**
Sunny spells across the United Kingdom on Sunday with the odd shower in the north. Rainy spells reaching western areas on Sunday night. Mostly cloudy on Monday with spells of rain.
- Monday**
Sunny spells across the United Kingdom on Monday with the odd shower in the north. Rainy spells reaching western areas on Monday night. Mostly cloudy on Tuesday with spells of rain.
- Tuesday**
Sunny spells across the United Kingdom on Tuesday with the odd shower in the north. Rainy spells reaching western areas on Tuesday night. Mostly cloudy on Wednesday with spells of rain.

European readings

City	Max	Min	Daytime	City	Max	Min	Daytime
Akrotiri	29	22	windy	Frankfurt	23	9	showers
Alicante	24	14	p/cldy	Funclal	21	17	rain
Amsterdam	19	13	showers	Gdansk	19	15	showers
Athens	30	22	sunny	Geneva	16	11	showers
Barcelona	20	15	p/cldy	Gibraltar	21	16	p/cldy
Bari	24	15	sunny	Hamburg	21	14	cloudy
Belgrade	20	14	showers	Helsinki	23	6	sunny
Benidorm	24	14	p/cldy	Innsbruck	21	10	cloudy
Bergen	26	18	sunny	Istanbul	23	16	p/cldy
Berlin	24	15	sunny	Kyiv	24	13	showers
Biarritz	18	11	showers	La Rochelle	17	12	showers
Bodrum	28	18	sunny	Lisbon	24	12	sunny
Bordeaux	18	12	rain	Locarno	18	8	showers
Brest	16	10	cloudy	Luxembourg	18	8	showers
Brussels	20	11	p/cldy	Madrid	25	9	sunny
Bucharest	27	13	showers	Majorca	25	15	p/cldy
Budapest	25	12	showers	Malaga	25	14	p/cldy
Cagliari	26	14	p/cldy	Malta	29	17	p/cldy
Chamonix	15	7	rain	Marseille	23	16	sunny
Copenhagen	20	14	showers	Menorca	23	16	p/cldy
Corfu	28	17	sunny	Milan	21	13	showers
Cork	14	8	cloudy	Monaco	20	15	showers
Corsica	23	11	sunny	Moscow	20	7	sunny
Crete	26	19	sunny	Munich	21	9	showers
Dublin	13	9	showers	Naples	23	16	sunny
Dubrovnik	23	15	sunny	Nice	21	15	showers
Faro	23	14	p/cldy	Nicosia	33	20	p/cldy
Florence	24	12	p/cldy	Oporto	19	8	sunny
				Oslo	25	11	p/cldy
				Palermo	24	16	sunny
				Paris	20	13	rain
				Perpignan	21	13	p/cldy
				Prague	22	11	p/cldy
				Reykjavik	10	4	rain
				Rhodes	27	21	windy
				Riga	27	16	p/cldy
				Rome	23	14	sunny
				Saint Malo	17	10	cloudy
				Salzburg	22	11	rain
				Santander	18	12	p/cldy
				Santiago/Comp	15	8	showers
				Sofia	21	11	rain
				St. Petersburg	25	10	p/cldy
				Stockholm	22	8	sunny
				Strasbourg	18	11	rain
				Tenerife	24	18	windy
				Tirana	26	14	sunny
				Toulouse	20	11	showers
				Valencia	23	15	p/cldy
				Venice	23	14	showers
				Vienna	24	15	p/cldy
				Vigo	19	8	rain
				Vilnius	24	15	p/cldy
				Warsaw	21	17	showers
				Zagreb	24	13	showers
				Zurich	15	11	showers

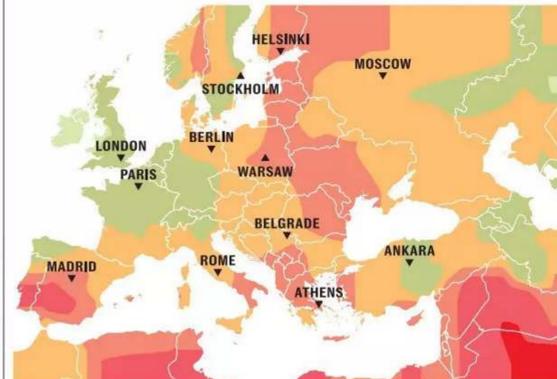
Nature Notes

Zoo opens doors to rare monkeys

A family of rare Rolo monkeys – one of the world's most endangered species of primates – has arrived at Chester Zoo. Four of the "incredibly special" monkeys have been welcomed to the zoo, which last hosted a Rolo 50 years ago. Parents Masaya and Grizu, along with their two young sons, Anum and Iloo will form a key part of an international conservation breeding programme that is working to safeguard the species. Mike Jordan of Chester Zoo said: "We're hopeful that, with the skills and expertise of primatologists here in Chester, this family unit will continue to grow and play a vital role in their continued survival on the planet." Once found in the forests of West Africa, black and white Rolo monkeys have been propelled to the brink of extinction in the past 30 years because of hunting and deforestation.

MAKE THE WORLD YOUR OWN

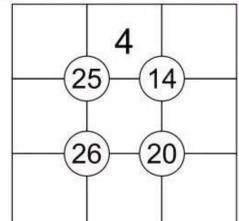
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World readings

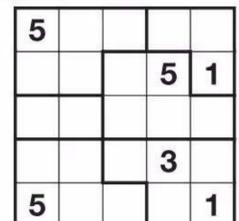
City	Max	Min	Daytime	City	Max	Min	Daytime
Accra	32	25	p/cldy	Damascus	35	20	windy
Addis Ababa	19	16	showers	Dar es Salaam	30	23	p/cldy
Adelaide	16	5	p/cldy	Dhaka	38	27	p/cldy
Alexandria	29	24	p/cldy	Dubai	38	29	haze
Algiers	27	12	cloudy	Falkland Is.	5	1	windy
Amman	37	22	haze	Harare	26	11	sunny
Anchorage	2	5	p/cldy	Havana	33	22	storms
Ankara	23	14	storms	Hong Kong	28	25	rain
Ascension Is.	29	25	p/cldy	Honolulu	25	23	showers
Auckland	15	10	p/cldy	Jakarta	29	27	rain
Baghdad	42	24	p/cldy	Jeddah	37	27	haze
Bahamas	29	25	p/cldy	Jerusalem	30	19	haze
Bahrain	37	30	haze	Johannesburg	21	4	sunny
Bamako	40	26	p/cldy	Kabul	32	14	sunny
Bangkok	33	26	rain	Karachi	35	30	haze
Beijing	31	21	sunny	Kolkata	36	28	p/cldy
Belrut	28	23	haze	Kuala Lumpur	34	26	storms
Bermuda	25	21	cloudy	La Paz	15	-1	sunny
Bogota	21	10	p/cldy	Lahore	46	29	haze
Bridgetown	31	27	showers	Lima	19	15	p/cldy
Brisbane	25	11	sunny	Los Angeles	18	14	p/cldy
Buenos Aires	15	12	p/cldy	Maldives	32	28	storms
Cairo	39	28	haze	Manila	36	26	p/cldy
Canberra	17	-4	sunny	Marrakesh	30	14	sunny
Cape Town	20	14	windy	Melbourne	17	8	p/cldy
Casablanca	23	15	p/cldy	Miami	32	25	sunny
Chicago	24	14	sunny	Montego Bay	30	25	storms
Christchurch	11	-1	p/cldy	Mumbai	34	30	p/cldy
Colombo	30	27	storms	Nairobi	26	16	p/cldy
				New Orleans	30	24	p/cldy
				New Delhi	42	31	haze
				New York	25	20	storms
				Ottawa	24	17	p/cldy
				Perth	27	11	p/cldy
				Port-of-Spain	32	26	showers
				Rio de Janeiro	29	22	sunny
				Riyadh	41	27	haze
				San Francisco	17	11	sunny
				Santiago	10	6	showers
				Seattle	12	9	p/cldy
				Seoul	25	14	p/cldy
				Seychelles	31	28	storms
				Singapore	32	25	storms
				Sydney	22	8	sunny
				Taipei City	26	23	storms
				Tangier	26	14	p/cldy
				Tel Aviv	31	23	sunny
				Tokyo	24	19	p/cldy
				Toronto	25	14	sunny
				Tunis	29	15	p/cldy
				Vancouver	13	10	windy
				Washington	27	22	storms
				Wellington	13	7	p/cldy
				Winnipeg	12	4	p/cldy

Sujiko MODERATE NO 4882



To play Sujiko, enter the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the total in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding squares. Today's solutions on Monday.

Suguru NO 1970



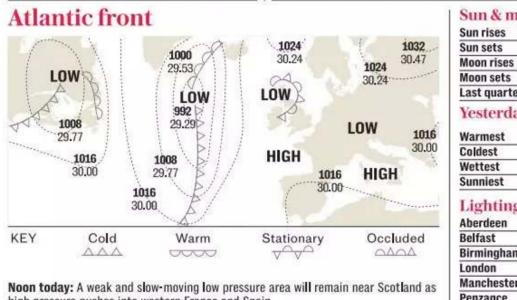
The aim of Suguru is to fill the grid so that no same digit is touching. A two-cell outlined block contains the digits 1 and 2; a three-cell block contains 1, 2, 3; and so on. The same digit must not appear in neighbouring cells, not even diagonally.

Yesterday's solutions:
Sujiko 4881: 981 Suguru 1969: 41321, 321434, 15132, 23241, 41321

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British readings

City	Sun	Rain	Max/Min	Daytime	City	Sun	Rain	Max/Min	Daytime		
Aberdeen	0.0	0.59	13	11	cloudy	Chester	1.7	0.87	13	10	showers
Aberystwyth	0.0	0.22	13	10	showers	Conventry	0.3	0.14	16	11	cloudy
Antrim	0.0	0.00	13	9	cloudy	Doncaster	0.0	0.12	18	12	showers
Aviemore	0.0	0.74	13	9	rain	Dover	3.2	0.00	16	12	cloudy
Barnstaple	0.0	0.00	14	12	cloudy	Dundee	0.0	0.49	14	12	rain
Barrow-in-Furness	0.0	1.20	13	11	rain	Eastbourne	6.8	0.00	18	12	p/cldy
Basingstoke	3.5	0.06	17	11	cloudy	Edinburgh	0.0	1.64	14	12	rain
Bedford	0.2	0.01	16	12	cloudy	Epsom	0.3	0.09	17	11	cloudy
Belfast	3.0	1.24	13	9	windy	Falmouth	0.4	0.02	16	11	cloudy
Berwick	0.0	0.87	12	11	rain	Farnborough	1.0	0.00	17	11	cloudy
Birmingham	2.0	0.12	14	11	cloudy	Fort William	0.0	0.47	13	9	rain
Bodmin	0.0	0.01	14	10	cloudy	Glasgow	0.0	1.19	16	10	rain
Bournemouth	3.0	0.03	16	11	cloudy	Great Malvern	0.0	0.02	16	12	cloudy
Braintree	0.7	0.03	17	11	cloudy	Grimsby	0.8	0.00	16	12	windy
Brecon	0.2	0.15	12	8	showers	Guernsey	3.5	0.00	16	12	cloudy
Bridlington	0.0	0.00	16	13	cloudy	Hereford	0.0	0.01	15	11	cloudy
Brighton	4.2	0.02	18	12	cloudy	High Wycombe	0.4	0.00	16	12	cloudy
Bristol	0.0	0.12	14	12	cloudy	Holyhead	0.0	0.39	13	9	showers
Camborne	2.5	0.02	15	11	showers	Huddersfield	0.0	0.17	12	9	showers
Cardiff	0.1	0.01	17	11	cloudy	Ipswich	1.7	0.02	17	11	cloudy
Carlisle	0.0	0.86	13	12	rain	Isle of Man	0.2	1.16	13	9	rain
Catterick	0.1	0.21	16	12	showers	Isle of Skye	0.0	0.79	12	7	rain
Chesterham	0.0	0.07	16	12	cloudy	Isle of Wight	3.7	0.01	16	13	cloudy



Sun & moon (Greenwich)

Sun rises 0457
Sun sets 2100
Moon rises 2253
Moon sets 0452
Last quarter May 30

Yesterday

Warmest Cheries 19C (67F)
Coldest Aonach 2C (36F)
Wettest Keswick 3.73 in.
Sunniest Herstoncoxeux West 7.8 hr.

Lighting up

Aberdeen 2140 to 0431
Belfast 2140 to 0

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#Precision