Tracey Emin

'Cancer changed everything for me'

G2



'The PM is so convinced he can't win, he is promising any old mad thing'

Marina Hyde Page 6



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Israeli spy chief 'threatened' ICC official over war crimes inquiry

Exclusive
Mossad director tried to persuade chief prosecutor to halt investigation, sources say

Harry Davies
Jerusalem

The former head of the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, allegedly threatened a chief prosecutor of the international criminal court in a series of secret meetings in which he tried to put pressure on her to abandon a war crimes investigation, the Guardian can reveal.

Yossi Cohen's covert contacts with the ICC's then prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, took place in the years leading up to her decision to open a formal investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in occupied Palestinian territories.

That investigation, launched in 2021, culminated last week when Bensouda's successor, Karim Khan, announced that he was seeking an arrest warrant for the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, over the country's conduct in its war in Gaza.

The prosecutor's decision to apply to the ICC's pre-trial chamber for arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, alongside three Hamas leaders, is an outcome Israel's military and political establishment has long feared.

Cohen's personal involvement in the operation against the ICC took place when he was the director of the Mossad. His activities were authorised at a high level and justified on the basis the court posed a threat of prosecutions against military personnel, according to a senior Israeli official.

Another Israeli source briefed on the operation against Bensouda said the Mossad's objective was to compromise the prosecutor or enlist her as someone who would cooperate with Israel's demands.

A third source familiar with the operation said Cohen was acting as Netanyahu's "unofficial messenger".

Cohen, who was one of Netanyahu's closest allies at the time and is emerging as a political force in his own right in Israel, personally led the Mossad's involvement in an almost decade-long campaign by the country to undermine the court.

Four sources confirmed that Bensouda had briefed a small group of senior ICC officials about Cohen's attempts to sway her, amid concerns about the increasingly persistent and threatening nature of his behaviour.

Three of those sources were familiar with Bensouda's formal disclosures to the ICC about the matter. They said she revealed Cohen had put pressure on her on several occasions not to proceed with a criminal investigation in the ICC's Palestine case.

According to accounts shared with ICC officials, he is alleged to have told her: "You should

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Threats and intimidation
Israel's nine-year secret 'war' on the ICC Pages 20-23

Labour vows to clear NHS waiting lists in five years

Peter Walker
Andrew Gregory

Labour has pledged to clear the NHS waiting list backlog within five years, with Wes Streeting warning the health service risks becoming "a poor service for poor people" while the wealthy shift to using private care.

In an interview with the Guardian, the shadow health secretary said another Conservative term could result in the total waiting list growing to 10 million people, with healthcare becoming as degraded as NHS dental services.

"I really fear that if Rishi Sunak wins another term, what we've seen happen to NHS dentistry – which is a poor service for poor people and everyone else going private – that is what we will see for the whole NHS," Streeting said. In what will be one of Labour's most

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PHOTOGRAPH: BASHAR TALEB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Tanks reached the centre of Rafah yesterday as Israel's isolation over the war in Gaza deepened, with three European countries formally recognising a Palestinian state and the UN security council calling an emergency meeting Page 32

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Johnston Busingye: as Rwanda's justice minister he presided over several cases in which dissidents were detained overseas
PHOTOGRAPH: PA IMAGES/ALAMY

Rwanda's top UK diplomat oversaw the use of Interpol to target exiles

Tom Burgis

Rwanda's top diplomat in the UK oversaw the use of the international justice system to target opponents of the country's rulers around the world, the Guardian can reveal.

New details of the Rwandan government's suppression of opposition beyond its borders add to concerns about the regime at the heart of Rishi Sunak's asylum policy.

During nine years as Rwanda's justice minister and attorney general, Johnston Busingye, now the high commissioner to the UK, presided over at least three cases in which Rwandan exiles who had defied the authorities were detained, deported or declared wanted on dubious grounds.

It is not the first time Busingye has been linked to acts of repression by the Rwandan government. While he was justice minister, he admitted the regime took part in an operation in Dubai to seize Paul Rusesabagina, who inspired the film Hotel Rwanda.

The Lantos Foundation, a US human rights organisation, asked the UK to impose sanctions on Busingye after his nomination. The Labour MP Chris Bryant said at the time that Busingye "should be on our list of sanctioned individuals, not people being escorted to Buckingham Palace to have their credentials agreed by his majesty".

For seven months, Busingye's nomination as the ambassador in London went unconfirmed. Then, in April 2022, the Rwanda asylum deal was agreed with the authoritarian president, Paul Kagame. Days later, Busingye was invited to the palace to be formally appointed.

A Lantos Foundation spokesperson told the Guardian the timing "raises the question of whether there was, in fact, a connection between the asylum deal and the UK's decision to ultimately accept Busingye's credentials".

A Foreign Office spokesperson said: "Nominations for ambassadors or high commissioners are considered on a case-by-case basis in the usual way and a range of factors are taken into account."

The Rwanda policy appeared to have been suspended last week. Sunak had wanted the first flights taking asylum seekers to the east African country to go in July, but this seems unlikely in the lead-up to the general election.

When he announced the deal with Rwanda, Boris Johnson, then prime minister, said: "Let's be clear, Rwanda is one of the safest countries in the world."

An investigation, Rwanda Classified, by an international coalition of journalists including the Guardian, coordinated by Forbidden Stories, showed that for some who cross Rwanda's ruler, nowhere is safe.

Kagame came to power in 1994, when the Tutsi rebel army he led overthrew the Hutu regime that had unleashed genocide. After 100 days in which more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been killed, Kagame restored order and charted an economic recovery aided by western powers that had stood by while the massacres raged.

Yet there was always a more sinister side to Kagame's rule. The fallout from the genocide triggered war in neighbouring Congo. Although peace was declared in 2003, Rwanda has maintained a hold on eastern Congo. A recent UN report said Rwandan troops were operating alongside M23, a Tutsi militia that rapes, kills and loots with impunity.

Within the country some journalists have said they feel threatened. John Williams Ntwali, a leading Rwandan reporter who published sensitive stories about Kagame's regime, was warned he would "end up in prison or dead" before he died in suspicious circumstances in 2023.

Kagame's influence stretches beyond central Africa. His opponents abroad live in fear that they might suffer the same fate as his former intelligence chief, Patrick Karegeya, whose bloodied body was found in a South African hotel room.

Yet Kagame has a chorus of prominent admirers, among them the Conservative MP Andrew Mitchell. From 2020 to 2022, Mitchell was paid nearly £40,000 for nine days' work a year by a bank founded by Kagame's former finance minister. Mitchell is now a Foreign Office minister. A spokesperson for that department said: "All the minister's previous interests when he was a backbencher have been declared in the correct way."

Mitchell has been a staunch defender of what he called Kagame's "remarkable" regime.

He has raised the case of five Rwandans living in the UK whose extradition Kagame's regime has demanded. They deny allegations of complicity in the genocide. The UK police are investigating but a British court has ruled that, because they would not have a fair trial, they should not be extradited.

In 2019 Mitchell quoted Busingye, then justice minister, as saying: "The UK will go down in history as the only country in Europe which knowingly shielded alleged Rwandan *génocidaires* from justice."

In 2013 Busingye was appointed attorney general and justice minister. The following year, alongside Kagame, he welcomed to Rwanda the head of Interpol, the international agency that runs global cooperation between police forces, to launch a renewed hunt for fugitive génocidaires.



Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame, at No 10 with Rishi Sunak last month

Questions quickly surfaced about how Rwanda uses red notices, the worldwide alerts Interpol issues when one of its member countries wants a suspect arrested.

In July 2016, Enoch Ruhigira, a Rwandan living in New Zealand, visited Germany and was arrested. Before the genocide, he had served as a senior official in the Hutu regime. When the killing started, Ruhigira distributed machetes and organised roadblocks to snare Tutsis, according to a 2004 red notice against him, seen by the Guardian.

The red notice had been withdrawn a year before his arrest, after it emerged that Ruhigira had fled Rwanda before the crimes he supposedly committed. Ruhigira was released without charge after eight months.

Another exiled Hutu, Leopold Munyakazi, is now in a Rwandan prison. Munyakazi was a member of the opposition. He moved to the US in 2004 and claimed asylum. According to Human Rights Watch, Interpol issued red notices in 2006 and 2008 accusing him of genocide. In 2016 he was deported even though an investigation by the US immigration authorities was "almost certainly" compromised by a Rwandan spy, according to a leaked FBI report.

In Rwanda he was sentenced to life for genocide but a judge quashed the conviction owing to lack of evidence. Then he was given nine years for "genocide denial" because he had said: "I refer to it as civil war, not genocide; it was about political power."

The leaked FBI report, written in 2015 while Busingye was justice minister, said Rwanda had been "attempting to manipulate ... the Interpol red notice system".

Five years later, in 2020, Interpol issued another alert on behalf of Rwanda. This time it was for Eugene Gasana, who had served as Rwanda's ambassador to the US and the UN. His diplomatic career ended when he disagreed with the president's plan to extend his rule.

The red notice said Gasana was wanted under a warrant issued by Rwanda's top prosecutor – who reported to Busingye. His alleged crime was rape and sexual harassment.

Gasana told Interpol the allegations had been concocted by Kagame's regime to "destroy him", and that it could only be for an "ulterior motive" as he could not be extradited for a crime allegedly committed in the US.

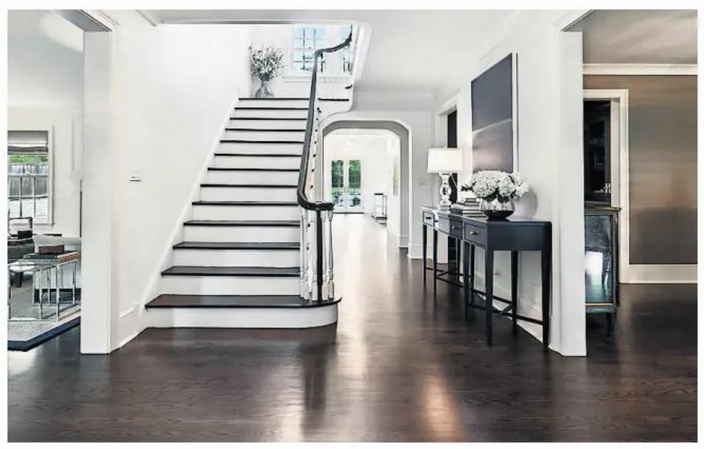
Interpol's internal watchdog sided with Gasana, finding that although one of his accusers had brought a civil claim, US law enforcement had "already investigated and declined to prosecute". The red notice was cancelled in July 2021 for having a "predominant political dimension".

An Interpol spokesperson said the agency "has a number of systems in place to avoid the abuse of our systems, and these have been significantly strengthened over the last few years".

Yolande Makolo, Rwanda's government spokesperson, said Rwanda had "built a fair and transparent system which has delivered justice to the victims" of the genocide.







$5.25m

The listed price for the Illinois mansion, pictured far left, in which Kevin (Macaulay Culkin) fended off villains in the hit 1990 film Home Alone. Left, the central staircase of the house featured in the film, and, below left, as it looks today

House from Home Alone goes on the market – but without the booby traps

Catherine Shoard

Cinema fans – and burglars – alert: the home made famous by the 1990 film Home Alone is on the market, with a sale price of $5.25m (£4.1m).

The five-bedroom, six-bathroom mansion at 671 Lincoln Avenue in Winnetka, Illinois, forms the key setting for the bulk of Chris Columbus's festive hit, as 10-year-old Kevin (Macaulay Culkin) fends off the break-in efforts of villains played by Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern, after his parents inadvertently leave him unattended over the holidays.



Macaulay Culkin as Kevin

The house was previously up for sale in 2012, eventually reaching a price of $1.58m in 2015. In 2021, Airbnb listed the property for one-night-only stays for fans of the film.

All exterior scenes were shot on location, but the only interiors used were the main staircase, basement, attic and first-floor landing.

All other interiors were duplicated on a soundstage; the tree house in the backyard built for the movie was dismantled after filming ended.

The living space in the house has since doubled, with the owners adding a large conservatory and a state-of-the-art basketball court.

The listing describes the property as "one of the most famous houses in the world", featuring two living rooms, a large kitchen, a three-car garage and the "unforgettable staircase" that Culkin sledged down.

It is unclear whether the house is still rigged to fend off intruders; Kevin defeats his enemies by pummelling them with missiles launched from household appliances.

Last year, the house from Halloween went on the market for $1.8m (£1.4m), while the flat above the bookshop from Notting Hill went on sale in 2022 for £2.375m.

Other movie properties to have changed hands include the sprawling mansion from Scarface, which changed hands in 2015 for $12.25m (£9.6m), and the family home in San Francisco featured in Mrs Doubtfire, which sold for $4.15m (£3.3m) in 2016.

Homes featured in horror movies have more of a chequered history on the open market. The home from Nightmare on Elm Street where Freddy Krueger slaughters all of his victims in the opening film sold in 2021 for $3.5m (£2.7m) despite its modest dimensions; visitors of a squeamish disposition might choose to stay in the guest house.

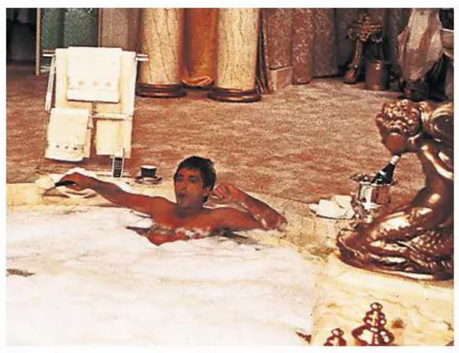
Yet the huge farmhouse from 2013's The Conjuring appeared to have had its prospects dented rather than raised by its big-screen role, selling in 2021 for just $1.2m, despite coming with 8.5 acres and the considerable efforts by the estate agents to spin its haunted status into a positive.

"The current caretakers have reported countless happenings in the house," read the listing, "and have turned overnight guest bookings and group events on the property into a steady successful business."

In 2021, a 18-bedroom, 25-bathroom mansion once owned by the press baron William Randolph Hearst and actor Marion Davies, and which featured in films including The Godfather and The Bodyguard, was listed for $119m. One of its 18 bedrooms was the one in which Jack Woltz, the movie mogul played by John Marley, awakes to discover his horse's head beneath the covers.

The property, which was built in 1927, features a two-storey library, tennis courts, and was a destination for Jacqueline and John F Kennedy on their honeymoon. It also acted as Kennedy's west coast election headquarters.

Other homes with big-screen roles



▲ *The mansion from Scarface sold for $12.25m (£9.6m) in 2015*



▲ *The flat above Notting Hill's shop went on sale for £2.375m in 2022*



▲ *The house from Halloween was priced at $1.8m (£1.4m) last year*



▲ *A home from Nightmare on Elm Street fetched $3.5m (£2.7m) in 2021*

News of the World paid women 'to shag celebrities', says Blunt

Lucy Knight
Jim Waterson

James Blunt claims the News of the World paid women to sleep with celebrities in order to get stories about their sexual performance.

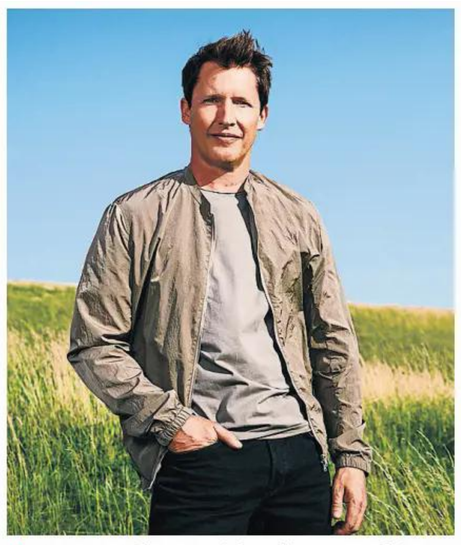
The singer, who settled his legal action against News International in 2012, said the police had sent him emails from the News of the World, which showed that two "beautiful" women were on its payroll "to go out and shag celebrities".

Speaking at the Hay literary festival in Powys, Blunt was asked about the emails, which he describes in his book Loosely Based on a Made-Up Story: a Non-Memoir: "The girls would bring the men back to [a] studio flat in Notting Hill, which had a fold-down bed, film the encounter, and then hand it over to the paper. The girls were hot, and I'd met them, and sure enough, I'd done the deed."

The singer said he had been shocked to read internal emails from Andy Coulson, the then editor, who later went to jail for phone hacking. Coulson "was discussing how best to portray my orgasm" and concluded: "I think he'd sing it."

Blunt also told the Hay audience about his friendship with the actor Carrie Fisher. They met in the 2000s, and while he was living in her home in Los Angeles he recorded his first album, Back to Bedlam.

Blunt was with Fisher the night before she was found unresponsive on a flight from London to Los Angeles in 2016. She died days later, with cocaine, heroin, MDMA and methadone found in her system.



▲ *James Blunt said police sent him emails from the now defunct tabloid*

Blunt said "she'd just got the job again of being Princess Leia in the new Star Wars movie, so she was really on a high and a positive, but they had applied a lot of pressure on her to be thin. She spoke about the difficulties women have in the industry … She really put a lot of pressure on herself, started using drugs again and by the time she got on the plane, she had effectively killed herself."

Rian Johnson, who directed the 2017 film Star Wars: the Last Jedi, has been contacted for comment, as have Lucasfilm, News UK and Coulson.

Samaritans can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org

Pope issues rare apology for using homophobic slur in talk with bishops

Angela Giuffrida
Rome

Pope Francis has apologised for using an offensive slur during a discussion with bishops about admitting gay men into seminaries, saying he "never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms".

The rare papal apology followed reports in the Italian press on Monday that, during the discussion in Rome last week, the pontiff, 87, had said there was already too much "frociaggine" in some seminaries. The Italian word roughly translates as "faggotness".

Matteo Bruni, the director of the Vatican's press office, said Francis was aware of the newspaper reports about the closed-door conversation and "apologises to those who felt offended by the use of the term, reported by others".

"As he stated on several occasions, 'In the church there is room for everyone, for everyone. Nobody is useless, nobody is superfluous, there is room for everyone. Just as we are, all of us,'" said Bruni. "The pope never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms, and apologises to those who felt offended by the use of a term, reported by others."

The discussion took place during an assembly of the Italian bishops conference, reportedly aimed at considering the question of whether gay men should be admitted to Catholic seminaries, where priests are trained. When one of the bishops asked Francis what he should do, the pope reportedly reiterated his objection to admitting gay men, saying that while it was important to embrace everyone, it was likely that a gay person could risk leading a double life. He is then alleged to have used the offensive word.

The story was first reported by the political gossip website Dagospia, before being covered by the Italian dailies La Repubblica and Corriere della Sera, and the news agency Adnkronos.

La Repubblica, Corriere and Adnkronos quoted unnamed bishops, who said that the pontiff meant the derogatory term as a "joke", and that those around him were surprised and perplexed by the alleged slur. One bishop told Corriere della Sera that the Argentinian pontiff may not have been aware the term was offensive.

Since he was elected pope in 2013, Francis has sought to adopt a more inclusive tone towards the LGBTQ+ community in his public statements, much to the disdain of conservative cardinals.

Soon after becoming pope, he famously replied to a question about gay priests: "Who am I to judge?"

He approved a ruling in December allowing priests to bless unmarried



▲ *Pope Francis approved same-sex couples being blessed in a significant change of the church's position*

and same-sex couples in a significant change of position for the church.

However, he has been clear about not allowing gay people to join the clergy. In an interview in 2018 he said he was "concerned" about what he described as the "serious issue" of homosexuality and that being gay was a "fashion" to which the clergy was susceptible.

"In our societies it even seems that homosexuality is fashionable, and that mentality, in some way, also influences the life of the church," he said at the time.

The Roman Catholic church's position is that homosexual acts are sinful. A decree on training for priests in 2016 emphasised the obligation of sexual abstinence, as well as barring gay men and those who support "gay culture" from holy orders.

Papal apologies are usually issued in the hope of righting "historical wrongs" of the church rather than immediate personal mea culpas, said Christopher White, the Vatican correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter.

"Papal apologies, while not unprecedented, tend to be for historical wrongs," he said. "John Paul II famously apologised for the way the church historically treated women and the Jewish people; both he and Benedict XVI and Francis have all had to issue repeated mea culpas for the church's shameful record on clergy abuse.

"This apology from Francis is noticeable for the immediate about-face, which is probably attributed to the internet age, and also for how inconsistent the pope's offensive language was with his general record of LGBTQ outreach and his desire not to undo the bridge building work he seems to sincerely be engaged in."

Beckham scores tie-up deal with Euro 24 sponsor AliExpress

Sarah Butler

First came the watches, then the suits, then the whisky. Now the former England footballer David Beckham has put his name and face to AliExpress, an online retail platform owned by the Chinese tech group Alibaba.

The deal to become a global ambassador for the firm comes in the run-up to the Euro 2024 football tournament, which starts next month, and is the latest tie-up for Beckham, following hot on the heels of deals in recent weeks with the suit maker Hugo Boss and air fryer maker SharkNinja.

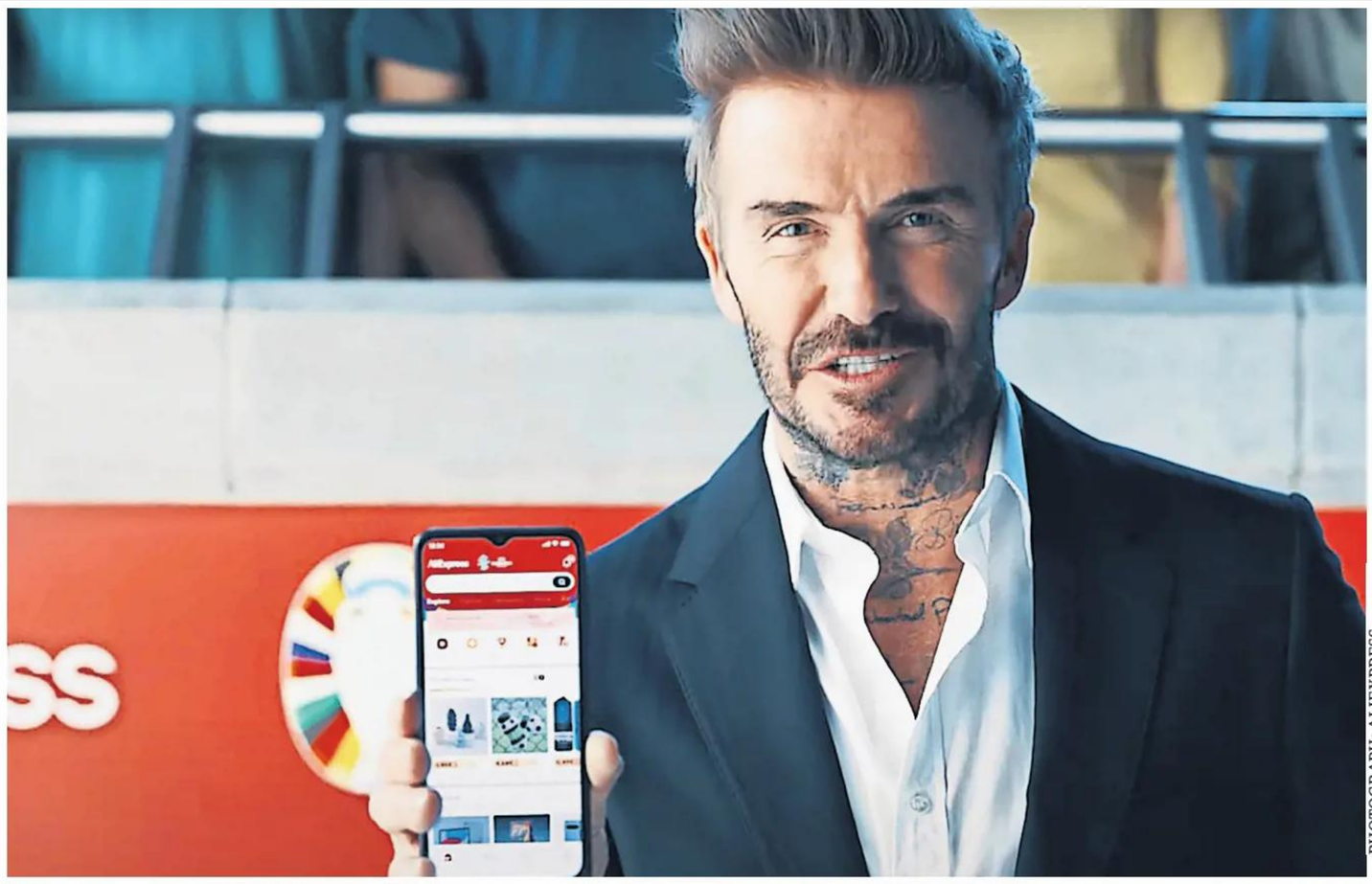
Beckham is also an ambassador for Tudor watches, Tempur mattresses, Unicef, and Nespresso coffee machines, and was brand ambassador for Haig Whisky for more than a decade until last year.

He fronts a Walkers crisps advert relating to the Uefa Euro 2024 tournament with the former French international footballer Thierry Henry. AliExpress is a sponsor for the tournament.

Beckham, who became a global style figure after rising to fame playing for Manchester United, Real Madrid and England, reportedly gained £200m from the sale of 55% of the business that handles his brand, to the US group Authentic Brands in 2022. Accounts for the first year of the partnership show that brand Beckham's revenues more than doubled from £34m to £72.6m, although pre-tax profits fell from £23.6m to £10.8m, chiefly because of an increase in administrative expenses.

Beckham and his wife, Victoria, who has a fashion label and beauty business, have earned millions through brand deals. In recent months the former Spice Girl has also joined with the Spanish high-street brand Mango.

The pair, who live mostly in a £30m white stucco townhouse in London and own a super-yacht called Seven, have a fortune of £455m, up £30m from a year before, according to the Sunday Times rich list.



PHOTOGRAPH: ALIEXPRESS

▲ *Beckham, seen below with his wife Victoria, has put his name to Alibaba's online platform, in a deal that follows a number of other tie-ups*



In March, AliExpress signed a deal to be the exclusive e-commerce platform partner of European football's governing body, Uefa, which oversees Euro 2024. The tournament, which is taking place in Germany, has also been sponsored by other Chinese groups, including the maker of electric vehicles BYD, and the electronics company Vivo.

Beckham's work as an ambassador for the 2022 Fifa World Cup, for which he was reportedly paid £10m, attracted criticism. He profited from his business relationship with Qatar, a country where there have been question marks over human rights, including treatment of women and the LGBTQ+ community. Beckham said at the time he believed sport could be a "force for good" and the World Cup had stimulated debate about the issues.

Man arrested over death of woman, 34, stabbed on Dorset beach

Nadeem Badshah

A 20-year-old man from south London was arrested on suspicion of murder after a woman was fatally stabbed on a beach in Bournemouth, police said last night.

Two women from Poole in Dorset were stabbed on Durley Chine beach at about 11.45pm last Friday. One of the women, 34, died at the scene while the other woman, 38, was seriously injured and remains in hospital.

The suspect, from Croydon, has also been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, Dorset police said yesterday.

Intelligence and firearms officers worked with the Metropolitan police to arrest the man in London.

The woman stabbed to death was named locally as sports coach and mother Amie Gray.

A friend of Gray's described her on a social media post as "the kindest lovely young girl".

Another person said: "You were such a good friend and someone I could call about anything. A beautiful person inside and out.

"Thank you for all the laughs and memories I will cherish forever."

A third person wrote Gray had a "fun and bubbly presence" and "lit up the room".

Flowers have been placed at both ends of a mile-long police cordon.

Austen was here
Fans decry plan for hotel used by writer
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Gas guzzlers
Soaring SUV sales stoke climate fears
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National



Seat in a Spitfire Dorothea Barron, 99, who was a serving Wren at the time of the D-day landings, took part in an event yesterday at London Biggin Hill airport. Second world war veterans are to travel to Normandy for the 80th anniversary of D-day on 6 June, and commemoration services will also be held in Britain.

PHOTOGRAPH: KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

Hundreds of students in debt told they may be unable to graduate

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

Hundreds of students at the University of Sussex, many from overseas, have been warned that they may be unable to either graduate or re-register for the next academic year if they fail to pay outstanding debts.

Those affected include students from Nigeria and Iran, who have been struggling to pay their fees after the value of their currencies crashed.

The university insisted, however, that no students would be removed from courses due to unpaid debts. It also said students would not be removed from university rooms this academic year due to debt.

The developments at Sussex emerged after Nigerian students at Teesside University told last week how they were thrown off courses and ordered to leave the UK when they got behind on payments. Teesside said it had "no choice" as failure to pay was a breach of visa sponsorship rules. It said it had made every effort to help the affected students, including with payment plans.

One Nigerian student at Sussex with outstanding debts, said: "We have no intention of not paying, we're willing to meet our obligations, but we're pleading for the university to grant us some time."

The University of Sussex student union claimed an earlier email from the university said debts had to be cleared by the end of May and warned students the university might have to take action to "withdraw" them from the university. Some students had IT access withdrawn, but then in a letter to those struggling to pay debts the university reassured them that it would not happen again in this academic cycle.

The letter, from Prof Kate O'Riordan, a pro-vice-chancellor at the university, said: "Students expecting to graduate in July 2024 or January 2025 will need to settle tuition fee debt before graduating. Students expecting to return in the next academic year will not be able to re-register with outstanding tuition fee debt. The university is being as flexible as possible, offering well-being and other support to students, and signposting financial support."

O'Riordan said the current level of unpaid fees was at least five times bigger than the university had seen previously. "What we are calling the cost of living crisis ... and a global financial crisis in other countries, is coming together at the same time in a way that has not been seen before."

Early exposure to peanuts 'cuts allergy risk', trial finds

Ian Sample
Science editor

Feeding children peanut products from infancy until the age of five cuts their risk of developing a peanut allergy into early adolescence, researchers say.

Children who ate peanut pastes or puffed peanut snacks regularly from the age of four to six months onward were 71% less likely to have a peanut allergy at the age of 13 than those who avoided peanuts, pointing to a long-lasting effect of early peanut consumption.

The simple dietary intervention could prevent about 10,000 cases of potentially life-threatening peanut allergies each year in the UK alone, doctors said, and cut global cases by 100,000 annually.

Gideon Lack, professor of paediatric allergy at King's College London, said decades of advice to avoid peanuts had made parents wary of giving them to their children from such an early age. But he said the evidence was now clear that early exposure to peanuts provided long-term protection against the allergy.

"I strongly recommend that babies are introduced to peanuts by four months if they have eczema and by six months if they don't have eczema," Lack said.

Babies with eczema have a greater risk of developing peanut allergies, probably because traces of the food can penetrate the skin more easily and be targeted by the body's immune system.

Rates of peanut allergy have risen in many western countries in recent decades. One in 50 children in the UK now have the allergy, with about 14,000 newly diagnosed each year. Although 20% of children typically grow out of the allergy, for the rest the condition can mean avoiding peanuts for life and the worry of a severe allergic reaction if they accidentally come into contact with the food.

Peanuts are legumes and from a different family of plants to tree nuts such as almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, pistachios and walnuts. About a third of children with peanut allergy, however, will have an allergy to at least one type of tree nut.

Past work by the same researchers found that regular consumption of peanut products from infancy reduced the risk of peanut allergy at age five by 81%, compared with the risk for children who avoided peanuts for the same period.

The latest study, the Leap-Trio trial, followed 508 of the children to an average age of 13, during which time they were free to eat or avoid peanuts as they wished.

100,000
Number of annual global cases of peanut allergies that could be cut via this simple dietary intervention

The trial found that children in the early-peanut consumption group had a 71% lower risk of peanut allergy compared with those in the peanut avoidance group. As expected, a small percentage of the children naturally grew out of their allergy.

The results published in NEJM Evidence show the protection remained intact regardless of the children's peanut-eating habits after the age of five.

Lack said there was a "double advantage" to starting children on peanut products early on.

He said: "You'll prevent the vast majority of peanut allergy, but for those cases where you [can't] you can identify the children earlier, when treating them is much easier. Once they are seven, eight, nine, months [old] you've really missed the boat. But even if so, you identify children who have peanut allergy early and can treat them with immunotherapy."

The researchers said peanut butter or peanut puffs can be given to children who are still breastfeeding, once they can manage soft food. The aim should be the equivalent of a heaped teaspoon of peanut butter three times a week. While whole or chopped peanuts should be avoided due to the choking risk, peanut puffs can be ground into a paste for babies.

Rayner told police will take no action after investigation into sale of home



Peter Walker
Vikram Dodd

Angela Rayner has been cleared of wrongdoing over claims she avoided tax on the sale of a home, with the Labour deputy leader criticising what she called the "desperate tactics" of Conservative MPs who urged police to investigate.

In a statement, Greater Manchester police (GMP) said any allegations that Rayner should have paid capital gains tax or council tax would not fall under their jurisdiction, and that they had shared details of their investigation with Stockport council and HMRC. The Guardian understands that neither of these bodies plan to take action.

Rayner had said she would resign as deputy leader if she was found to have broken the law by avoiding tax when she sold the former council home she owned for a profit in 2015. The Tories had pressured police to look into claims that she had wrongly designated the home as her principal residence, and that it was wrongly listed on the electoral register.

"Following allegations about Angela Rayner MP, Greater Manchester police has completed a thorough, carefully considered and proportionate investigation," said a spokesperson for the force. "We have concluded that no further police action will be taken.

"The investigation originated from complaints made by Mr James Daly MP directly to GMP. Subsequent further contact with GMP by members of the public, and claims made by individuals featured in media reporting, indicated a strong public interest in the need for allegations to be investigated.

"Matters involving council tax and personal tax do not fall into the jurisdiction of policing. GMP has liaised with Stockport council and information about our investigation has been shared with them. Details of our investigation have also been shared with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs."

It is understood that HMRC also looked into the issue at the request of Rayner, and has confirmed there is no capital gains tax liability, meaning no action will be taken.

A spokesperson for Stockport council said it had "reviewed and responded to all correspondence" on the matter, adding: "We have also concluded that no further action will be taken on behalf of the council."

Rayner said: "We have seen the Conservative party use this playbook before – reporting political opponents to the police during election campaigns to distract from their dire record. I am grateful to all those who have stood by and supported me and my family."

Asked about the announcement, Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, said he was "obviously pleased", adding: "I never doubted that Angela hadn't done anything wrong."

Starmer was subject to his own police investigation over alleged wrongdoing, one also heavily pushed by Tory MPs. He and Rayner were cleared in 2022 by Durham police after claims they broke lockdown rules by having beer and a takeaway curry with Labour staff during election campaigning in 2021.

Michael Barton, the former chief constable of Durham police, said such inquiries were concerning. "When did politicians start thinking it was a good idea to pressurise the police … into fanciful investigations when the police are under such huge strain?"

In 2007, before Rayner was an MP, she bought the £79,000 property using the right-to-buy scheme, getting a 25% discount off its asking price. A year later she had a second child, with her then-partner Mark Rayner, a Unison official. He already owned a home about a mile away.

Their son was born prematurely and spent eight months in intensive care. The couple kept their separate properties during this period. In 2010, they were married, a year after having their second child.

In March 2015, Rayner sold her home for £127,500, making a profit of £48,500. Because it was designated as her main residence, the profit was not liable for capital gains tax. The allegation by some Tories was that this was misleading, as she primarily lived at her then-husband's address.

Married couples who both have individual properties can only have one main residence between them under tax law.



▲ *Angela Rayner said that she was grateful to all those who stood by her*

Nuts in May Starmer sticks to shtick but is Sunak's lovely story derailing?

Marina Hyde's campaign trail



People say that manufacturing has declined under the Conservatives, but the sheer volume of outrage manufactured by Rishi Sunak's national service wingnuttery at the weekend was last night compounded by his decision to unveil a quadruple lock to the state pension. Truly the seven-blade razor of advanced pensions technology. It's so innovative it might even spin off and manufacture another deranged bit on the Loose Women show.

I am still howling at the moment on that show a couple of weeks ago when Janet Street-Porter demanded of Sunak: "Why do you hate pensioners? WHY DO YOU HATE PENSIONERS? That is the only conclusion I can come to." State of the art lunacy, made end-to-end in the UK. Let's face it, this is what you call a joined-up manufacturing industry.

But look, for whatever reason, Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves preferred to spend their afternoon at a facility where something other than abstract nouns was manufactured – at Airbus Defence and Space, in Stevenage. A lot of election campaign visits are to places connected with jobs politicians probably wanted to do when they were little. Digger driver. Train driver. Biscuit factory worker.

Today's broadly fell into the category "spaceman". Airbus are serious manufacturers in aerospace and defence, and recently won a new contract to maintain the Skynet military satellite system.

Anyway – the event. There wasn't a speech, which was a plus. I'm not saying that if you wanted to hide the nuclear codes, inside a Starmer speech would be the best place to do it. But it would not be the worst.

Instead it was to be a Q&A with a throng of Airbus staff, surely some of our best and brightest – albeit kept from their workstations for an extra hour as Starmer was running late. As they waited for him to bound in – don't call him Sleepy! – there was a chap saying: "If I could just ask people to crowd around, to come even closer to the stage." For some time now the fashionable look for political events is that one which happens in high-school movies when people clear a tight circle around the two best dancers and watch them do their dance.

And so to the two best dancers and their dance. It may not be electrifying – Airbus probably make machinery less robotic than Rachel Reeves – but the Starmer/Reeves shtick is incredibly practised. Nothing can derail its choreography, not even the question from one guy which opened with the statement: "I'm currently working on lunar mission planning …" Even so mate, you WILL get an answer containing the keywords "stability" and "respect" and "grown up".

But by now you already know the nine or 10 nouns, abstract and otherwise, that characterise the parties' preferred election discourse. Chaos. Plan. Toybox. Toolmaker. You may already never want to hear these words again.

But the key thing to remember, if you're a vaguely politically engaged sort of a person, is that election campaigns are not for you. General elections are covered by a bunch of jaded weirdos given to rolling their eyes and going: "Settle an argument for me – was his dad a

'Why do you hate pensioners? It's the only conclusion …'

Janet Street-Porter
Loose Women panellist

▼ *During her Q&A at Rolls-Royce, Reeves hinted Labour might not be able to raise the personal allowance*

PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA



Budget
Reeves will wait until autumn if party wins

Jessica Elgot
Deputy political editor

Rachel Reeves has said there will be no budget until September if Labour wins the election and promised the party would not announce any additional tax measures beyond what it had already promised.

The party has ruled out increases to income tax, national insurance, corporation tax or any form of wealth tax and Reeves said there would be no new measures proposed or "black holes" to fill.

Keir Starmer backed the pledge, saying there would "no fiscal surprises" in the Labour manifesto.

At her first major speech of the campaign, Reeves said all the tax measures to fund the party's current commitments had been announced. "There are no additional tax rises needed beyond the ones that I've said," she added.

▼ *The shadow chancellor's speech came as Labour was endorsed by 120 major business leaders*

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES MANNING/PA



Labour has already said it would fund various pledges with measures including a windfall tax on oil and gas firms, adding VAT to private school fees, taxing private equity bonuses, and a further tightening of the non-dom tax system.

Reeves ruled out a snap budget or fiscal statement should Labour win the election, saying she was committed to receiving forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) before any such event.

"The OBR requires 10 weeks' notice to provide an independent forecast ahead of a budget and I've been really clear that I would not deliver a fiscal event without an OBR forecast," she said. That timeframe would mean no budget until mid-September.

Reeves and Starmer had previously ruled out a rise in national insurance and income tax, though over the weekend Starmer did not explicitly rule out a rise in VAT, which Reeves has now done by implication.

However, she hinted during her Q&A session at Rolls-Royce in Derby yesterday that there was no guarantee Labour would be able to allow a rise in the personal allowance. Not doing so would in effect be a tax rise as wage inflation pushes people into higher tax bands.

Reeves emphasised again in later interviews that there would be no new tax rises to deliver what Labour was promising in the election campaign – though she said she was not going to "write the budget" during the campaign.

She also said she did not anticipate any "black holes" Labour would need to fill with surprise tax increases.

"There is nothing in our plans that requires any further increases in taxes, I have confidence in that. Voters can have confidence," she told Sky News.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) thinktank, has called for a more transparent conversation about tax and spending. Its director, Paul Johnson, recently said both parties must "reckon with the reality of the economic and fiscal context in which this election is taking place".

Johnson said they would face stark choices in government and that both parties would need to choose between cutting spending, raising taxes further or increasing annual borrowing.

"The parties might well be reluctant to tell us which of these they would opt for upon taking office. That doesn't mean that we should refrain from asking them," the IFS report said.

Her speech, in which Reeves said Labour would become the natural home for business, came as the party was endorsed by 120 major business leaders in a letter to the Times. The letter drew criticism from the Tories, who said some of the companies involved were now defunct and said there were no FTSE 100 companies among the signatories.

Starmer laughed off the criticism during a visit to Airbus in Stevenage yesterday, challenging the Conservatives to "produce their own list".

toolmaker?!" And they are aimed at people who, only in five weeks' time and only in tiny percentages and only if you're extremely lucky, will be going: "Hang on, his dad was a toolmaker??? I thought he was born a sir. I guess you learn something new every election."

So this is partly why for many the election currently feels as if it's happening on different rhythms. On the one hand you've got parties trying normal traditional campaign events: in the case of Labour, something like this Airbus thing; in the case of the Lib Dems, falling off paddleboards. (That is pure heritage for them, I think I once went to Go Ape with Nick Clegg.)

On the other hand … the Conservatives. Is this traditional? Even government ministers have gone on holiday. Steve Baker, the Northern Ireland minister, has jetted off to Greece on what he himself has defensively described as a "much-needed break", even though he's about to get really quite a lot of time off from early July.

The prime minister seems so palpably convinced he can't win he's at the stage of promising any old mad thing. In fact, in terms of a specific snapshot of where we are, just shy of a week into the election he called, it's like that scene at the end of Of Mice and Men [spoiler alert, kids], where Rishi Sunak knows the Conservative party has accidentally killed something. (Curley's wife? The economy? Dignity in politics?)

And now he is sitting down next to the Conservative party and is telling it a lovely story about all the lovely things they are going to do, right before he shoots it in the head.

Labour plans to clear NHS waiting lists in five years

Continued *from page 1*

prominent and ambitious pledges of the election, Streeting and Keir Starmer will use a campaign visit to the West Midlands to promise that the backlog of about 3.2 million people in England currently waiting more than 18 weeks for NHS treatment will be cleared within five years.

The party has previously set out plans to use more weekend and evening services to create 40,000 extra appointments a week, along with other measures such as expanding staff provision and using capacity from the private health sector. However, this is the first time Labour has made such a specific promise on waiting lists. Healthcare analysts said it could prove tricky to implement.

Streeting said he was aware of the weight of responsibility to deliver the promise, but as someone who was treated by the NHS for kidney cancer he felt it was now his "driving purpose" to achieve it.

"As someone whose life was saved by the NHS when I had kidney cancer, as someone whose family has regularly relied on the NHS, in good times and bad, if there's only one thing that I do with a life that's been saved by the NHS, it's making sure that I dedicate my life to saving the NHS that saved me," he said. "And that's my driving purpose. I really hope that people give us a chance to do it."

He added: "I'm happy to be judged by every single pledge that we set out at this election. As I've been saying to people on the doorstep, particularly with Labour's six first steps, we've been so careful to make sure that the promises we make are promises we can keep and the country can afford. Because we know that if there's one thing that's in even shorter supply than money at the moment, it's trust."

While some of the swifter patient turnaround is intended to come from a £1.3bn annual funding increase, paid for in part by abolishing the non-dom tax status, much of the plan rests on modernisation and efficiency.

Streeting has previously clashed with professional organisations such as the British Medical Association, the doctors' union, but he said there was willingness within the NHS to change. "I'm sat talking to you in a practice up in Yorkshire, where the GP partners have led an approach that prioritises the family-doctor relationship and provides a whole range of services, from singing classes to helping people with respiratory problems to dementia clinics," he said.

"There are brilliant people on the frontline. They're not resistant to change. They are crying out for it and they are desperate for a government to work with them rather than to pull the rug out from under them.

"So I don't feel like it's going to be me versus the NHS on NHS reform. It's going to be me with the NHS, reforming the National Health Service so that it's back on its feet and fit for the future."

NHS waiting lists are gauged by a variety of metrics depending on the time waited. The most recent figures show that in England among the 3.2 million people waiting for more than 18 weeks just over 300,000 have been on a waiting list for a year or more.

The total waiting list comprises about 6.3 million individuals and just over 7.5m cases. Labour is to argue that on the government's trajectory, the latter figure would reach 10m in another Conservative term.

Although healthcare analysts have welcomed the plan, some said the proposal would fail to provide a "rapid or sudden improvement" in waiting times, while others said it might distract from other pressing healthcare issues.

"Clearing the backlog within five years would take real effort and focus and may mean other ambitions in health and care will be slower to realise," said Sarah Woolnough, the chief executive of the King's Fund charity. "Achieving this ambition to eradicate the backlog within five years would almost certainly require a swift resolution to ongoing industrial action."

She added that offering evening and weekend appointments was a "good idea" but said it was "not a given" that NHS staff would be interested in doing extra shifts "when so many report high levels of stress and burnout".

Thea Stein, the chief executive of the Nuffield Trust charity, said Labour was right to focus on waiting lists: "We support the intention to spend more money on equipment, historically the victim of short-termism.

"However, the sum of money they are proposing will cover only a limited amount of extra care, not enough for a rapid or sudden improvement."



▲ *Wes Streeting suggested a football challenge between the party leaders*

'One-on-one in midfield' Tory tactics tackled

Wes Streeting has mocked the Conservatives for trying to portray Keir Starmer as old and doddery. The shadow health secretary said he was "pretty disgusted" at some of the Tories' campaign tactics, notably anonymous quotes calling Starmer "Sir Sleepy" and intimating that, at 61, he was less vigorous than the 44-year-old prime minister.

On the basis of footage from Monday, Streeting said, Sunak would be no match for Starmer, who plays five-a-side football regularly. "What have we seen so far? We've seen Rishi Sunak trying to paint himself as the youthful, dynamic candidate against his older opponent.

"Seeing that appalling stunt of Rishi trying to dribble a ball, Keir would take his ankles out in a second on a football pitch. Forget the TV debates – let's have one-on-one in the midfield. I know who my money would be on."
Peter Walker

General election 2024

Three potential candidates in frame to replace Abbott

Aletha Adu
Political correspondent

Labour could potentially install one of three "credible" candidates in Diane Abbott's seat, as the party seemed intent on not allowing her to stand as an MP despite an investigation into her conduct being completed six months ago.

Abbott, Britain's first black female MP, was suspended from the party in April last year over a letter in the Observer that seemed to play down suggestions of racism against Jewish people, meaning she was still an independent when parliament was prorogued before the general election, which will take place on 4 July.

Labour's national executive committee completed its investigation in December, it has emerged, with Abbott given a formal warning with an instruction to complete an online antisemitism training course in February.

It was reported last night that Labour had restored the whip to Abbott, but it remained unlikely that she would be selected as a candidate in the upcoming election.

The Guardian understands that the party could make a renewed push to exclude her from standing again for her Hackney North and Stoke Newington seat after she liked a post on X by Jeremy Corbyn's wife, Laura Alvarez, about his decision to stand as an independent candidate.



▲ *Last night it was reported Labour had restored the whip to Diane Abbott, who was suspended last year*
PHOTOGRAPH: DOMINIC LIPINSKI/PA

Restoring the whip to Abbot would allow her to leave the party "with dignity".

In the past, Labour has blocked a number of leftwing hopefuls from standing as candidates, and suspended party members for expressing support for other political parties.

Although her fate is officially yet to be decided, three Labour activists with links to Abbott's constituency - Anntoinette Bramble, the deputy mayor of Hackney council; Sem Moema, the London assembly member for North East; and Mete Coban; the Labour councillor for Stoke Newington - have been widely talked about as possible replacements.

Abbott was suspended after she wrote a letter headlined: "Racism in Britain is not a black and white issue. It's far more complicated", suggesting Jewish, Irish and Traveller people were not subject to racism "all their lives". She apologised for the letter.

Party sources acknowledge the huge amount of support Abbott has locally, and had been hoping to find a civil agreement, but not stand for Labour at the next election, because of what are termed as health difficulties.

But sources close to Abbott have questioned why her future within the party has been linked to her health, and why she cannot make that decision.

BBC Newsnight was first to report that the NEC had completed its investigation as long ago as December. In March, Abbott strongly denied reports that she rejected antisemitism training offered by the party.

Labour figures from across the party are understood to be furious at the fact the case was concluded so long ago, but shadow ministers have continued to present it as ongoing, seemingly not knowing.

Others have expressed concern that black Labour members will feel there is no space for them in the party if she is ejected.

After the Guardian revealed that the Tories' biggest donor, Frank Hester, told colleagues that looking at Abbott made you "want to hate all black women", adding that the MP "should be shot", Abbott said she hoped to receive some "public support" from the Labour leader.

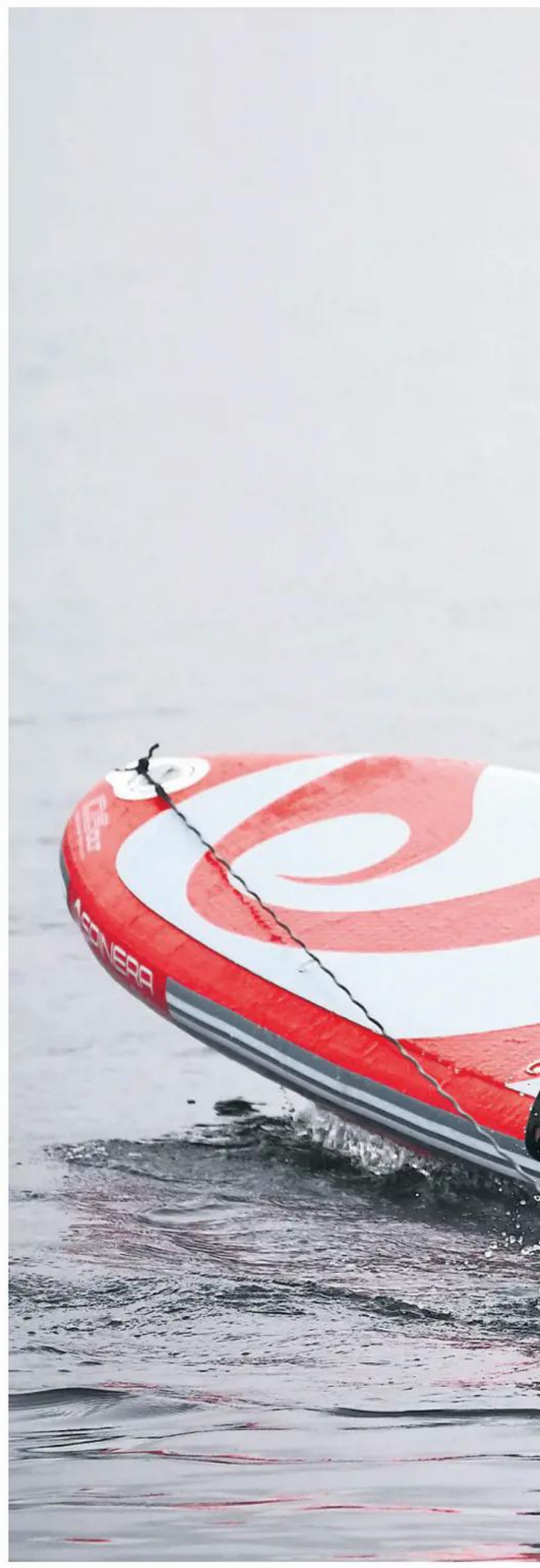
In the wake of the row, Keir Starmer criticised Hester's "abhorrent language", but told the BBC her suspension "was for an entirely different issue".

When asked about Abbott's case last week, the Labour leader said: "The final decisions on candidates is coming up in a few days' time, I think 4 June, it may be a little earlier, a little later, I can't quite remember.

"But within a relatively short period of time, the final list of candidates will be decided, and that will be a matter for the Labour party's national executive committee."

A spokesperson from the leftwing campaign group Momentum said: "This is outrageous news which confirms that the Starmer leadership is trying to force Britain's first black woman MP out of parliament.

"For months, we have been told by Keir Starmer that the process is independent and it's nothing to do with him."



Labour

Party lines up leader's allies to fill safe seats

Jessica Elgot
Eleni Courea

Labour has opened applications for a string of safe seats after seven MPs announced last-minute retirements, with allies of party leader Keir Starmer expected to be lined up to take their places.

Those standing down include the shadow minister for music and tourism, Barbara Keeley, and the chair of the parliamentary Labour party, John Cryer, as well as John Spellar, the MP for Warley; Virendra Sharma, the MP for Ealing Southall; and Kevin Brennan, the MP for Cardiff West.

Julie Elliott, the MP for Sunderland Central, and Lyn Brown, the MP for West Ham, joined the ranks of those retiring yesterday.

Senior Labour sources said there could be several more departures announced in the next 24 hours.

The party is also advertising for a number of other safe seats in London, including Stratford and BowA number of senior Labour figures are widely expected to seek a seat in the coming days, including Josh Simons, the director of the highly influential, pro-Starmer thinktank Labour Together, and Georgia Gould, the leader of Camden council.

Members of the party's national executive committee (NEC), who have been instrumental in transforming its rules after Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, are also tipped for seats. They include Luke Akehurst, Gurinder Singh Josan, Abdi Duale and the NEC chair, James Asser.

The move will trigger controversy from critics who argue that Labour candidates - particularly those in plum seats - should be selected with local input from grassroots members and not simply handed to allies of the party leadership.

In February 2020, while he was campaigning for the Labour leadership, Starmer said selections for Labour candidates needed to be "more democratic and we should end NEC impositions of candidates. Local party members should select their candidates for every election."

He added then that "there should be no power without accountability, and true accountability requires transparency".

Labour figures argue that special circumstances are triggered once an election is called and candidates must quickly be put in place.

The party is yet to announce a decision on whether Diane Abbott, who has been suspended for more than a year after remarks she made about racism, will be allowed to stand for Labour.

Candidates standing in the general election must submit their nomination papers by 7 June, meaning that parties must complete all of their selections before then. Barring further last-minute retirements, Labour has selected most of its candidates.

Over the weekend Labour installed dozens of candidates in non-target seats that it has little hope of winning. The Guardian reported last week that shortlists for non-target seats were completed in January while the party was stepping up preparations for a spring election.

A party source stressed that shortlisted candidates had undergone rigorous vetting at the time, after the controversy over leaked anti-Israel comments made by its byelection candidate in Rochdale, Azhar Ali.

The Conservative party also still has dozens of candidates to select. Several safe Tory seats are expected to be given to allies of Rishi Sunak, with some of his Downing Street aides tipped to stand.





▶ *The Labour MPs John Cryer, Barbara Keeley, right, and Julie Elliott, below, will not stand in the general election*



Education

How private sector could be affected by Starmer's proposals

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

One of Labour's flagship policies is its promise to end tax breaks for private schools.

The policy is not new. It was adopted under Jeremy Corbyn and has featured in previous Labour election manifestos. But with polls showing Keir Starmer's party on course for victory on 4 July, it is coming under renewed scrutiny.

With the general election just over five weeks away, here's what you need to know about Labour's plans.



Making a splash Ed Davey, the Lib Dem leader, falls into Windermere from a paddleboard while on the campaign trail in the Lake District. He later revealed he had fallen off on purpose to highlight his party's policy of getting tough with water firms over pollution.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS FURLONG/GETTY

What is the party proposing?
Labour has said that if it wins the general election it will remove the tax exemptions currently enjoyed by private schools. The most significant of these in terms of revenue is VAT, which Starmer has pledged to add to private school fees at the standard rate of 20%.

What happens at the moment?
Under existing rules, independent schools do not have to charge VAT on fees due to an exemption for the supply of education. Many have argued this is unfair, including former Conservative education secretary Michael Gove, who wrote in the Times in 2017: "That tax advantage allows the wealthiest in this country, indeed the very wealthiest in the globe, to buy a prestige service that secures their children a permanent positional edge in society at an effective 20% discount. How can this be justified?"

What does Labour hope to achieve?
Labour's aim is to address a fundamental unfairness and generate funding that can be invested in the state sector. The share of pupils in private schools across the UK has remained at around 6-7% for the last 20 years, which equates to 560,000-570,000 pupils in England.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said the policy will generate roughly £1.5bn a year. Labour has said it will use this to pay for 6,500 extra teachers - a key election pledge - and to put mental health support in every school.

What impact will it have?
The Daily Mail on Tuesday claimed that "Labour's tax raid on private schools would force nearly half of fee-paying pupils into the state system". It said a survey of parents with children at private schools indicated "as many as 224,000 pupils could leave as a result".

It is the latest - and most extreme - of a series of stories in recent weeks that say the policy will lead to a sharp increase in private school fees, which will in turn trigger an "exodus" of pupils to already over-stretched state schools, potentially costing the government more than it raises in taxes.

Labour has dismissed this as scaremongering. "It's the vested interests in the private school lobby which make those kinds of bogus arguments," the shadow education secretary, Bridget Phillipson, told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

The survey in the Mail report was done by Baines Cutler, who describe themselves as "leading experts in financial benchmarking and strategic advice for the independent schools' sector". A report by the IFS, which is often described as Britain's leading economics thinktank, predicted - in contrast - that removing tax exemptions was likely to have a "relatively limited effect" on numbers attending private schools with a mere 3%-7% reduction.

Could it lead to private schools closing?
Critics of the policy fear it could, but the Etons and Winchesters of this world will not suffer. It was reported last weekend that Alton School, an £18,000 a year Catholic day school in Hampshire, is to close at the end of this term.

"This proposal is based on a continued decline in pupil numbers, to the extent that the school has now become unviable," its website said. "This is due to a combination of adverse political and economic factors."

The Telegraph dubbed it the first victim of "Labour's planned tax raid on private education".

According to the Independent Schools Council, which represents 1,300 private schools in the UK, there has been a 2.7% drop in new pupil recruitment since last year.

There could be many reasons for that - inflation-driven fee increases, the impact of the cost of living crisis on parents, and the declining birth rate. But small independent schools, often charging much lower fees, have always been more precarious, and they will be concerned Labour's policy could tip them over the edge.

Could the policy have unintended consequences?
While some commentators have warned the policy will pile additional pressures on state schools already struggling with squeezed budgets and insufficient teachers, others say the impact will be much more limited.

Schools are already used to dealing with the sudden influx of refugee children from countries such as Ukraine and Afghanistan, and with falling rolls in some parts of the country, additional pupils from the private sector could be a bonus, bringing in funding.

According to IFS analysis, a small shift in pupils from the private to the state sector would require an extra £100m-£300m in school funding a year. It's worth noting that the overall schools budget in England is about £60bn.

But, the IFS says, it "should be remembered that pupil numbers in the state sector are expected to fall dramatically over the next decade so state schools might welcome extra pupils moving from the private sector".

Explainer
What is socialism?

A few days into the general election campaign, Keir Starmer surprised some by declaring himself a socialist. "I would describe myself as a socialist. I describe myself as a progressive. I'd describe myself as somebody who always puts the country first and party second," he said.

What is socialism?
Socialists believe all human beings are of equal worth, and that society should be organised to reflect that. Some socialists believe that key industries and sectors, such as utilities, transport and housing, should be owned by the state and run in the public interest rather than for private profit. Other socialists believe all industries and sectors should be run this way.

Where did the idea originate?
It began as a reaction to capitalism after the industrial revolution. People were concentrated into towns and cities to work long hours for low wages (often in dangerous conditions) in factories, mills, mines and other workplaces. The factory owners grew rich on the backs of the working class. Some people argued the workers should collectively own the factories, either through workers' co-operatives or through public ownership. Karl Marx was the most high profile advocate of this.

What about the Labour party?
The Labour party was founded in 1900, out of socialist, Marxist, social democrat and trade unionist movements. Its fundamental principles of social justice, internationalism and "democratic socialism" have endured, although they have been interpreted differently over the past 124 years. The first Labour government was formed in 1924, but it was the post-war Labour government that brought real change: the NHS, welfare state and the nationalisation of coal, iron, steel and the railways.

Is it still a socialist organisation?
Socialism came roaring back under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership - which was welcomed by some but also blamed for putting off potential Labour voters. After he was dumped as leader, the national anthem was sung at Labour's 2022 conference along with the Red Flag. But now Starmer, considered by many to have shifted the party back to the centre ground of UK politics, has said he is a socialist.

Could we be heading for a socialist UK?
No. Labour shows little inclination to introduce radical policies, renationalise or boot the bosses out. Its hallmarks are political caution, economic stability and reassuring business leaders. **Harriet Sherwood**

Election campaigning not optional, says PM after minister takes holiday

Eleni Courea
Political correspondent

Rishi Sunak warned Conservative MPs yesterday that election campaigning was not optional, after a minister decided to go on holiday.

During a campaign visit to a ceramics factory in the Midlands, the prime minister said he had been "out every day" and that the MPs he had spent time with were "working their socks off for their communities".

Steve Baker, a Northern Ireland minister, announced he was going ahead with his holiday this week since MPs had been led to believe the general election would be held in the autumn.

Asked whether campaigning was optional for MPs, Sunak said: "No. Our MPs, candidates are working their socks off across the country, actually. I've been out every day of this campaign, spending time with them. They're working really hard. And what they're talking to everyone about is the choice in this election – it's very clear. We live in uncertain times, and those uncertain times call for a government prepared to take bold action, that has got a clear plan."

Some Conservative MPs and ministers are angry with Sunak for calling a surprise summer election.

On Monday Baker told the Mirror: "The prime minister told everyone we could go on holiday and then called a snap election. So I've chosen to do my campaign work in Greece."

He declined to respond to the prime minister's remarks yesterday.

Sunak was visiting Churchill Ceramics, in Stoke-on-Trent, where he took four questions, three from staff and one from the company's chief executive.

During the Q&A session Sunak appeared to grant a question to Beverly Cumberlidge, a worker who had her hand up, before he was redirected by the Tory deputy chair Jonathan Gullis to someone else.

Cumberlidge later said she was disappointed she was not given the chance to question the prime minister, who spoke about making the UK "the best country in the world to be a veteran".

She said: "My partner suffers from PTSD. He was in the Falklands war, and he's got no help. We've got nowhere to turn to. He's had counselling, but the counselling hasn't helped so he just tries to do it on his own. He self-harms ... There's no support, there's nowhere we can go."

Asked whether she was satisfied with Sunak's answers, she said: "Not really, no ... They want young people to go into the military. The pay isn't good enough. Why would they?"



▲ *Steve Baker declined to respond to the prime minister's remarks*

Jade Burden, a veteran who works in HR at the company, asked Sunak whether he had a "plan to look after people in the future when they have left the forces" following the proposed national service scheme.

She later told reporters: "I understand what he is saying about looking after veterans. However ... the experience he has described is a lot different to what I experienced and what a lot of my friends experienced when they were part of the forces."

The prime minister later told journalists he hoped his two daughters would have a chance to complete national service.

Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow paymaster general, said: "From the economy to apprenticeships to veterans, once again Rishi Sunak thinks he can pull the wool over the public's eyes. But they know what we know – that we are all worse off after 14 years of Tory chaos, neglect and instability."

> *'The prime minister told everyone we could go on holiday and then called an election. I've chosen to do my campaign work in Greece'*
>
> **Steve Baker**
> *Minister*



▶ *Rishi Sunak playing bowls in Market Bosworth yesterday. Some of his MPs and ministers are angry with him for calling a snap election*
PHOTOGRAPH: AARON CHOWN/PA



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Education Sunak pledges to replace 'rip-off degrees' with high-skilled apprenticeships

Eleni Courea
Political correspondent

Rishi Sunak has promised to create 100,000 high-skilled apprenticeships a year by scrapping "rip-off degrees" if he wins the general election.

In the latest of a flurry of announcements as the Conservatives try to narrow Labour's 20-point poll lead, the party pledged to replace "low-quality" university degrees with apprenticeships.

Under the plans, there would be legislation granting greater powers to the Office for Students, the universities regulator, to close degree courses that are underperforming. These would be chosen based on drop-out rates, job progression and future earnings potential.

The Conservatives said creating 100,000 high-skilled apprenticeships would cost £885m by the end of the next parliament in 2029-30. This would be paid for by shutting down the worst-performing university degrees, which would save an estimated £910m.

Sunak said that "improving education is the closest thing we have to a silver bullet for boosting life chances". He pledged to create thousands more apprenticeships by '"putting an end to rip-off degrees and offering our young people the employment opportunities and financial security they need to thrive".

The Conservatives claim to have delivered 5.8m apprenticeships since 2010. But the number of people starting out on apprenticeships in England has fallen from 500,000 in 2015 to 337,000 last year, according to Commons library statistics.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017-18 and the Covid-19 pandemic have had a negative impact on uptake.

Labour has pledged to replace the apprenticeship levy with a growth and skills levy to fund other types of training. It would allow businesses to use 50% of their funds to pay for non-apprenticeship training.

As the Conservatives unveiled their own apprenticeship policy, they attacked New Labour's legacy of getting more young people to university. In 1999, Tony Blair set a target to get 50% of young adults into higher education.

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, who completed an apprenticeship at a Kirkby car factory, said: "When Labour were in power they pushed an arbitrary target to get half of young people to university, creating a boom in low quality degrees - leaving far too many students saddled with debt and little else.

"The choice is clear. Sir Keir Starmer and the Labour party who have contempt for apprenticeships, or Rishi Sunak and the Conservatives who have a clear plan to give young people the best start to their careers."

Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, said the announcement was "laughable", noting the decline in apprenticeships.

"Why on earth should parents and young people believe they'll create training opportunities now, after 14 years of failing to deliver opportunities for young people and the skills needed to grow our economy?" she added.

"Labour will get our economy growing again by gearing apprenticeships to young people and delivering a new growth and skills levy to provide the skills businesses need. We'll create a new generation of technical excellence colleges, working with employers and our world class universities, to get people into good jobs in their area."

500,000
Number of people starting out on apprenticeships in England in 2015, according to Commons library data

337,000
Number of apprenticeships started last year, despite Tories claiming to have delivered 5.8m apprenticeships

Tory tax plan £2.4bn tax cut for pensioners 'easily raised'

Caroline Davies

The work and pensions secretary said Labour would drag millions of older people into paying income tax, while the Conservatives could "comfortably" raise money for proposed tax cuts for pensioners by clamping down on tax avoidance.

Under the "triple lock plus" proposal of the Tories, millions of pensioners would get "tax cuts worth hundreds of pounds over the next parliament", Mel Stride told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

It is the second big policy announcement of the election campaign by the Tories, following their national service plan.

The pledge involves a £2.4bn tax cut for pensioners, who would get a personal tax allowance that would always rise in line with the triple lock.

Stride said: "By leaving the situation as it is at the moment we will see, by 2027, millions of pensioners being dragged into paying income tax. That's what you'll get under Labour."

Reminded that the Conservatives had frozen the tax thresholds in the first place, and that the proposals were undoing something they did, Stride said: "We did have to freeze some thresholds as part of paying down what was £400bn, that we spent, quite rightly, to protect people up and down the country."

He said they had taken "the bold and difficult decisions" to get the economy growing and lower inflation. He told Times Radio: "£2.4bn is the cost at the end of the parliament. We can comfortably raise £6bn from clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion ... The head of the National Audit Office has stated that that number is achievable."

Asked how the Conservatives would pay for this and their national service policy, he said: "It's £2.5bn per year, which will be £1bn coming from avoidance and evasion and one and a half from levelling-up funding. So we've got six [billion saved] through avoidance and evasion ... £1bn of that is going into the national service and the remainder is going to fund this important tax cut for our pensioners."

Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said: "The point at which pensioners currently start to pay tax is below where it was in 2010, whereas the point at which the rest of us start to pay tax is well above where it was in 2010."

Reality check Can Treasury fund 'triple lock plus' pledge?

Phillip Inman

The Conservative plans to boost the income of pensioners with a "triple lock plus" is a pitch to a group who, according to many polls, are the most likely to support the party, and is seen as a measure designed to shore up its core vote.

What is the pledge?

From April 2025, a Conservative government would raise the tax-free pension allowance in line with the triple lock. That would mean the personal allowance for pensioners would increase by 2.5%, average earnings growth or inflation - whichever is the highest. According to the Office for Budget Responsibility, by 2027 the state pension is expected to be higher than the tax-free personal allowance. The Tories say the triple lock plus would mean the state pension would always be below the tax-free threshold, preventing millions more pensioners being dragged into income tax. They say it would amount to a tax cut of about £100 a year for 8 million pensioners next year, rising to £275 a year by the end of the parliament.

How much would it cost?

The Conservatives claim the policy would cost an estimated £2.4bn a year by the end of the parliament. However, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said forecasts of what it might cost could be blown off course if there was a repeat of the kind of economic shocks we have had over the last four years. It would only take inflation to take off again and the bill could rocket.

How will it be paid for?

Rishi Sunak said a previously announced plan to save £6bn a year from a clampdown on tax avoidance and evasion would be used to fund the tax break for pensioners. Labour has a similar scheme to tackle errant taxpayers, though it is more circumspect about the money it would raise.

Can we afford it?

Carl Emmerson, the deputy director at the IFS, said there were doubts about any government's ability to achieve savings from chasing tax evaders (evasion is criminal activity) and avoiders. The OBR has also said there was not enough evidence to show the Treasury could raise the funds from avoidance and evasion. More broadly, Emmerson said, "the bigger picture is that the public finances are not in a good state and the next government will need to show how it is going to fund public services." Promises of tax cuts made that harder, he said.

Who aligned tax thresholds in the first place?

In 2010, the coalition government embarked on a plan to end a long period when pensioners enjoyed a higher income tax allowance than working people. Back in 2010-11, the personal allowance was £6,475 for people aged under 65, compared with £9,490 for those aged 65 to 75 (and £9,640 for people 75+). Ministers raised the working age threshold until it was the same as the pensioner allowance. In recent years the threshold has been the same for everyone and frozen, as part of a policy to raise taxes.

General election 2024

Polls Labour rings up near supermarket sweep among shoppers

Sarah Butler

Labour voters now make up the majority of customers at all major supermarkets apart from Waitrose, according to the latest polling.

Shoppers at Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Lidl and Aldi have all swung to Labour from Conservative since 2019, the research found. Ocado has the biggest proportion of Labour supporters, followed by the discounters Lidl and Iceland.

Even at Conservative holdout Waitrose, the party's lead has narrowed to just 1.2 percentage points, down from 36.4 in 2019. That is bad news for Rishi Sunak given that "Waitrose woman" – middle class, southern and not a fan of Brexit and the culture wars – was one of the voter demographics identified by the Conservatives in 2022 as one they needed to win over to stay in No 10.

Meanwhile, shoppers at Iceland, which has the biggest proportion of customers on the lowest incomes, have swung further to the left. Even the supermarket's managing director, Richard Walker, has switched to Keir Starmer's party after ditching plans to become a Conservative MP.

Zoe Mills, an analyst at the retail research firm GlobalData, which conducted the poll, said: "If supermarkets were seats, Labour would be on course for a landslide victory."

Mills said that apart from Waitrose, the only chains where the Tories were not trailing Labour by double-digits were Marks & Spencer and the Co-op.

The supermarket that had the highest proportion of Reform UK voters was the Co-op, despite its long socialist heritage and the fact it funds the Co-operative party which backs 26 current Labour MPs.

Mills suggested the Co-op's large number of stores in south and south-east England could explain why so many of its shoppers favoured the party backed by Nigel Farage and led by Richard Tice, who is understood to be a Tesco shopper.

Aldi, the German-owned discounter, was found to have the biggest share of Green party supporters, followed by M&S.



Farage says UK moving towards a state where women are excluded

Aletha Adu
Political correspondent

Nigel Farage has said Britain is moving towards "sectarian politics with women completely excluded", as he called for rising levels of Channel crossings to be declared a "national security emergency".

Reform UK's honorary president also defended comments he made on Sunday saying a growing number of Muslims did not share British values, and rejected accusations over the years that he had used antisemitic and Islamophobic "dog whistles".

"I talked over the course of the weekend to [Sky News presenter] Trevor Phillips, about the small but worryingly growing number of young men, predominantly young men in this country, adopting radical views, views that aren't just un-British, but views that frankly are extremely anti-British."

Speaking at the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club in Dover, Farage added: "You might have noticed that Angela Rayner yesterday was campaigning in her constituency, begging, begging a group of Muslim leaders to please vote Labour, you will have noticed not a single woman in the room.

"So we're moving into an age in our inner cities and towns, I'm afraid, I'm worried to say, of sectarian politics with women completely excluded."

He went further as he said British Muslims "who are working, paying their taxes, wanting their kids to do well, it's them that are perhaps going to be the worst affected by this if this current unpleasant trend continues".

Following his speech, a BBC News presenter apologised after she accused Farage of using "customary inflammatory language".

Geeta Guru-Murthy made the comment after a clip of Farage speaking at the Dover event was shown on the news channel, before later apologising and saying this "didn't meet the BBC's editorial standards on impartiality".

Live on air, Guru-Murthy said: "Earlier today we heard live from Nigel Farage, speaking at that election event we just saw. When we came away from his live speech, I used language to describe it which didn't meet the BBC's editorial standards on impartiality. I'd like to apologise to Farage and viewers for this."

In a post on X Farage tagged the presenter and asked: "What happened to impartiality?"

Farage said he had been "ahead of the curve" by describing rising migration levels as an "invasion" after 2010 as "3,800 boats later, 125,000 people later, I think invasion frankly was pretty appropriate".

His appearance in Dover yesterday marked his first intervention of the election campaign. He used the event to appeal to the electorate that a vote for the Conservative party was a "wasted vote". "This election is a foregone conclusion. Labour are going to win and they're going to win quite big," he said.

"And therefore you could argue, actually, that a vote for the Conservative party is a wasted vote. And given that, you know, Labour are going to win, why not vote for something that you actually believe in?"

When asked by the Guardian why voters should trust him when he had been accused of using antisemitic and Islamophobic "dog whistles", he replied: "How can I be antisemitic and Islamophobic at the same time?" before adding: "When you dare to say anything that's not the prevailing orthodox view you're written off as being mad and bad. I don't hold any of those negative motives."

The Conservatives face huge losses in red wall seats, he said after his speech, as voters feel "totally let down".



▲ *Nigel Farage defended previous comments he made about Muslims*

Partner pays tribute to watch dealer who died day after London shop robbery

Kevin Rawlinson

The partner of a watch dealer who was found dead the day after he was the victim of a robbery has paid tribute to him.

The man, reported to be Oliver White, who worked at a shop in Richmond, south-west London, died hours after being put in a chokehold during the raid on Saturday. Police said they were not treating the death as suspicious.

"My darling boy I can't believe you're gone," his partner, Alana Dredge, wrote online.

In an emotional message addressed to her partner, she said: "The last thing you said to me was I love you. I will cherish you forever, being with you was the best six years of my life. I hope you are reading this from up there, I will continue to make you proud."

▼ *Alana Dredge posted an emotional message online to her partner, Oliver White, saying 'being with you was the best six years of my life'*



Police said two unarmed men had stolen several high-value watches from the shop. Scotland Yard said the victim of the robbery was found dead about 10 miles away – in the Surrey town of Shepperton – on Sunday.

Surrey police confirmed officers were called to a location in Shepperton shortly after 8.15pm on Sunday after a report of a concern for safety.

"A man in his 20s was sadly pronounced dead at the scene. His next of kin are aware and are being supported. Inquiries are still ongoing, but his death is not thought to be suspicious," they said.

On Saturday, Scotland Yard released images of two men they wish to locate after the robbery and said the staff member had not been seriously injured.

In the images, one man wears a grey hoodie while the other wears a black and white T-shirt with sunglasses on his head. Police said yesterday that no arrests had been made. They asked anyone with information to call 101, quoting incident number CAD4555/25May.

WeWork founder pulls out of bid to retake control of bankrupt firm

Guardian staff

The WeWork founder Adam Neumann has shelved his bid to acquire the bankrupt shared office space firm.

It emerged earlier this year that Neumann, who was ousted from the business in 2019 following a botched attempt to take it public on the stock market, was seeking to buy the business. His new real estate venture, Flow Global, submitted a bid of more than $500m (£390m) to take over WeWork and its assets.

However, Neumann confirmed yesterday that Flow was walking away from his dream to take back control of the firm. "For several months, we tried to work constructively with WeWork to create a strategy that would allow it to thrive," he told DealBook. "Instead, the company looks to be emerging from bankruptcy with a plan that appears unrealistic and unlikely to succeed."

WeWork, with more than $13bn in long-term leases, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last November in order to renegotiate these agreements. The firm did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

At its peak, the company had been valued at $47bn as investors including the Japanese multinational SoftBank lined up to back it. As it prepared to go public in 2019, however, analysts gave it a far lower valuation.

After it eventually went public, in 2021, its market valuation tumbled to less than $50m.

Neumann, 45, stepped down from WeWork in 2019 after its initial failure to go public, and criticism of the firm's internal culture on his watch. He landed on his feet, however, launching Flow – a real estate venture which raised $350m from the Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz in 2022.

Additional reporting **Reuters**



▲ *Adam Neumann set up a new real estate firm after quitting WeWork*

Representative Example	Duration of Device Plan	Upfront Cost	Monthly Device Payment	Credit Amount	Total Amount Payable for Device	Interest Rate	Representative APR	Cash Price	Lead airtime allowance	Airtime Plan	Airtime Plan April 2025 – March 2026	Airtime Plan April 2026 – March 2027
iPhone 15 Pro Max	36 months	£30	£29.69	£1,069.00	£1,099.00	0%	0%	£1,099.00	1GB	£17	£17 + RPI% announced in Feb 2025 = Price A	Price A + RPI% announced in Feb 2026

RPI rate is the Retail Price Index rate of inflation announced in February each year. £29.69 Device Plan for 36 months and £17 monthly rolling Airtime Plan. Lowest monthly price [ever] based on spreading Device Plan payment over 36 months and making an upfront payment of £30. £335 saving consists of £191 discount applied to device plan (total cost of device was £1,290 now £1,099) and further £144 saving achieve by £4 per month discount on the airtime plan over 36 months. Ends 3 July 2024. Data allowances must be used within the month and cannot be carried over. Subject to availability. **O2 Refresh custom plans:** Direct purchases only. Pay the cash price for your device or spread the cost over 3 to 36 months (excludes dongles). The device cost will be the same whatever you choose. There may be an upfront cost. You can pay off your Device Plan at any time and choose to keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or leave. If you are in the first 24 months of your Device Plan and you cancel your Airtime Plan you will have to pay the remainder of your Device Plan in full. After 24 months you can keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or end it without affecting your Device Plan. 0% APR. Finance subject to status and credit checks. 18+. Direct Debit. Credit provided by Telefónica UK Ltd, RG2 6UU. Telefónica UK is authorised and regulated by the FCA for consumer credit and insurance. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/terms

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Art review

Pews, chains and a carnival dancer tell of artist's travels in time and space



A structure like a bodega the size of a prison cell casts shadows across the last section, drawing on the artist's move to Brooklyn when he was eight

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/ REX/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Alvaro Barrington
Tate Britain, London
★★★★☆

Adrian Searle

A soundtrack of rain sizzles on a tin roof, interspersed with snatches of music and radio voices struggling against the storm. The shiny tin overhead and the bare walls compound the reverb of the Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain. I want to sink into one of the rattan sofas, close my eyes and drift to the noise. I think of sweat sticking my body to the clear plastic cover of the sofa. Maybe they should turn the heating up, to complete the experience.

This is the opening that greets visitors to GRACE, Alvaro Barrington's Tate Britain commission. The length of the Duveen and its division into three sections invites a journey in time and space. For now, we are in a schematic recreation of Barrington's childhood home in Grenada, where he lived with his grandmother.

At the rear of this first space, two L-shaped sections of white-painted wall, like the corners of a room, create a division. Glazed windows are closed against the imaginary weather. The details start to snag you: the woven abstract curtains, the embroidery decorating the old postcards trapped under the plastic sofa covers. All these works are by one of Barrington's collaborators, Teresa Farrell.



The central rotunda space in the Duveen recreates the atmosphere of carnival, with paintings by Barrington stretched between tall scaffoldings of metal round the edges of the space. Loosely painted figures and faces – bird-men and bodies drenched in blue pigment, masked figures in fanciful costumes – one reminds me of Goya's folkloric buffoons – loom from unprimed burlap canvases. Everything feels loose and improvised and assured, a clamour of touches, moods and modes.

The whole space is commanded by a sculpture of a lone dancer, surrounded by a battery of steel drums, ready to be played (as I'm sure they will be when the commission is open to the public). Like a Caribbean Botticelli Venus, she floats mid-move, lost in a music only she can hear, fabulous in designer jewellery and a costume that has a kind of Afro-Futurist, superhero hauteur.

A lone dancer surrounded by steel drums commands the central space as artist Alvaro Barrington, right, recreates the atmosphere of carnival

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/SHUTTERSTOCK



The last section of the Duveen has a darker feel. Encircled by a high cage of metal crowd-control barriers stands a small building. A corner bodega perhaps, a garage or lock-up. It is the same size as an American prison cell, but is brightly spotlit from above, casting menacing shadows on the gallery walls. There are industrial shutters at either end of the building, operated by machine. As soon as one shutter rises, the other falls. There's nothing inside but chains glinting against the walls. It's a metaphor, an open and shut case. This is life on the corner, and a reminder of what Barrington found when he moved to Brooklyn with his mother, who had been living in Venezuela, when he was eight.

"The lack of hope and economic opportunity, and the availability of drugs like cocaine, meant that many people in the community self-medicated," the artist writes. "Politicians responded with mass incarceration and the 'war on drugs' … even a trip to the local corner store could lead one of us falling victim to this incredible assortment of violence.'

Barrington's wall texts are a model. They don't tell you what to think or feel; they are pointers, detailing his story and indicating how GRACE came about.

Right at the end, we come to three rows of church pews. Sitting there, and looking back beyond the cell, the pleasures of carnival and the sounds of childhood are framed by the Duveen's columns. Up above them is a stained-glass window that fits the final archway high up towards the roof. Church was a bulwark against all the violence on the street, the randomness and isolation. It meant community, and some sort of hope of grace.

Barrington's commission evokes his origins and his journey to be here now. It is full of life. For descendants of slavery, the occupation of an institution built on the proceeds of the Tate sugar trade, Barrington's GRACE has a particular resonance.

From 29 May to 26 January 2025

Dench hints that failing eyesight will curtail further acting roles

Catherine Shoard

Judi Dench has suggested she has retired from acting because of her worsening eyesight. At the Chelsea flower show Dench was asked if she had plans for further roles, and responded: "No, no, I can't even see!"

Representatives for the actor, who is 89, indicated there was nothing further to add. At Chelsea at the weekend, however, Dench said she had other projects in train. "Our book has come out [Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays the Rent], we're going to Cheltenham book fair, then I'm going to do shows with Gyles Brandreth."



Judi Dench memorises lines due to age-related macular degeneration

Dench has age-related macular degeneration, which affects more than 700,000 people in the UK. She has been open about her diminishing vision, telling the presenter Louis Theroux in 2022: "I don't want to retire. I'm not doing much at the moment because I can't see. It's bad."

She added: "I have a photographic memory so a person saying to me: 'This is your line,' I can do that."

Last year, she told the Sunday Mirror she was trying to find work-arounds but she could not "see on a film set any more", and could not see to read. "But you just deal with it. It's difficult if I have any length of a part."

Dench has been frank about the effects on her professional life of her condition and the need to memorise lines orally. In 2021 she received an Oscar nomination for her role in Kenneth Branagh's Belfast, and appeared in a key role in Allelujah, Richard Eyre's adaptation of the Alan Bennett play. Her last screen role was a cameo in 2022's Spirited.

Dench has said she still works because she has "an irrational fear of boredom". She said: "That's why I now have this tattoo that says carpe diem, that's what we should live by."

Her other film roles have included playing M in eight James Bond films and Elizabeth I in Shakespeare in Love. Dench has also won a Tony and eight Olivier awards for stage roles. TV shows have included the sitcom As Time Goes By and the comedy A Fine Romance.

While Dench was at the Chelsea flower show this year a primary school pupil gave her the first seedling grown from the illegally felled Sycamore Gap tree. "I'll be naming him Antoninus," she said, "the adopted son of the emperor Hadrian."

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‘Passionate’ Austen fans lobby to protect hotel where she danced



▲ *Fans of Jane Austen (right) outside the Grade II listed-Dolphin hotel in Southampton* PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW CROFT/SOLENT NEWS & PHOTO AGENCY

Steven Morris

Devotees of Jane Austen on both sides of the Atlantic have joined a campaign to save the historic port city hotel where she celebrated her 18th birthday.

Plans are afoot to transform the Grade II-listed Dolphin hotel in Southampton, where Austen once danced in the grand ballroom, into student accommodation.

Fans of Austen in the UK and much further afield are lobbying Southampton city council to reject the plans and keep the building, parts of which date back to the 16th century, in a form that would have been recognisable to Austen.

The writer is said to have marked her 18th birthday in the Dolphin’s ballroom – which is on the first floor with a beautiful bow window – on 16 December 1793 and to have attended other dances there later in her life.

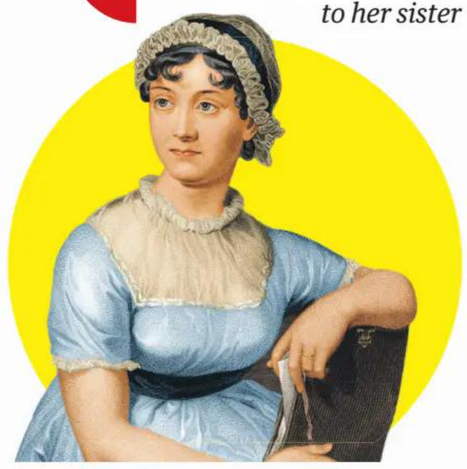
Austen aficionado Norma Mackey, a member of the Southampton-based Sarah Siddons Fan Club theatre group, said when she first heard of the plan she almost burst into tears.

“I’m so passionate about this. As soon as I found out about it I contacted our theatre group so they knew what to do … objection, objection, objection.”

She said just knowing Austen had been at the hotel engendered warmth. “It’s a nice feeling to know she’s been here. I love the architecture as well. They will lose a gem.”

Fifteen years after celebrating her birthday at the hotel, Austen returned for another dance and wrote to her sister, Cassandra, that the ball was “rather more amusing” than she expected.

> ***‘It was the same room in which we danced 15 years ago … We took our tea in an adjoining and very comfortable room’***
>
> *Jane Austen’s letter to her sister*



“The room was tolerably full, and there were, perhaps, 30 couple [sic] of dancers. The melancholy part was, to see so many dozen young women standing by without partners, and each of them with two ugly naked shoulders.

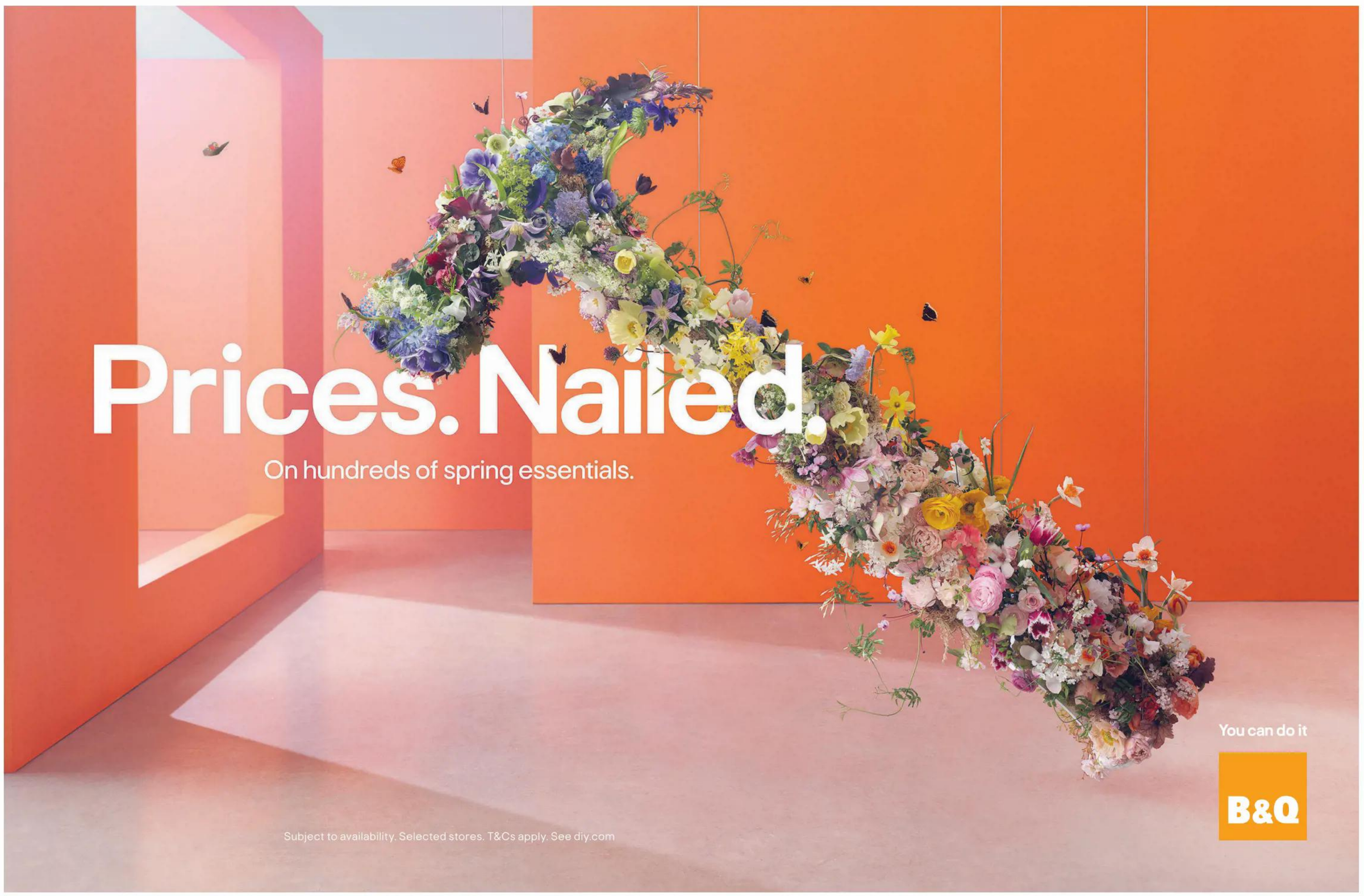
“It was the same room in which we danced 15 years ago. I thought it all over, and in spite of the shame of being so much older, felt with thankfulness that I was quite as happy now as then. We paid an additional shilling for our tea, which we took as we chose in an adjoining and very comfortable room.”

Jennifer Weinbrecht, who owns the Jane Austen Books store in Geauga County, Ohio, has written a stern letter on behalf of the “international community of Jane Austen fans and scholars” objecting to the plans. “I request that you consider the cultural importance of the Dolphin as the only remaining structure in Southampton with Jane Austen connections,” it says.

Weinbrecht described Southampton as an important location on the “extended Austen pilgrimage”, which takes in places such as the Georgian city of Bath and Chawton, the Hampshire village where she spent the last eight years of her life.

A local councillor, Sarah Bogle, argued that changing the hotel into student accommodation could hit visitor numbers. The Hampshire branch of the Jane Austen Society said it was “not enthusiastic” about the plans but that they were preferable to the building becoming derelict.

The scheme is being considered by Southampton city council’s planning department. A letter submitted on behalf of the applicant said the plans would “enable a long-term viable use of this important and prominent building”.





Revealed

Former Israeli spy head 'threatened' ICC chief prosecutor over court's war crimes investigation

Harry Davies
Jerusalem

Continued *from page 1*

help us and let us take care of you. You don't want to be getting into things that could compromise your security or that of your family."

One individual briefed on Cohen's activities said he had used "despicable tactics" against Bensouda as part of an ultimately unsuccessful effort to intimidate and influence her. They likened his behaviour to "stalking".

The Mossad also took a keen interest in Bensouda's family members and obtained transcripts of secret recordings of her husband, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the situation. Israeli officials then attempted to use the material to discredit the prosecutor.

The revelations about Cohen's operation form part of a forthcoming investigation by the Guardian, the Israeli-Palestinian publication +972 Magazine and the Hebrew-language outlet Local Call, revealing how multiple Israel intelligence agencies ran a covert "war" against the ICC for almost a decade.

Contacted by the Guardian, a spokesperson for Israel's prime minister's office said: "The questions forwarded to us are replete with many false and unfounded allegations meant to hurt the state of Israel." Cohen did not respond to a request for comment. Bensouda declined to comment.

In the Mossad's efforts to influence Bensouda, Israel received support from an unlikely ally: Joseph Kabila, the former president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who played a supporting role in the plot.

Revelations about the Mossad's efforts to influence Bensouda come as the current chief prosecutor, Khan, warned in recent days that he would not hesitate to prosecute "attempts to impede, intimidate or improperly influence" ICC officials.

According to legal experts and former ICC officials, efforts by the Mossad to threaten or put pressure on Bensouda could amount to offences against the administration of justice under article 70 of the Rome statute, the treaty that established the court.

A spokesperson for the ICC would not say whether Khan had reviewed his predecessor's disclosures about her contacts with Cohen, but said Khan had never met or spoken to the head of the Mossad.

While the spokesperson declined to comment on specific allegations, they said Khan's office had been subjected to "several forms of threats and communications that could be



viewed as attempts to unduly influence its activities".

BENSOUDA SPARKS IRE OF ISRAEL

Khan's decision to seek arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant last week marked the first time the court had taken action against leaders of a country closely allied with the US and Europe. Their alleged crimes - which include directing attacks on civilians and using starvation as a method of warfare - relate to the eight-month war in Gaza.

The ICC case, however, dates back to 2015, when Bensouda decided to open a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine. Short of a full investigation, her inquiry was tasked with making an initial assessment of allegations of crimes by individuals.

Bensouda's decision sparked the ire of Israel, which feared its citizens could be prosecuted for their involvement in operations in Palestinian territories. Israel had long been open about its opposition to the ICC, refusing to recognise its authority.

Soon after commencing the preliminary examination, Bensouda and her senior prosecutors began to receive warnings that Israeli intelligence was taking a close interest. According to two sources, there were even suspicions among senior ICC officials that Israel had cultivated sources in the court's prosecution division, known as the office of the prosecutor. Another later recalled that it was an assumption the agency was behind some of the activity officials had been made aware of. Only a small group of senior figures at the ICC, however, were informed that Cohen had personally approached the chief prosecutor.

A career spy, Cohen enjoys a reputation as an effective recruiter of foreign agents. He was a loyal and powerful ally of the prime minister at the time, having been appointed as director of the Mossad by Netanyahu in 2016 after working for several years as his national security adviser.

As the head of the national security council between 2013 and 2016, Cohen oversaw the body that, according to multiple sources, began to coordinate a multiagency effort against the ICC once Bensouda opened the preliminary inquiry in 2015.

Cohen's first interaction with Bensouda appears to have taken place at the Munich security conference in 2017, when the Mossad director introduced himself to the prosecutor in a brief exchange. After this encounter, Cohen subsequently "ambushed" Bensouda in a bizarre episode in a Manhattan hotel suite, according to sources familiar with the incident.

Bensouda was in New York in 2018 on an official visit, and was meeting Kabila, then the president of the DRC, at his hotel. The pair had met several times before in relation to the ICC's ongoing investigation into alleged crimes committed in his country.

The meeting, however, appears to have been a setup. At a certain point, after Bensouda's staff were asked to exit the room, Cohen entered, according to three sources familiar with the meeting. The surprise appearance, they said, caused alarm to Bensouda and ICC officials travelling with her.

Why Kabila helped Cohen is unclear, but ties between the two men were revealed in 2022 by the Israeli publication TheMarker, which reported on a series of secretive trips the Mossad director made to the DRC throughout 2019. According to the publication, Cohen's trips, during which he sought Kabila's advice "on an issue of interest to Israel", and which were almost certainly approved by Netanyahu, were highly unusual and had astonished senior figures in the intelligence community.



▲ *Fatou Bensouda with Joseph Kabila. Sources claim the then leader of the DRC played a supporting role in the plot against the ICC's chief prosecutor. Left, Benjamin Netanyahu, Bensouda and Yossi Cohen* PHOTOGRAPH: ICC

Reporting on the DRC meetings in 2022, the Israeli broadcaster Kan 11 said Cohen's trips related to an "extremely controversial plan" and cited official sources who described it as "one of Israel's most sensitive secrets". Multiple sources have confirmed to the Guardian the trips were partly related to the ICC operation, and Kabila, who left office in January 2019, played an important supporting role in the Mossad's plot against Bensouda. Kabila did not respond to a request for comment.

'THREATS AND MANIPULATION'

After the surprise meeting in New York, Cohen repeatedly phoned the chief prosecutor and sought meetings with her, three sources recalled. According to two people familiar with the situation, at one stage Bensouda asked Cohen how he had obtained her phone number, to which he replied: "Did you forget what I do for a living?"

Initially, the sources explained, the intelligence chief "tried to build a relationship" with the prosecutor and played "good cop" in an attempt to charm her. The objective, they said, appeared to have been to enlist Bensouda into cooperating with Israel.

Over time, however, the tone of Cohen's contact changed and he began to use a range of tactics, including "threats and manipulation", an individual briefed on the meetings said. This prompted Bensouda to inform a small group of senior ICC officials about his behaviour.

In December 2019, the prosecutor announced that she had grounds to open a full criminal investigation into allegations of war crimes in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, she held off launching it, deciding to request a ruling from the ICC's pre-trial chamber to confirm the court did indeed have jurisdiction over Palestine. Multiple sources said it was at this stage that Cohen escalated efforts to persuade Bensouda not to pursue a full investigation if the judges gave her the green light.

Between late 2019 and early 2021, the sources said, there were at least three encounters between Cohen and Bensouda, all initiated by the spy chief. His behaviour is said to have become increasingly concerning to ICC officials. A source familiar with Bensouda's accounts of the final two meetings said he had raised questions about her security, and that of her family, in a manner that led her to believe he was threatening her.

On one occasion, Cohen is said to have shown Bensouda copies of photographs of her husband taken covertly when the couple were visiting London. On another, according to sources, Cohen suggested that a decision to open a full investigation would be detrimental to her career.

Four sources familiar with the situation said it was around the same time that Bensouda and other ICC officials discovered that information was circulating among diplomatic channels relating to her husband, who worked as an international affairs consultant. Between 2019 and 2020, the Mossad had been actively seeking compromising information on the prosecutor and took an interest in her family.

The spy agency obtained a cache of material, including transcripts of an apparent sting operation against her husband. It is unclear who conducted the operation, or precisely what he is alleged to have said. One possibility is that he had been targeted by the intelligence agency or by private actors of another country that wanted leverage over the ICC. It is also possible that the information was fabricated.

Once in the possession of Israel, however, the material was used by its diplomats in an unsuccessful attempt to undermine the chief prosecutor. But according to multiple sources, Israel failed to convince its allies of the significance of the material. Three sources briefed on the information shared by Israel at a diplomatic level described the efforts as part of an unsuccessful "smear campaign" against Bensouda. "They went after Fatou," one source said, but it had "no impact" on the prosecutor's work.

Cohen is said to have shown Bensouda copies of photos of her husband taken covertly when the couple were visiting London

The diplomatic efforts were part of a coordinated attempt by the governments of Netanyahu and Donald Trump to place public and private pressure on the prosecutor and her staff. Between 2019 and 2020 the Trump administration imposed visa restrictions and sanctions on the chief prosecutor. The move was in retaliation to Bensouda's pursuit of a separate investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan, allegedly committed by the Taliban and both Afghan and US military personnel.

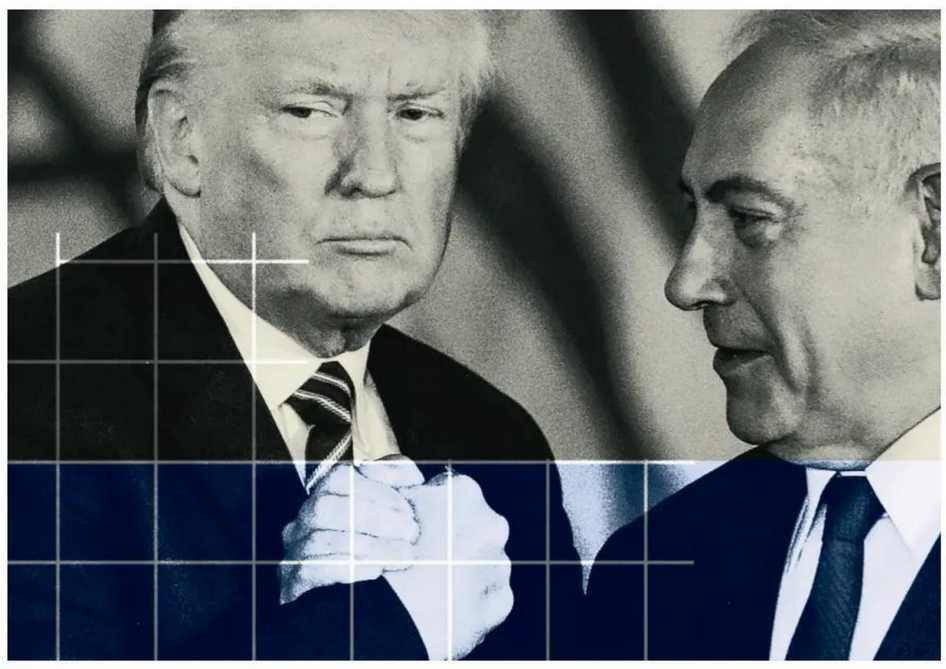
However, Mike Pompeo, then US secretary of state, linked the sanctions package to the Palestine case. "It's clear the ICC is only putting Israel in [its] crosshairs for nakedly political purposes," he said.

Months later, he accused Bensouda, without citing any evidence, of having "engaged in corrupt acts for her personal benefit". The US sanctions were rescinded after Joe Biden entered the White House.

In February 2021, the ICC's pre-trial chamber issued a ruling confirming the ICC had jurisdiction in occupied Palestinian territories. In March, Bensouda announced the opening of the criminal investigation. "In the end, our central concern must be for the victims of crimes, both Palestinian and Israeli, arising from the long cycle of violence and insecurity that has caused deep suffering and despair on all sides," she said at the time.

Bensouda finished her nine-year term at the ICC three months later, leaving it to her successor, Khan, to take up the investigation. It was only after the Hamas attacks and the ensuing war on Gaza that the investigation gained renewed urgency, culminating in last week's request for arrest warrants.

It was the result Israel's establishment had feared. "The fact they chose the head of Mossad to be the prime minister's unofficial messenger to [Bensouda] was to intimidate, by definition," said a source briefed on Cohen's operation. "It failed."



▲ *Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. The Trump administration imposed sanctions on Bensouda in retaliation for her pursuit of an inquiry into alleged war crimes in Afghanistan* PHOTOGRAPH: RONEN ZVULUN/REUTERS

A Guardian special investigation
Israel



Surveillance, hacking, threats and intimidation

Israel's nine-year 'war' on the international criminal court exposed

Harry Davies, Bethan McKernan and Yuval Abraham *Jerusalem*
Meron Rapoport *Tel Aviv*

When the chief prosecutor of the international criminal court (ICC) announced he was seeking arrest warrants against Israeli and Hamas leaders, he issued a cryptic warning: "I insist that all attempts to impede, intimidate or improperly influence the officials of this court must cease immediately."

Karim Khan did not provide specific details of attempts to interfere in the ICC's work, but he noted a clause in the court's foundational treaty that made any such interference a criminal offence. If the conduct continued, he added, "my office will not hesitate to act". The prosecutor did not say who had attempted to intervene in the administration of justice, or how exactly they had done so.

Now, an investigation by the Guardian and the Israeli-based magazines +972 and Local Call can reveal how Israel has run an almost decade-long secret "war" against the court. The country deployed its intelligence agencies to surveil, hack, pressure, smear and allegedly threaten senior ICC staff in an effort to derail the court's inquiries.

Israeli intelligence captured the communications of numerous ICC officials, including Khan and his predecessor as prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, intercepting phone calls, messages, emails and documents.

The surveillance continued in recent months, providing Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, with advance knowledge of the prosecutor's intentions. A recent intercepted communication suggested that Khan wanted to issue arrest warrants against Israelis but was under "tremendous pressure from the United States", according to a source familiar with its contents.

Bensouda, who as chief prosecutor opened the ICC's investigation in 2021, paving the way for last week's announcement, was also spied on and allegedly threatened.

Netanyahu has taken a close interest in the intelligence operations against the ICC, and was described by one source as being "obsessed" with intercepts about the case. Overseen by his national security advisers, the efforts involved the domestic spy agency, the Shin Bet, as well as the military's intelligence directorate, Aman, and cyber-intelligence division, Unit 8200. Intelligence gleaned from intercepts was, sources said, disseminated to government ministries of justice, foreign affairs and strategic affairs. A covert operation against Bensouda, revealed by the Guardian, was run by Netanyahu's ally Yossi Cohen, who was at the time the director of Israel's foreign intelligence agency, the Mossad.

Details of Israel's nine-year campaign to thwart the ICC's inquiry have been uncovered by the Guardian, an Israeli-Palestinian publication +972 Magazine and Local Call, a Hebrew-language outlet.

The joint investigation draws on interviews with more than two dozen current and former Israeli intelligence officers and government officials, senior ICC figures, diplomats and lawyers familiar with the ICC case and Israel's efforts to undermine it.

Contacted by the Guardian, a spokesperson for the ICC said it was aware of "proactive intelligence-gathering activities being undertaken by a number of national agencies hostile towards the court". They said the ICC was continually implementing countermeasures against such activity, and that "none of the recent attacks against it by national intelligence agencies" had penetrated the court's core evidence holdings, which had remained secure.

A spokesperson for Israel's prime minister's office said: "The questions forwarded to us are replete with many false and unfounded allegations meant to hurt the state of Israel." A military spokesperson added: "The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] did not and does not conduct surveillance or other intelligence operations against the ICC."

Since it was established in 2002, the ICC has served as a permanent court of last resort for the prosecution of individuals accused of some of the world's worst atrocities. It has charged the former Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, the late Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi and most recently, the Russian president, Vladimir Putin.

Khan's decision to seek warrants against Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, along with Hamas leaders implicated in the 7 October attack, marks the first time an ICC prosecutor has sought arrest warrants against the leader of a close western ally.

The allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity that Khan has levelled against Netanyahu and Gallant all relate to Israel's eight-month war in Gaza, which according to the territory's health authority has killed more than 36,000 people.

But the ICC case has been a decade in the making, inching forward amid rising alarm among Israeli officials at the possibility of arrest warrants, which would prevent those accused from travelling to any of the court's 124 member states for fear of arrest.

It is this spectre of prosecutions in The Hague that one former Israeli intelligence official said had led the "entire military and political establishment" to regard the counteroffensive against the ICC "as a war that had to be waged, and one that Israel needed to be defended against. It was described in military terms."

That "war" commenced in January 2015, when it was confirmed that Palestine would join the court after it was recognised as a state by the UN general assembly. Its accession was condemned by Israeli officials as a form of "diplomatic terrorism".

One former defence official familiar with Israel's counter-ICC effort said joining the court had been "perceived as the crossing of a red line" and "perhaps the most aggressive" diplomatic move taken by the Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank. "To be recognised as a state in the UN is nice," they added. "But the ICC is a mechanism with teeth."

'If Fatou Bensouda spoke to any person in the West Bank or Gaza, then that phone call would enter [intercept] systems'

A HAND-DELIVERED THREAT

For Fatou Bensouda, a respected Gambian lawyer who was elected the ICC's chief prosecutor in 2012, the accession of Palestine to the court brought with it a momentous decision. Under the Rome statute, the treaty that established the court, the ICC can exercise its jurisdiction only over crimes within member states or by nationals of those states.

Israel, like the US, Russia and China, is not a member. After Palestine's acceptance as an ICC member, any alleged war crimes – committed by those of any nationality – in occupied Palestinian territories now fell under Bensouda's jurisdiction.

On 16 January 2015, within weeks of Palestine joining, Bensouda opened a preliminary examination into what in the legalese of the court was called "the situation in Palestine". The following month, two men who had managed to obtain the prosecutor's private address turned up at her home in The Hague.

Sources familiar with the incident said the men declined to identify themselves when they arrived, but said they wanted to hand-deliver a letter to Bensouda on behalf of an unknown German woman who wanted to thank her. The envelope held hundreds of dollars in cash and a note with an Israeli phone number.

Sources with knowledge of an ICC review into the incident said that while it was not possible to identify the men, or fully establish their motives, it was concluded that Israel was likely to be signalling to the prosecutor that it knew where she lived. The ICC reported the incident to Dutch authorities and put in place additional security, installing CCTV cameras at her home.

The ICC's preliminary inquiry in the Palestinian territories was one of several such fact-finding exercises the court was undertaking at the time, as a precursor to a possible full investigation. Bensouda's caseload also included nine full investigations, including into events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and the Darfur region of Sudan.

Officials in the prosecutor's office believed the court was vulnerable to espionage activity and introduced countersurveillance measures to protect their confidential inquiries.

In Israel, the prime minister's national security council had mobilised a response involving its intelligence agencies. Netanyahu and some of the generals and spy chiefs who authorised the operation had a personal stake in its outcome.

Unlike the international court of justice, a UN body that deals with the legal responsibility of nation states, the ICC prosecutes individuals, targeting those deemed most responsible for atrocities.

Multiple Israeli sources said the leadership of the IDF wanted military intelligence to join the effort, which was being led by other spy agencies, to ensure senior officers could be protected from charges. "We were told that senior officers are afraid to accept positions in the West Bank because they are afraid of being prosecuted in The Hague," one source recalled.

Two intelligence officials involved in procuring intercepts about the ICC said the prime minister's office took a keen interest. Netanyahu's office, one said, would send "areas of interests" and "instructions" in relation to the monitoring of court officials. Another described the prime minister as "obsessed" with intercepts shedding light on the activities of the ICC.

HACKED EMAILS AND MONITORED CALLS

Five sources familiar with Israel's intelligence activities said it routinely spied on phone calls made by Bensouda and her staff with Palestinians. Blocked by Israel from accessing Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the ICC was forced to conduct much of its research by telephone, which made it more susceptible to surveillance. Thanks to their comprehensive access to Palestinian telecoms infrastructure, the sources said, operatives could capture the calls without installing spyware on the ICC officials' devices.

"If Fatou Bensouda spoke to any person in the West Bank or Gaza, then that phone call would enter [intercept] systems," one source said. Another said there was no hesitation internally over spying on the prosecutor, adding: "With Bensouda, she's black and African, so who cares?"



▲ *The ICC's headquarters in The Hague. Unlike the international court of justice, which covers nation states, the ICC prosecutes individuals deemed most responsible for atrocities around the world* PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE CORDER/AP



▲ *Above and left, Karim Khan, the ICC's current chief prosecutor. Ongoing surveillance has provided Benjamin Netanyahu, far left, with advance knowledge of Khan's intentions* PHOTOGRAPH: LUIS ACOSTA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The surveillance system did not capture calls between ICC officials and anyone outside Palestine. However, multiple sources said the system required the active selection of the overseas phone numbers of ICC officials whose calls Israeli intelligence agencies decided to listen to.

According to one Israeli source, a large whiteboard in an Israeli intelligence department contained the names of about 60 people under surveillance – half of them Palestinians and half from other countries, including UN officials and ICC personnel.

In The Hague, Bensouda and her senior staff were alerted by security advisers and via diplomatic channels that Israel was monitoring their work. A former senior ICC official recalled: "We were made aware they were trying to get information on where we were with the preliminary examination."

Officials also became aware of specific threats against a prominent Palestinian NGO, Al-Haq, which was one of several Palestinian human rights groups that frequently submitted information to the ICC inquiry, often in lengthy documents detailing incidents it wanted the prosecutor to consider. The Palestinian Authority submitted similar dossiers.

Such documents often contained sensitive information such as testimony from potential witnesses.

Al-Haq's submissions are also understood to have linked specific allegations of Rome statute crimes to senior officials, including chiefs of the IDF, directors of the Shin Bet and defence ministers such as Benny Gantz.

Years later, after the ICC had opened a full investigation into the Palestine case, Gantz designated Al-Haq and five other Palestinian rights groups as "terrorist organisations", a label that was rejected by multiple European states and later found by the CIA to be unsupported by evidence. The organisations said the designations were a "targeted assault" against those most actively engaging with the ICC.

According to current and former intelligence officials, military cyber-offensive teams and the Shin Bet both systematically monitored the employees of Palestinian NGOs and the Palestinian Authority who were engaging with the ICC. Two intelligence sources described how operatives hacked into the emails of Al-Haq and other groups communicating with Bensouda's office.

One of the sources said the Shin Bet even installed Pegasus spyware, developed by the private-sector NSO Group, on the phones of Palestinian NGO employees, as well as two senior Palestinian Authority officials.

Keeping tabs on the Palestinian submissions to the ICC's inquiry was viewed as part of the Shin Bet's mandate, but some army officials were concerned that spying on a foreign civilian entity crossed a line, as it had little to do with military operations.

"It has nothing to do with Hamas, it has nothing to do with stability in the West Bank," one military source said of the ICC surveillance. Another added: "We used our resources to spy on Fatou Bensouda – this isn't something legitimate to do as military intelligence."

SECRET MEETINGS WITH THE ICC

Legitimate or otherwise, the surveillance of the ICC and Palestinians making the case for prosecutions against Israelis provided the Israeli government with an advantage in a secret back channel it had opened with the prosecutor's office.

Israel's meetings with the ICC were highly sensitive: if made public, they had the potential to undermine the government's

Continued *on page 22*



▲ *Israel's secret meetings with the ICC were highly sensitive and took place between 2017 and 2019. They were led by the prominent Israeli lawyer and diplomat Tal Becker, pictured* PHOTOGRAPH: HOLLANDSE HOOGTE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Continued *from page 21*

official position that it did not recognise the court's authority.

According to six sources familiar with the meetings, they consisted of a delegation of top government lawyers and diplomats who travelled to The Hague. Two of the sources said the meetings were authorised by Netanyahu.

The Israeli delegation was drawn from the justice ministry, foreign ministry and the military advocate general's office. The meetings took place between 2017 and 2019, and were led by the prominent Israeli lawyer and diplomat Tal Becker.

"In the beginning it was tense," recalled a former ICC official. "We would get into details of specific incidents. We'd say: 'We're receiving allegations about these attacks, these killings,' and they would provide us with information."

A person with direct knowledge of Israel's preparation for the back-channel meetings said officials in the justice ministry were furnished with intelligence that had been gleaned from Israeli surveillance intercepts before delegations arrived at The Hague. "The lawyers who dealt with the issue at the justice ministry had a big thirst for intelligence information," they said.

For the Israelis, the back-channel meetings, while sensitive, offered a unique opportunity to directly present legal arguments challenging the prosecutor's jurisdiction over the Palestinian territories. They also sought to convince the prosecutor that, despite the Israeli military's highly questionable record of investigating wrongdoing in its ranks, it had robust procedures for holding its armed forces to account.

This was a critical issue for Israel. A core ICC principle, known as complementarity, prevents the prosecutor from investigating or trying individuals if they are the subject of credible state-level investigations or criminal proceedings.

Israeli surveillance operatives were asked to find out which incidents might form part of a future ICC prosecution, multiple sources said, in order to enable Israeli investigative bodies to "open investigations retroactively" in the same cases.

"If materials were transferred to the ICC, we had to understand exactly what they were, to ensure that the IDF investigated them independently and sufficiently so that they could claim complementarity," one source explained.

Israel's back-channel meetings with the ICC ended in December 2019, when Bensouda, announcing the end of her preliminary examination, said she believed there was a "reasonable basis" to conclude that Israel and Palestinian armed groups had both committed war crimes in the occupied territories.

It was a significant setback for Israel's leaders, although it could have been worse. In a move that some in the government regarded as a partial vindication of Israel's lobbying efforts, Bensouda stopped short of launching a formal investigation.

Instead, she announced she would ask a panel of ICC judges to rule on the contentious question of the court's jurisdiction over the Palestinian territories, owing to "unique and highly contested legal and factual issues".

Yet Bensouda had made clear she was minded to open a full investigation if the judges gave her the green light. It was against this backdrop that Israel stepped up its campaign against the ICC and turned to its top spy chief to turn up the heat on Bensouda personally.

THREATS AND A 'SMEAR CAMPAIGN'

Between late 2019 and early 2021, as the pre-trial chamber considered the jurisdictional questions, the Mossad's director, Yossi Cohen, intensified his efforts to persuade Bensouda not to proceed with the investigation.

Cohen's contacts with Bensouda – which were described to the Guardian by four people familiar with the prosecutor's contemporaneous accounts of the interactions, as well as sources briefed on the Mossad operation – had begun several years earlier.

In one of the earliest encounters, Cohen surprised Bensouda when he made an unexpected appearance at an official meeting the prosecutor was holding with the then DRC president, Joseph Kabila, in a New York hotel suite.

Sources familiar with the meeting said that after Bensouda's staff were asked to leave the room, Cohen suddenly appeared from behind a door in a carefully choreographed "ambush".

After the incident in New York, Cohen persisted in contacting the prosecutor, turning up unannounced and subjecting her to unwanted calls. While initially amicable, the sources said, Cohen's behaviour became increasingly threatening and intimidating.

A close ally of Netanyahu at the time, Cohen was a veteran Mossad spymaster and had gained a reputation within the service as a skilled recruiter of agents with experience cultivating high-level officials in foreign governments. Accounts of his secret meetings with Bensouda paint a picture in which he sought to "build a relationship" with the prosecutor as he attempted to dissuade her from pursuing an investigation that, if it went ahead, could embroil senior Israeli officials.

Three sources briefed on Cohen's activities said they understood the spy chief had tried to recruit Bensouda into complying with Israel's demands during the period in which she was waiting for a ruling from the pre-trial chamber.

They said he became more threatening after he began to realise the prosecutor would not be persuaded to abandon the investigation. At one stage, Cohen is said to have made comments about Bensouda's security and thinly veiled threats about the consequences for her career if she proceeded. Contacted by the Guardian, Cohen and Kabila did not respond to requests for comment. Bensouda declined to comment.

When she was prosecutor, Bensouda formally disclosed her encounters with Cohen to a small group within the ICC, with the intention of putting on record her belief that she had been "personally threatened", sources familiar with the disclosures said.

This was not the only way Israel sought to place pressure on the prosecutor. At around the same time, ICC officials discovered details of what sources described as a diplomatic "smear campaign", relating in part to a close family member.

According to multiple sources, the Mossad had obtained a cache of material including transcripts of an apparent sting operation against Bensouda's husband. The origins of the material – and whether it was genuine – remain unclear.

However, elements of the information were circulated by Israel among western diplomatic officials, sources said, in a failed attempt to discredit the chief prosecutor. A person briefed on the campaign said it gained little traction among diplomats and amounted to a desperate attempt to "besmirch" Bensouda's reputation.



▲ *Mike Pompeo, Donald Trump's secretary of state, announcing sanctions on ICC officials, which were believed to relate as much to the court's inquiry over Palestine as to an Afghanistan investigation* PHOTOGRAPH: YURI GRIPAS/GETTY

TRUMP'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ICC

In March 2020, three months after Bensouda referred the Palestine case to the pre-trial chamber, an Israeli government delegation reportedly held discussions in Washington with senior US officials about "a joint Israeli-American struggle" against the ICC.

One Israeli intelligence official said they regarded Donald Trump's administration as more cooperative than that of his Democratic predecessor. The Israelis felt sufficiently comfortable to ask for information from US intelligence about Bensouda, a request the source said would have been "impossible" during Barack Obama's tenure.

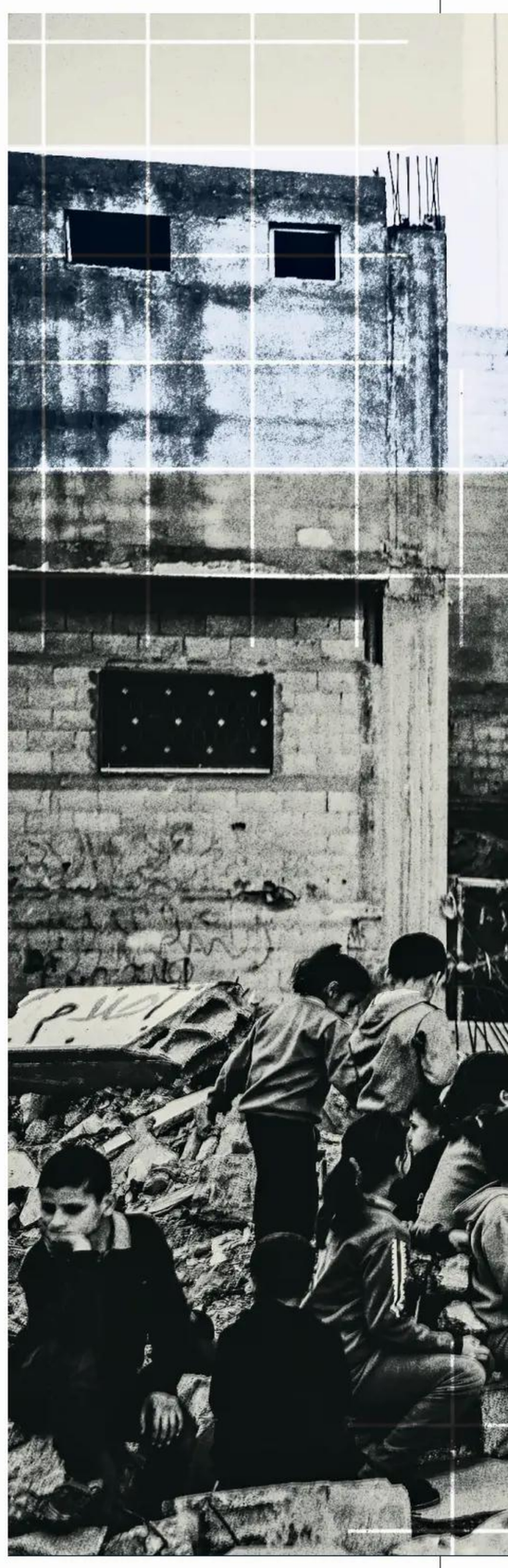
Days before the meetings in Washington, Bensouda had received authorisation from the ICC's judges to pursue a separate investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan committed by the Taliban and both Afghan and US military personnel. Fearing US armed forces would be prosecuted, the Trump administration was engaged in its own aggressive campaign against the ICC, culminating in the summer of 2020 with the imposition of US economic sanctions on Bensouda and one of her top officials.

Among ICC officials, the US-led financial and visa restrictions on court personnel were believed to relate as much to the Palestine investigation as to the Afghanistan case. Two former ICC officials said senior Israeli officials had expressly indicated to them that Israel and the US were working together.

At a press conference in June that year, senior Trump administration figures signalled their intention to impose sanctions on ICC officials, announcing they had received unspecified information about "financial corruption and malfeasance at the highest levels of the office of the prosecutor".

As well as referring to the Afghanistan case, Mike Pompeo, Trump's secretary of state, linked the US measures to the Palestine case.

"It's clear the ICC is only putting Israel in [its] crosshairs for nakedly political purposes," he said. Months later, Pompeo accused Bensouda of having "engaged in corrupt acts for her personal benefit".



The US has never publicly provided any information to substantiate that charge, and Joe Biden lifted the sanctions months after he entered the White House.

But at the time Bensouda faced increasing pressure from an apparently concerted effort behind the scenes by the two powerful allies. As a Gambian national, she did not enjoy the political protection that other ICC colleagues from western countries had by virtue of their citizenship. A former ICC source said this left her "vulnerable and isolated".

Cohen's activities, sources said, were particularly concerning for the prosecutor and led her to fear for her personal safety. When the pre-trial chamber finally confirmed the ICC had jurisdiction in Palestine in February 2021, some at the ICC even believed Bensouda should leave the final decision to open a full investigation to her successor.

On 3 March, however, months before the end of her nine-year term, Bensouda announced a full investigation in the Palestine case, setting in motion a process that could lead to criminal charges, though she cautioned the next phase could take time.

"Any investigation undertaken by the office will be conducted



▼ *The Palestinian photographer and painter Belal Khaled draws graffiti on the wall of a building destroyed in Israeli attacks on Rafah in February* PHOTOGRAPH: ABED ZAGOUT/ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

independently, impartially and objectively, without fear or favour," she said. "To both Palestinian and Israeli victims and affected communities, we urge patience."

KHAN ANNOUNCES ARREST WARRANTS

When Khan took the helm at the ICC prosecutor's office in June 2021, he inherited an investigation he later said "lies on the San Andreas fault of international politics and strategic interests".

As he took office, other investigations – including on events in the Philippines, DRC, Afghanistan and Bangladesh – competed for his attention, and in March 2022, days after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, he opened a high-profile investigation into alleged Russian war crimes.

Initially, the politically sensitive Palestine inquiry was not treated as a priority by the British prosecutor's team, sources familiar with the case said. One said it was in effect "on the shelf" – but Khan's office disputes this and says it established a dedicated team to take the inquiry forward.

In Israel, the government's top lawyers regarded Khan – who had previously defended warlords such as the former Liberian president Charles Taylor – as a more cautious prosecutor than Bensouda. One former senior Israeli official said there was "lots of respect" for Khan, unlike for his predecessor. His appointment to the court was viewed as a "reason for optimism", they said, but they added that the 7 October attack "changed that reality".

The Hamas assault on southern Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed nearly 1,200 Israelis and kidnapped about 250 people, clearly involved brazen war crimes. So, too, in the view of many legal experts, has Israel's subsequent onslaught on Gaza, which is estimated to have killed more than 36,000 people and brought the territory to the brink of famine through Israel's obstruction of humanitarian aid.

The appointment of Khan was seen as a 'reason for optimism' but the 7 October attack 'changed that reality', according to an Israeli official

By the end of the third week of Israel's bombardment of Gaza, Khan was on the ground at the Rafah border crossing. He subsequently made visits to the West Bank and southern Israel, where he was invited to meet survivors of the 7 October attack and the relatives of people who had been killed.

In February 2024, Khan issued a strongly worded statement that Netanyahu's legal advisers interpreted as an ominous sign. In the post on X, he in effect warned Israel against launching an assault on Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, where more than 1 million displaced people were sheltering at the time. "I am deeply concerned by the reported bombardment and potential ground incursion by Israeli forces in Rafah," he wrote. "Those who do not comply with the law should not complain later when my office takes action."

The comments stirred alarm within the Israeli government as they appeared to deviate from his previous statements about the war, which officials had viewed as reassuringly cautious. "That tweet surprised us a lot," a senior official said.

Concerns in Israel over Khan's intentions grew last month when the government briefed the media that it believed the prosecutor was contemplating arrest warrants against Netanyahu and other senior officials such as Gallant.

Israeli intelligence had intercepted emails, attachments and text messages from Khan and other officials in his office. "The subject of the ICC climbed the ladder of priorities for Israeli intelligence," one intelligence source said.

It was via intercepted communications that Israel established that Khan was at one stage considering entering Gaza through Egypt and wanted urgent assistance doing so "without Israel's permission".

Another Israeli intelligence assessment, circulated widely in the intelligence community, drew on surveillance of a call between two Palestinian politicians. One of them said Khan had indicated that a request for arrest warrants of Israeli leaders could be imminent, but warned he was "under tremendous pressure from the United States".

It was against this backdrop that Netanyahu made a series of public statements warning a request for arrest warrants could be imminent. He called on "the leaders of the free world to stand firmly against the ICC" and "use all the means at their disposal to stop this dangerous move".

Israeli intelligence intercepted emails, text messages and attachments from Khan and other officials in his office

He added: "Branding Israel's leaders and soldiers as war criminals will pour jet fuel on the fires of antisemitism." In Washington, a group of senior US Republican senators had already sent a threatening letter to Khan with a clear warning: "Target Israel and we will target you."

The ICC, meanwhile, has strengthened its security with regular sweeps of the prosecutor's offices, security checks on devices, phone-free areas, weekly threat assessments and the introduction of specialist equipment. An ICC spokesperson said Khan's office had been subjected to "several forms of threats and communications that could be viewed as attempts to unduly influence its activities".

Khan recently disclosed in an interview with CNN that some elected leaders had been "very blunt" with him as he prepared to issue arrest warrants. "'This court is built for Africa and for thugs like Putin,' was what a senior leader told me."

Despite the pressure, Khan, like his predecessor in the prosecutor's office, chose to press ahead. Last week, he announced he was seeking arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant alongside three Hamas leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

He said Israel's prime minister and defence minister stood accused of responsibility for extermination, starvation, the denial of humanitarian relief supplies and deliberate targeting of civilians.

Standing at a lectern with two of his top prosecutors – one American, the other British – at his side, Khan said he had repeatedly told Israel to take urgent action to comply with humanitarian law.

"I specifically underlined that starvation as a method of war and the denial of humanitarian relief constitute Rome statute offences. I could not have been clearer," he said. "As I also repeatedly underlined in my public statements, those who do not comply with the law should not complain later when my office takes action. That day has come."

New era of 'poly-crime' destabilising countries, Interpol says

Rajeev Syal
Home affairs editor

The world is entering a "poly-criminal age" where cross-continental gangs use fraud, drugs, AI and child sexual abuse to generate profits bigger than some nations' gross domestic products, a senior figure in Interpol has said.

Stephen Kavanagh, an executive director of the international agency, said that multibillion pound syndicates are destabilising countries, driving migration and destroying ecosystems.

Kavanagh, who is seeking to be elected as the next Interpol secretary general, urged officers struggling to cope in a new era of crime to team up with academia and tech giants.

"A new era of crime is under way unlike anything we have faced before in speed, scale and sophistication.

"The chaos and misery it is unleashing is destabilising countries, driving migration, destroying ecosystems and harming the lives and livelihoods of millions.

"This poly-criminal age requires us to recognise the impacts in all their forms, to face uncomfortable truths and to make collective choices about how, where and when we as an international community are prepared to take responsibility and confront it," he told an audience at the Royal United Services Institute.

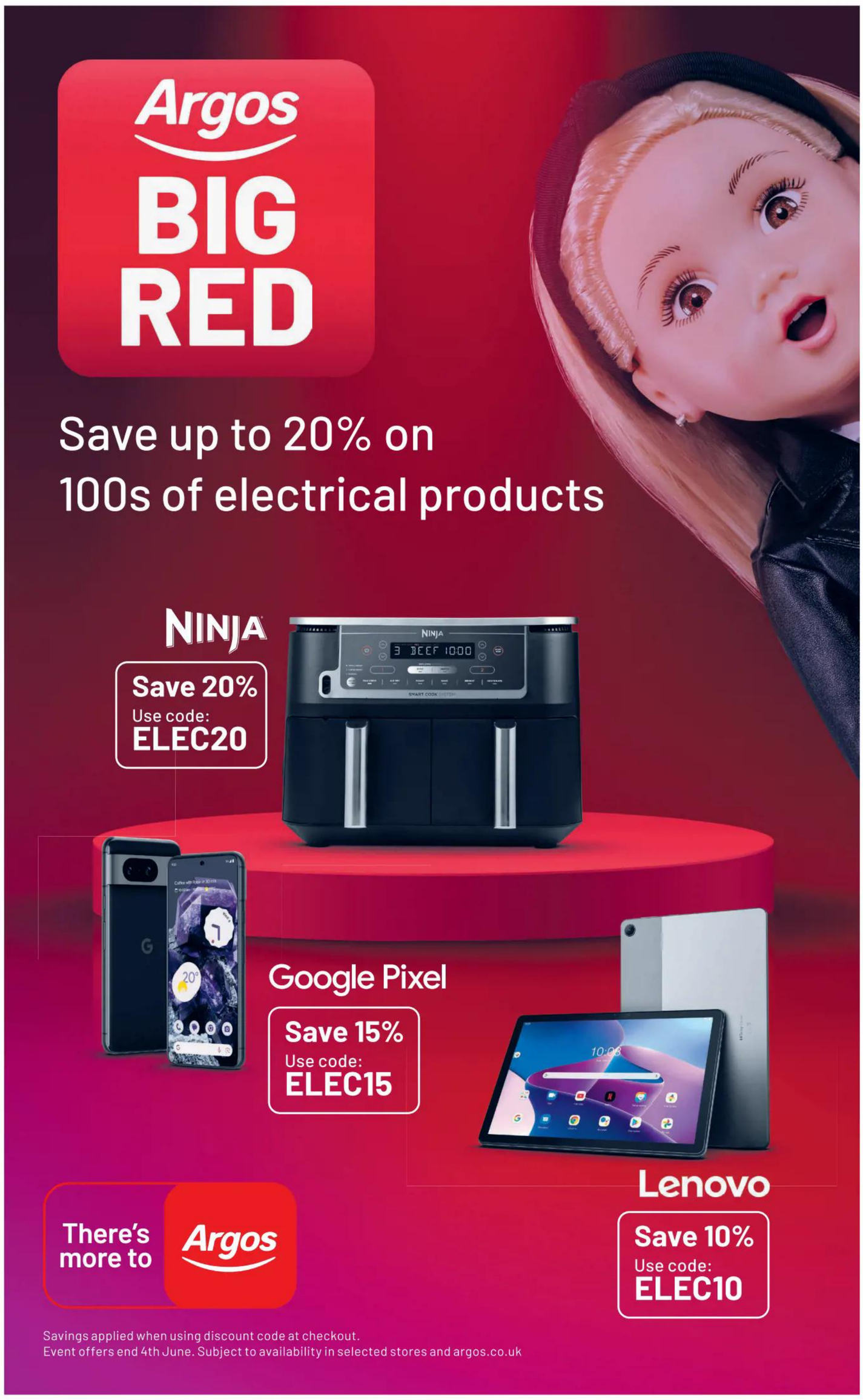
Crime gangs have helped to destabilise countries such as Ecuador and are capitalising on the £61bn methamphetamine market in south east Asia and the Pacific region, Kavanagh said.

They are now exploiting AI as part of sophisticated frauds, he said, while profiting from the sexual exploitation of hundreds of millions of children.

"We need to recognise the importance of a new collective wisdom.

"That means working more closely with others outside traditional law enforcement, with academia, with tech, the private sector, with wider government.

"It is a fact that Interpol and law enforcement simply doesn't have access to the insights, resources and data that our partners hold," he said.



Man jailed for stabbing pregnant ex-girlfriend

Steven Morris

A man who stabbed his pregnant ex-girlfriend weeks before she was due to give birth to their baby has been jailed for 17 years and four months for attempted murder.

Daniel Mihai Popescu, 29, grabbed Andreea Pintili in the street near her home in Aberfan, south Wales, and told her: "I have a knife and I am going to kill you."

He stabbed her with a 20cm knife multiple times. In her victim impact statement Pintili, who was 37 weeks pregnant at the time of the attack, said: "His intention that day was to kill me and my unborn child." She added: "I feel lucky to be alive after this harrowing experience. He told me he had a knife and to get into the house. I have no doubt if I went in to the house he would have killed me."

Schools were locked down while armed police searched for Popescu after the attack on 5 December last year. John Hipkin KC, prosecuting, said Popescu and Pintili began a relationship in 2020 but he developed a gambling habit and the couple separated around August 2023.

Merthyr Tydfil crown court heard he began to stalk her by calling her from withheld numbers, filming her and uploading the footage on TikTok, and sitting outside her home.

After Pintili moved to Aberfan, Popescu left two bags of his clothing outside her home and left her a voicemail, saying: "Don't touch my clothes, I'm not going from the street until you get back together with me."



▲ *Daniel Mihai Popescu pleaded guilty to attempted murder*

Popescu was arrested after this and released on bail with a condition not to contact Pintili. But Hipkin told the court that Popescu continued to stalk her, and sent a message to his sister suggesting he would kill Pintili.

CCTV footage played to the court showed Pintili walking along the street near her home before Popescu emerged from a hiding place behind a parked car and attacked her.

A woman saw the attack, screamed and ran to try to help, which caused Popescu, a factory and car wash worker, to flee. Pintili suffered wounds to her back and hand. She was taken to hospital but she and her unborn child were not seriously hurt.

She said she was happy Popescu pleaded guilty to attempted murder but would never feel safe.

She said: "I feel very scared and anxious of the thought of him being released. He did not abide to any bail condition set, and I feel he'll also ignore any restraining orders placed upon him."

David Aubrey KC, defending, said that after they separated, Popescu was informed that when the child was born he would have no contact with the baby or be named as the father on the birth certificate.

The recorder of Cardiff, Judge Tracey Lloyd-Clarke, told Popescu he appeared to feel very little remorse and posed a high risk of causing serious harm to Pintili and any of his future partners.

Police released footage of the attack and the arrest. DI James Morris called it a "senseless and sustained act of violence". He praised the "strength and bravery of the victim" and the courage of the woman who ran to help her.



▲ *Andreea Pintili, who was 37 weeks pregnant at the time of the attack, said that she felt 'lucky to be alive'*

Stage review Izzard in a 'shallow impersonation of a profound play'

Eddie Izzard: Hamlet
Riverside Studios, London
★☆☆☆☆

Arifa Akbar

Has the solo star-vehicle as epic monologue theatre reached its peak with Eddie Izzard's one-woman Hamlet? Isabelle Huppert, Sarah Snook and Andrew Scott have all performed their own turns of late.

This is, in fact, Izzard's second such dramatic juggling act. The first was the charmingly performed Great Expectations in which she played every part. But where Dickensian drama suits picaresque characterisation and cute delivery, here Izzard, wrestling with 23 Shakespearean roles on an empty stage, butts up against the limits of the form – or perhaps the limit of her own acting skills, which are badly exposed.

Directed by Selina Cadell and adapted by Izzard's brother, Mark Izzard, the production is fresh from New York, where it was extended three times. It is perplexing to see why, even for this self-proclaimed Izzard fan. As a stand-up stalwart, Izzard knows how to hold a crowd. Stage presence is not the problem and Izzard looks the part, starkly melancholy in black jacket and leggings with a blaze of red lipstick. The play feels eclipsed by the circus trick of Izzard's endeavour.

She switches places to play characters in conversation, skips across the stage in Hamlet's antic state, gurns when Claudius makes his confession, twirls as she transforms from Polonius into Laertes, holds up invisible hand puppets for Rosencrantz and Gildenstern and sword-fights awkwardly to the bloody denouement.



▼ *Eddie Izzard's one-woman show is a marathon achievement, but more a feat of memory than performance*
PHOTOGRAPH: AMANDA SEARLE

It is certainly a marathon achievement but more a feat of memory (bar a few fumbles) than performance. Is Izzard's a philosopher Hamlet, an oedipal or suicidal Hamlet? The prince seems too skin-deep to be any of those iterations, Izzard diligently channelling words rather than any meaningful interpretation of the role. The speed means you cannot absorb the verse or even follow the change in mood and action. Some of the soliloquies carry conspiratorial outrage or a dancing delivery, and it comes to feel like a shallow impersonation of a profound play.

Hamlet's women are hardly prominent figures but here they feel especially shadowy. We gain no insight into the queen and her "too hasty" marriage, nor feel Ophelia's tragedy as she unravels.

At times it looks like avant-garde cabaret, other times like "bedroom mirror" Shakespeare that should perhaps have stayed that way.

There is humour, but this comes from Izzard's comic gesturing or added lines ("tedious old git" Hamlet says of Polonius) rather than Shakespeare's acid satire of Polonius or Hamlet's wordplay and antic disposition.

Izzard is up against the limits of solo theatre – or perhaps the limits of her own acting skills, which are badly exposed

There are no props or scenery, only light changes in Tyler Elich's design – so bilious green when the king's ghost appears and white for the soliloquies, which seems effective at first but gradually turns crass in its signposting.

Most frustratingly, Izzard uses the same tone for every character, from Claudius to Gertrude to Hamlet – and unlike Scott's one-man Vanya, she gives characters no idiosyncrasies so those who do not know this text well may be lost.

Never mind the murder at the heart of Hamlet. This production feels like its own massacre.

Plays until 30 June

An URGENT appeal to Guardian 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.



© UNHCR/Roger Arnold

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 Guardian readers if you will make today, 29 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-guardian
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

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: P24ODAGU1

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

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

A minimum of 75% of your gift will directly help displaced and refugee families, funding Emergency Rescue Kits and other humanitarian interventions.

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency United Kingdom for UNHCR

United Kingdom for UNHCR is a registered charity in England and Wales (1183415).

P24ODAGU1

Eyewitness



▼ Miami, Florida
Tower blocks reflect the shape of a liner in port, where cruises are a big contributor to the local economy

PHOTOGRAPH: CRISTOBAL HERRERA/EPA



One Earth Solar Farm Limited

Section 48 Planning Act 2008 and Regulation 4 Infrastructure Planning (Applications Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
Notice publicising a proposed application for a Development Consent Order
Notice is hereby given that One Earth Solar Farm Ltd (13078087) of Unit 2 Crossways Bicester Road, Kingswood, Aylesbury, England, HP18 0RA (the 'Applicant') proposes to make an application to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero under section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (the 'Act') for a Development Consent Order ('DCO').

The Applicant intends to make the application in Q1 2025.

Overview of One Earth Solar Farm

One Earth Solar Farm would comprise the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic ('PV') array electricity generating facility and battery energy storage system with a total capacity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW) and import/export connection to the National Electricity Transmission System ('the Project').
The Project would be located on approximately 1,500 hectares of land within the administrative boundaries of Newark and Sherwood District Council, Bassetlaw District Council, West Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council, and Nottinghamshire County Council (the 'Proposed Site').

Development Consent Order (DCO)

As the Project would generate in excess of 50MW of electrical capacity, it is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Act. Accordingly, the Applicant must apply to the Secretary of State for a DCO under the Act.

The DCO would, amongst other things, authorise:

- construction, operation and decommissioning of ground mounted solar PV arrays, inverters, transformers, substations, a Battery Energy Storage System, along with underground cables to connect to the High Marnham substation
- other infrastructure works including on-site cabling, ancillary buildings such as offices and welfare areas, access tracks, and any other works identified as necessary to enable the Project. There would also be parts of the Proposed Site used for landscaping which would include features such as biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures, amenity improvements and fencing.
- the compulsory acquisition of land and/or rights and the taking of temporary possession of land.
  the overriding of easements and other rights over or affecting land.
- the application and/or disapplication of legislation relating to the Project.
- such ancillary, incidental and consequential provisions, licences, property rights, permits and consents as are necessary and/or convenient.
- powers to undertake highway improvement works in order to facilitate the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Project is an Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') development for the purposes of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and accordingly a Preliminary Environmental Information Report ('PEIR') has been produced and is included as part of the consultation materials. The PEIR sets out the preliminary environmental information on the Project. The Applicant is carrying out an EIA and will submit an Environmental Statement as part of its DCO application.

Statutory Pre-application Consultation

The Applicant is commencing consultation on the Project from 29 May 2024 to 9 July 2024. The purpose of this consultation is to obtain views on the Project ahead of submission of the DCO application.
The Applicant has produced a Statement of Community Consultation ('SoCC') in accordance with section 47 of the Act which explains how the Applicant will consult with the local community about the Project. The SoCC can be viewed free of charge at https://oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk/document-library/ , or at the community access locations set out below from 13 May 2024. The consultation will be carried out in accordance with the SoCC.

Consultation Materials

We have developed a variety of materials to provide more information about the Project, including:

- a consultation booklet showing the nature and location of the Project.
- A consultation questionnaire to gather feedback on the Project.
- the PEIR.
- a SoCC which was developed in accordance with section 47 of the Act and explains how we will consult with the community.

The consultation materials will be available in several formats and locations from 29 May 2024 to 9 July 2024. All consultation materials will be available to download online free of charge at https://oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk/document-library/ or free of charge on a USB on request using the details in this notice. Printed copies of the consultation booklet, SoCC and questionnaire are available free of charge upon request using the details in this notice. Requests for hard copies of the PEIR will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and a fee to cover printing costs (up to a maximum of £750 for one full set of consultation documents) may be charged to the recipient.
Printed copies of consultation materials, including the SoCC, will be available to view at the following community access locations during the consultation period (please check opening times before travelling):

Community Access Locations

Locations	Opening Hours
South Clifton Sports Pavilion, South Clifton, Newark NG23 7AH	After 5:30pm on Fridays
The Courtyard Tea Room, Collingham Rd, Newton on Trent, Lincoln LN1 2LL	9am - 3pm Tuesdays - Fridays
Saxilby Library, St Andrews Centre, William St, Saxilby LN1 2LP	10:30am - 4pm Tuesdays, 10:30am - 1pm W ednesdays-Fridays
St Helen's Church, Main Street, Thorney, Newark, NG23 7EU	11am – 4pm Sundays
Bassetlaw District Council, 17B The Square, Retford, Notts, DN22 6DB	9am – 5pm Mondays-Fridays
Bassetlaw District Council, Queens Buildings, Potter St, Worksop S80 2AH	9am – 5pm Mondays-Fridays
Newark and Sherwood District Council, Castle House, Great North Rd, Newark NG24 1BY	9am – 5pm Mondays-Fridays
West Lindsey District Council, Guildhall Marshall's Yard, Marshalls Yard, 13b Beaumont St, Gainsborough DN21 2NA	9am – 5pm Mondays-Fridays

Information Events

In addition, the Applicant is hosting a number of public events at the following dates and locations to enable individuals to learn more about the Project and share their feedback.

Date	Location
Friday, 7 June 2024 4 - 8 pm	Dunham on Trent Village Hall, Dunham NG22 0FJ
Saturday, 8 June 2024 12 - 4 pm	St Peters Church Newton on Trent, Lincoln LN1 2JS
Wednesday, 12 June 2024 2 - 6 pm	South Clifton Coronation Hall South Clifton, NG23 7AN
Thursday, 13 June 2024 12 - 4 pm	Normanton Village Hall Normanton on Trent
Tuesday, 18 June 2024 6 - 7 pm	Webinar – Please visit our website to register: oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk
Saturday, 29 June 2024 12 - 4 pm	South Clifton Coronation Hall South Clifton, NG23 7AN
Wednesday, 3 July 2024 6 – 7 pm	Webinar – Please visit our website to register: oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk

Providing Feedback

Any person may comment on the Project or otherwise respond to this publicity by 11:59pm on 9 July 2024 through any of the following methods:

- Complete a questionnaire online at the project website: oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk
- Complete a paper questionnaire and return it to the Freepost address:
  One Earth Solar Farm Freepost SEC NEWGATE UK LOCAL (no stamp is required)
- Send written comments by post to the Freepost address above, or by email to info@oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk

Next Steps

The Applicant will consider and have due regard to all responses received by the above deadline when developing the application for a DCO. Responses will form the basis of a Consultation Report that will be one of the factors taken into consideration by the Secretary of State when deciding whether the application can be accepted for Examination. Therefore, in providing any comment, it should be borne in mind that the substance of it may be communicated to others as part of the Consultation Report.

Communications Lines

If you would like further information about this notice, the consultation or the Project, please contact the project team by using one of the contact methods provided below:

- Call Freephone: 0800 169 6507
- Email: info@oneearthsolarfarm.co.uk
- Write to: One Earth Solar Farm, FREEPOST SEC Newgate UK Local (no stamp is needed)

SUVs driving 20% of global rise in CO_2 as sales hit record high

Damian Carrington
Environment editor

Sales of SUVs set a record in 2023, making up half of all new cars sold globally, data has revealed, as experts warned rising sales of the large, heavy vehicles were pushing up the carbon emissions that drive global heating.

Analysis by the International Energy Agency (IEA) found emissions from SUVs made up 20% of the global rise in CO_2 in 2023. If SUVs were a country, the IEA said, they would be the world's fifth-largest emitter of CO_2, ahead of Japan and Germany.

Emissions from the global transport sector have risen fast in recent years, outside of the Covid pandemic. SUV sales rose 15% in 2023, compared with a 3% rise for conventional cars.

The IEA said the main reasons behind the surge were "the appeal of SUVs as a status symbol", marketing by carmakers, and perceptions that they were more comfortable. The IEA also said SUVs caused greater injury to pedestrians in collisions due to their higher front ends, and took up more space in cities than regular cars.

About 20% of new SUVs sold in 2023 were pure electric or hybrids. But the IEA said the larger vehicles needed bigger batteries, putting pressure on the supply of critical minerals and requiring more electricity to run.

Cars running on petrol or diesel have become more efficient, but Laura Cozzi and Apostolos Petropoulos of the IEA, who conducted the analysis, said: "The trend toward heavier and less efficient vehicles such as SUVs has largely nullified the improvements achieved in recent decades."

James Nix of the thinktank Transport and Environment (T&E) said: "Carmakers in pursuit of higher margins know only one direction: bigger and heavier. New cars are getting wider every year, and are on track to become as wide as buses and trucks.

"Europe will go the way of North America unless lawmakers step in with EU width limits and national taxes and parking charges which discourage big SUVs."

There were more than 360m SUVs on the road worldwide in 2023, producing 1bn tonnes of CO_2 emissions, up about 10% on 2022. As a result, global oil consumption rose by 600,000 barrels a day, more than a quarter of the total growth in oil demand, the IEA said. SUVs weigh 200kg-300kg more than an average medium-sized car and emit about 20% more CO_2.

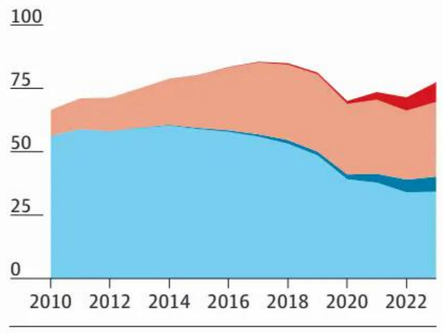
In rich countries, almost 20m SUVs were sold in 2023, taking their market share to 50% for the first time. Globally, 48% of new cars sold were SUVs and, including older cars, one in four cars on the road today are SUVs, according to the IEA.

Sales of electric cars are rising rapidly and 55% of these were SUVs in 2023, the IEA data showed. "Shifting from fossil-fuelled cars to electric vehicles is a key strategy for reaching international energy and climate goals," Cozzi and Petropoulos said. But they added that using fewer materials to produce cars was also "essential for a sustainable future".

Some countries, including France, Norway and Ireland, are working to rein in demand for SUVs, with Paris tripling its parking charges for the vehicles.

In March, T&E said the UK was a "tax haven" for polluting SUVs, as the vehicle excise duty for them in the first year is a fraction of that in other countries. The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said in February he would monitor the effectiveness of the Paris plan.

SUVs now account for half of all new car sales
New car sales, millions



Source: International Energy Agency

UK transport emissions

Rich white men biggest contributors

Matthew Taylor

Wealthy white men from rural areas are the UK's biggest emitters of climate-heating gases from transport, according to a new study. Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research looked at transport emissions by income, gender, location, ethnicity, age and disability. The study breaks down the emissions into international and domestic flights, private road transport and public transport.

Wealth

The richest 0.1% in Britain emit 22 times more from transport than low earners, and 12 times more than the average. The data finds that income is directly linked to levels of mobility, with people who earn more than £100,000 travelling on average at least double the distance each year compared with those on incomes under £30,000.

Those in the most deprived 10% are responsible for by far the fewest emissions, though flying still makes up more than half of their total emissions.

Gender and disability

Men are responsible for significantly more emissions from transport than women. Those who do not have a disability also emit more than those who do.

Age

Emissions from flying peak between 25 and 35, according to the data, with the over-65s flying the least. Use of private road transport peaks in middle age, with the most emissions per year produced by people aged 49-65. Emissions from public transport use are highest among the young, and fall the older people get.

Location

Overall, people living in rural areas tend to emit more than those in urban areas. They emit more from driving, probably reflecting the reliance on private transport in many rural areas which are often less well served by buses and trains.

Ethnicity

Per capita, people in the "white British" category tend to emit more through flights and private transport, and slightly less on public transport, than "non-white British" people .

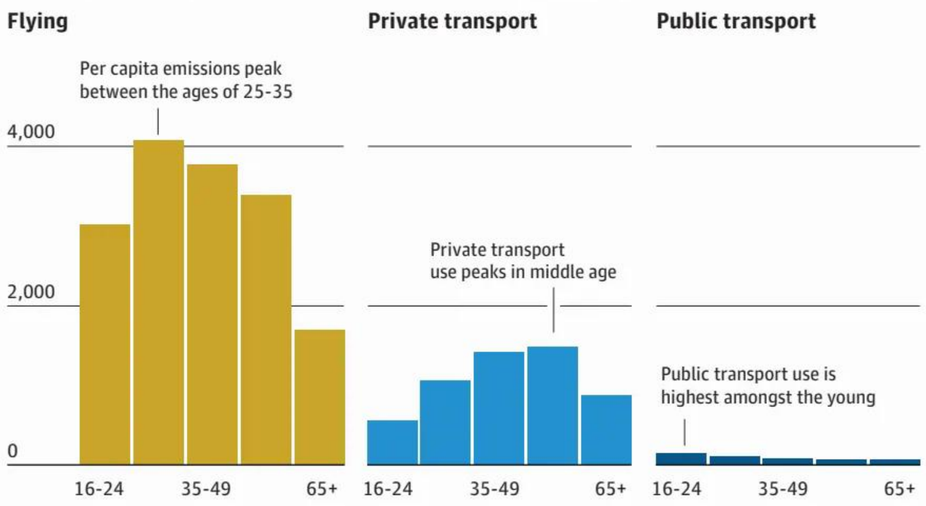
In the UK, transport is now the largest source of emissions, and the report calls on government to rapidly improve public transport, boost active travel and speed up the transition to electric vehicles. It also calls for new taxes on private jets and reinstating the 2030 ban on petrol and diesel vehicles.

Maya Singer Hobbs, a senior research fellow at IPPR, said: "Reducing emissions can actually tackle some of that injustice, if done fairly. But while not everyone needs to make the same changes, those who are financially best off need to do the most."

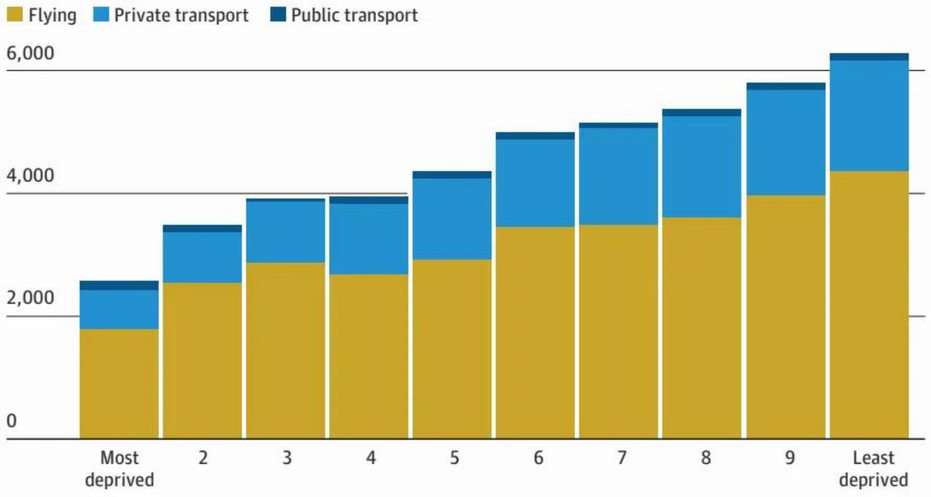
Stephen Frost, the principal research fellow at IPPR, said the study demonstrated who was best placed to cut their emissions and how we could tackle the "underlying unfairness in how the transport system currently works".

"Now is not the time to slow down our efforts to reach net zero - doing so just fuels existing transport inequalities," he said. "The next UK government must step up the pace by delivering a credible, fair and people-focused plan for more sustainable travel."

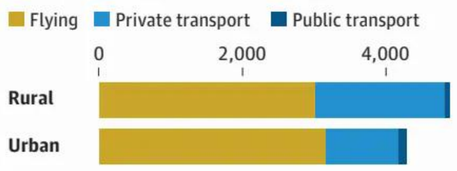
Transport emissions by age group
*Average annual per capita transport emissions by age group, kgCO2e**



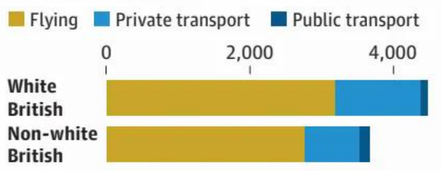
Transport emissions by deprivation decile
Average annual per capita transport emissions by deprivation decile, kgCO2e



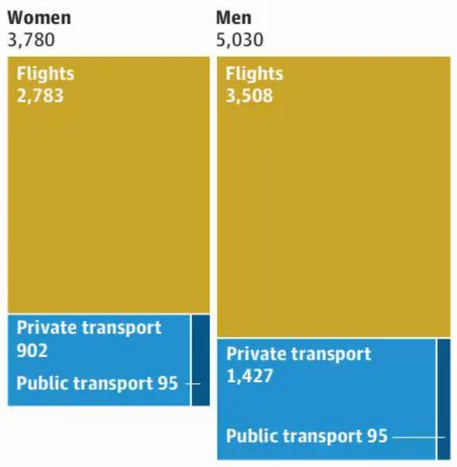
Transport emissions by geography
Average annual per capita transport emissions by geography, kgCO2e



Transport emissions by ethnicity
Average annual per capita transport emissions by ethnicity, kgCO2e



Transport emissions by gender
Average annual per capita transport emissions by gender, kgCO2e



Source: IPPR. Moving together: A people-focused pathway to fairer and greener transport. Note: *Kilograms of CO2 equivalent, adjusted for non-CO2 impacts



▶ *People living in rural areas tend to produce more climate-heating gases, with poor public transport likely to be a factor* PHOTOGRAPH: TIM GRAHAM/ALAMY

'Now is not the time to slow down our efforts to reach net zero – doing so just fuels existing transport inequalities'

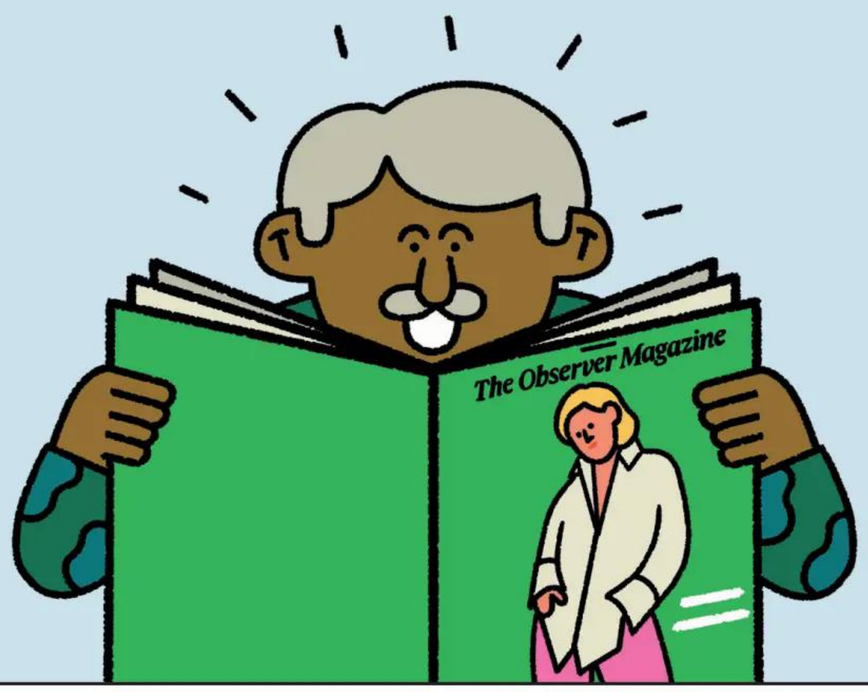
Stephen Frost
Research fellow, IPPR

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Wild Rose, film about Glasgow country singer, to become stage musical

Mark Fisher

Wild Rose, the award-winning film about a Glasgow country singer, is to be turned into a musical.

The writer Nicole Taylor is adapting her 2018 screenplay and working with John Tiffany, the director of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.

The show will begin at the Royal Lyceum theatre, in Edinburgh, in March next year, with further dates expected to be announced.

Taylor adapted the recent Netflix hit One Day, and her other small-screen credits include Three Girls, The Nest, and The C Word.

She said she had always believed in the dramatic potential of Wild Rose: "I held on to the rights, even though as a first-time writer I had no negotiating position and I'd never written a word for theatre. I knew it would take theatrical form at some point."

Starring Jessie Buckley, Julie Walters and Sophie Okonedo, the film tells the story of Rose-Lynn Harlan, a single mother and former prisoner, who seeks Nashville stardom. A cleaner by day, she fronts a country band by night, but her dreams of fame are tempered by the reality of caring for her two young children.

"The dramatic question feels as enduring as ever," said Taylor. "That is, once you are a mum what are you allowed to want? And if you've got talent, is that a trump card?"

Tiffany, who directed the musical Once and the National Theatre of Scotland's Black Watch, said Taylor's film was perfect for the stage. "It's a gorgeous mixture of a truthful, engaging story and the beautiful genre of country music. Rose-Lynn is such a fantastic Glasgow character. The contradiction within her – she frustrates you and makes you fall in love with her in equal measure. I could see it on stage immediately."

Taylor has been a country music fan since she was 12 and is delighted by its rise in popularity. "As Rose-Lynn says, country music is about getting what's [inside you] out, and that feels inherently right for a musical where people express themselves in song. I wouldn't be a writer if I hadn't discovered country music because I still use it to understand what I'm feeling and to be able to describe it."



Jessie Buckley as Rose-Lynn in the film, a single mother and former prisoner who dreams of stardom

PHOTOGRAPH: ENTONE GROUP

The Netflix adaptation of One Day attracted audiences of 15.2 million but Taylor said she was excited about working in theatre for the first time. "I'm overjoyed. It's such a responsibility, you're getting people out of their houses, making them physically sit there. I feel such a responsibility to be really good – more than if you're watching telly and can just turn it off."

The musical runs from 6 March to 5 April and will feature songs by Dolly Parton, Carrie Underwood, Wynonna Judd, Chris Stapleton, Caitlyn Smith, the Chicks, and Patty Griffin, as well as the film's original song, Glasgow (No Place Like Home). It will be choreographed by Steven Hoggett and Vicki Manderson.

"It will be very different from the film," said Tiffany. "There will be a large band on stage in order to get the fullness of the songs and it will go very lightly from world to world."



World



Tanks move into centre of Rafah as Israel's global isolation grows

Emma Graham-Harrison
Jerusalem

Tanks reached the middle of Rafah yesterday as Israel's global isolation deepened, with three European countries formally recognising a Palestinian state and the UN security council calling an emergency meeting to discuss the situation in Gaza.

Overnight Israeli forces again attacked the Tel al-Sultan area, where at least 45 people were killed on Sunday by an airstrike and huge fire in an area crowded with refugee tents.

Authorities in Gaza said 21 people were killed in the latest attack, more than half of them women. At least one bomb landed about 300 metres (980ft) from Sunday's strike site.

Growing international outrage about the Israeli push into Rafah, including an order from the UN's top court to stop the offensive and sharp criticism from the US, Israel's most important ally, after the weekend attack, have not had any apparent impact on its military plans.

The prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, described Sunday's strike as a "tragic mistake" but vowed to continue the operation. Later a spokesperson for the Israeli military said its airstrike had not caused the fire.

R Adm Daniel Hagari said jets used small bombs to kill two Hamas commanders inside buildings about 180 metres from tents where the fire broke out.

"Our munition alone could not have ignited a fire of this size," he said, adding that the military was investigating whether the "unexpected and unintended" fire had been caused by secondary explosions at what they claimed was an ammunition warehouse near tents.

About 1 million Palestinians have fled Rafah since early May, but hundreds of thousands are still sheltering there, Unrwa, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, said yesterday.

"[They left] with nowhere safe to go and amidst bombardments, lack of food and water, piles of waste and unsuitable living conditions," Unrwa said in a post on X. "Day after day, providing assistance and protection becomes nearly impossible."

For months, Israel urged Palestinian civilians to seek safety in Rafah as intense fighting razed much of the rest of Gaza. Now they are being told to move again, as Israeli troops move in to the last area that had not seen ground operations. For much of May, since seizing the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, Israeli ground forces had mostly probed the city's outskirts and entered only eastern areas. But yesterday tanks were seen near al-Awda mosque, a landmark in central Rafah, Reuters reported, citing witnesses. They also pushed towards western neighbourhoods, taking positions on the Zurub hilltop, after heavy bombardment.



▲ *People arrive in Khan Younis after fleeing Israeli attacks on Rafah*

Not all Palestinians sheltering there are able to move, and some have decided there is greater danger in moving given that fighting continues across much of Gaza and there is little shelter, food, water or sanitation elsewhere.

The military operation has choked off most aid to Gaza. The Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings were the main entry points for food, fuel and medical supplies during the first seven months of war, but in more than three weeks from 6 to 28 May, just 216 aid trucks entered Gaza, UN figures show.

That is an average of fewer than 10 a day, although Israel, the US and the UN had agreed at least 500 trucks a day, the prewar level, were needed.

Some supplies had reached northern Gaza through a floating pier built by the US. But the Pentagon yesterday said that part of the $320m (£251m)

'A lot of grudge votes'
ANC at risk as South Africa heads to polls
Page 34



Ancient steeds
Stallions buried 2,000 years ago discovered
Page 37

◀ *Palestinians try to salvage belongings from damaged tents in Rafah. Officials in the city said at least 45 people were killed on Sunday by an Israeli airstrike and a fire that took hold in an area crowded with refugee tents*

PHOTOGRAPH: HANI ALSHAER/ANADOLU/ GETTY IMAGES

structure had broken away in heavy seas, rendering it inoperable for at least a week while it is repaired.

The World Food Programme – the UN's food agency – and Unrwa provide the majority of food aid in Gaza.

The UN security council was due to convene an emergency meeting late yesterday to discuss Israel's campaign in Rafah, and the US government on Monday warned Israel to "take every precaution possible to protect civilians".

Israel's offensive has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians in Gaza, the majority of them civilians, according to health authorities there. It was launched after Hamas conducted cross-border attacks on 7 October, killing about 1,200 people and taking 250 others hostage.

Yesterday, Spain, Ireland and Norway formally recognised the state of Palestine. They said the move would bolster efforts to reach a permanent solution to decades of conflict, but Israel has fiercely attacked their decision and recalled ambassadors from Madrid, Dublin and Oslo last week in response.

Spain's socialist prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, said the "historic" decision had been taken "with a single goal: to contribute to achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians", and was not directed "against anyone, least of all Israel".

Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz, said in a statement on X that Sánchez's actions made him "complicit … in war crimes". More than 140 countries recognise a Palestinian state already, but no major western powers had done so. The move by the trio could add to pressure in nearby capitals and even Washington.

Oslo's foreign minister, Espen Barth Eide, said it was a significant moment, after decades of Norwegian support for a two-state solution to the regional conflict.

"For more than 30 years, Norway has been one of the strongest advocates for a Palestinian state. Today … is a milestone in the relationship between Norway and Palestine," he said.

Sánchez said a "viable" Palestinian state would comprise the West Bank and Gaza, connected by a corridor, with East Jerusalem as its capital and the Palestinian National Authority as its legitimate government.

He said that while it was not up to Spain to define another country's borders, its position was aligned with those of the UN security council and the EU: "Therefore we won't recognise change in the 1967 lines other than those agreed to by the parties."

Additional reporting
Sam Jones and Rory Carroll

Georgia's 'foreign influence' bill set to become law

Pjotr Sauer

Georgia's parliament has voted to override a presidential veto on the controversial "foreign influence" law, a move that is poised to derail the EU aspirations of many Georgians in favour of closer ties with Moscow.

The divisive bill, which requires civil society organisations and media that receive more than 20% of their revenues from abroad to register as "organisations serving the interests of a foreign power", was approved by the parliament earlier this month.

The president, Salome Zourabichvili, later vetoed the law, which she and other critics argue is modelled on a 2012 Russian bill used to suppress pro-western groups.

But yesterday the Georgian parliament, controlled by the ruling Georgian Dream party, voted to overrule her veto, setting the stage for the speaker to sign the bill into law in the coming days.

Thousands of opponents of the bill rallied outside the parliament building yesterday, waving Georgian and EU flags.

Zourabichvili addressed the crowd by video link, asking: "Do we want a European future or Russian slavery?

She called on the protesters to mobilise ahead of elections in October, saying: "You are angry today, aren't you? Get angry, but let's get to work. The work is that we have to prepare, first of all, for a true referendum."

The EU has said the law will be an obstacle to the country's accession to the bloc, a goal supported by up to 80% of the electorate. In a statement yesterday the EU said it "deeply regrets" the vote to override the veto and was "considering all options to react to these developments".

"The EU has stressed repeatedly that the law adopted by the Georgian parliament goes against EU core principles and values," it said.

The EU offered Georgia candidate status last December, while noting that Tbilisi needs to implement key policy recommendations for its membership bid to progress. The legislation has brought hundreds of thousands of people out on to the streets of the capital. They accuse the Dream party of trying to smear dissenting voices as traitors and block EU membership aspirations.

Critics of the law also worry it will be used to restrict debate in the run-up to parliamentary elections.

Yesterday one protester, Giorgi Amzashvili, told Reuters that the lawmakers who had voted to override the president's veto were "the most treacherous people in our history". "A disastrous day in our lives, in Georgian history," he said.

> ***'[It is] a disastrous day in our lives, in Georgian history'***
>
> **Giorgi Amzashvili**
> *Protester*

The US has also warned that the legislation and the government's anti-western rhetoric is turning Georgia into an "adversary" and that Washington could pull billions in economic and military aid.

The Dream party has defended the law, arguing it is needed to stem what it deems to be harmful foreign actors trying to destabilise the nation.

"What continues frustrating us is the stigmatisation of this law by internal and external actors as well as their tendency for jumping to quick conclusions," said Shalva Papuashvili, the speaker of the Georgian parliament from the Georgian Dream party.



◀ *A protester argues with police officers at a demonstration in Tbilisi against the foreign influence bill, which threatens to prevent Georgia's membership to the EU favoured by 80% of the electorate*

PHOTOGRAPH: ZURAB TSERTSVADZE/AP

Landslide damage revealed as more evacuations ordered

Martha Louise
Papua New Guinea

Satellite images have revealed the scale of Friday's devastating landslide in Papua New Guinea, as thousands more people were told to flee due to fears of a second landslide.

The images show extensive damage inflicted on a village in the province of Enga, where an estimated 2,000 people were buried, PNG's National Disaster Centre said.

Buildings were covered by mountains of debris and roads have been blocked, hampering rescue and relief efforts. Relief workers have been arriving in the remote northern region since the landslide struck, although officials say the chance of finding survivors is slim.

"The landslide area is very unstable. When we're up there, we're regularly hearing big explosions where the mountain is, there is still rocks and debris coming down," Enga province disaster committee chairperson Sandis Tsaka told Reuters.

A state of emergency has been declared across the disaster zone and a neighbouring area, with a combined population of between 4,500 and 8,000, although not all have been ordered to evacuate yet, Tsaka said.

Aid organisations said they were trying to get food, water and shelter to the area but its remoteness was making access difficult.

"This is an incredibly inaccessible part of Papua New Guinea and it's a really challenging process for everyone involved," Australia's Pacific minister, Pat Conroy, said, as Canberra promised to send technical experts and A$2.5m (£1.3m) in initial aid.

"I'm advised access can only be achieved through helicopters, so search and recovery efforts are very, very challenging," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation yesterday. The head of the International Organisation for Migration in PNG, Serhan Aktoprak, said survivors have been reluctant to allow heavy machinery to be used in rescue efforts, because they do not want the bodies of relatives harmed.

"We're just hoping that in the remaining short window of time we have, we can at least contribute to the relief efforts in saving some more lives, but unfortunately [time] is not on our side."

Meanwhile, residents fear the damage to infrastructure will make it more difficult for their communities to recover.



▲ *Rescuers reported 'explosions' and falling debris as they worked*

"The landslide hit our community hard. This road is our lifeline, our connection to the outside world for trade and supplies, and now it's gone," said Oscar Fredrick, a resident from Tumundan Maup checkpoint.

Many of the small farms and food gardens that sustain the local population were destroyed, as well as much of the livestock. The landslide also buried three streams the community relied on for drinking water.

"Prices will skyrocket, essentials like fuel will become scarce," another resident said, adding: "We need our government to step in, to rebuild not just the road but our lives."

Aktoprak estimated that 6,000 people have been affected by the disaster so far, adding that if survivors were forced to move to urban areas, this would trigger "additional economic and social problems".

PNG's defence minister, Dr Billy Joseph said the government would rebuild communities and bolster disaster preparedness but the primary focus for now was relief and recovery.

Additional reporting
AAP and Associated Press



Grim national mood puts ANC rule at risk as South Africans go to polls

Rachel Savage
Johannesburg

South Africans are voting today in what are expected to be the most competitive elections since the end of apartheid, which could result in the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party losing its majority for the first time since Nelson Mandela led it to power 30 years ago.

The national mood is grim owing to some of the world's highest rates of unemployment and inequality, power cuts, water shortages and violent crime. Younger generations do not feel the same gratitude and loyalty to the ANC as many of their parents and grandparents do for leading the successful fight for multiracial democracy.

Polls have consistently shown the ANC getting less than 50% of the national vote, down from 57.5% in the last elections in 2019. This raises the prospect of South Africa's first coalition government since the government of national unity during Mandela's single presidential term, when the country was seen as a beacon of hope for Africa and the world.

"I certainly think the ANC is not going to make 50%. The best case seems to be 46-47%," said David Everatt, a professor at the University of Witwatersrand, who conducted polls for the party from 1993 until South Africa's most recent regional elections in 2021.

He added: "The mood is very, very low and many people attribute their unhappiness directly to the ANC."

Millions more South Africans now have access to quality housing with electricity and running water than in 1994 when the ANC came to power. But rising unemployment, along with corruption scandals and rolling power cuts, have contributed to a sense for many that the government no longer works for them. More than 80% of South Africans said the country was going in the wrong direction in a 2022 poll by the pan-African survey organisation Afrobarometer.

Joy Reabetswe, 18, who is saving money to pay for a law degree, said voting had not crossed her mind. President Cyril Ramaphosa "could do better", she said, speaking outside a supermarket on the outskirts of Diepsloot, a poor township bordering verdant golf courses on Johannesburg's northern fringes.

The Democratic Alliance (DA), the largest opposition party, could help South Africans, she said, but was not appealing either, due to the oft-levelled accusations that it favoured the interests of white people (which it denies).

The DA is led by John Steenhuisen, who is white and took over the party leadership in 2019 when his black predecessor, Mmusi Maimane, resigned, claiming his efforts to win over more black voters had been stymied. It was formed from the merger of the Democratic party, whose roots were in opposing apartheid in the former white-only parliament, and the New National party, the renamed National party that had ruled apartheid South Africa.

The economically liberal DA got 20.8% of the vote in the 2019 elections and few analysts think it will achieve far above that this year.

Nor is there confidence that the Multi-Party Charter for South Africa, a loose alliance the DA formed with 10 other smaller parties, only four of which now have any elected representatives, will get a majority.

Among the other opposition parties that could score double digits are the Marxist-inspired Economic Freedom Fighters, led by the former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, which got almost 11% of the vote in 2019.


▲ *Early ballot papers for the most competitive election since apartheid*

▲ *Rubbish on a Johannesburg street. There is a sense the ANC government no longer works for the people*
PHOTOGRAPH: IHSAAN HAFFEJEE/REUTERS

Meanwhile, a new party, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), named after the ANC's armed wing during apartheid, has further complicated the political landscape for the elections, which also include provincial ballots.

This is especially the case in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the second-most populous province and stronghold of the MK leader, the former president Jacob Zuma, who was last week barred by South Africa's top court from running for parliament himself.

Zuma, 82, was president from 2009 to 2018, but was forced to resign amid corruption allegations that he denies.

"KZN is definitely the battlefield," said Mbali Ntuli, a former DA politician who now runs the non-partisan Ground Work Collective, which ran voter registration drives among young people and will field about 2,500 election observers. "There are a lot of people who are doing a grudge vote by voting for the MK. You hear them quite openly saying they want to vote against Ramaphosa's ANC."

However, the possibility of the ANC scraping a slim majority cannot be counted out thanks in part to its formidable electoral machine, liberation history and the power of incumbency, some experts say.

Party of Mandela
Why is it losing support?

Who are the ANC's challengers?
The ruling party is battling against established opposition parties such as the economically liberal Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Marxist-inspired Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). It is also being challenged by upstarts such as the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, led by the former president Jacob Zuma, who is bitterly opposed to the current South African leader, Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Social Research Foundation had the ANC on 44.1% of the vote this week. Some analysts think the ANC could still scrape a majority, noting that phone polls often have significant flaws.

Why are these elections important?
South Africans voted Nelson Mandela and the ANC into office in 1994 on a wave of hope. Thirty years later, the mood is bleak. The ANC losing its majority would be a tipping point for a party that still carries the halo of liberation. If it gets more than 45% of the vote, it may be able to form a coalition with smaller parties and continue policies such as trying to end power cuts. But if it gets closer to 40%, it may have to share power with the DA or EFF, which could mean radical policy changes.

What are the key issues?
The lack of jobs is the most pressing issue for South Africans. Almost a quarter of adults told Afrobarometer that joblessness, which has deepened poverty and inequality, was the most important problem to address. South Africans are also fed up with scheduled power cuts, violent crime – South Africa has one of the world's highest murder rates – and corruption.

What have the parties pledged?
The ANC has warned that "forces" are seeking to undo democratic progress. It has pledged to create 4m "work opportunities", introduce national health insurance and a basic income grant, and tackle corruption and illegal immigration.

The DA has campaigned on the slogan "Rescue South Africa". It promises to lift 6 million people out of poverty, create 2m jobs and take a "balanced approach" to privatising state-owned companies. The EFF says the economy has been left in the hands of "white monopoly capital". It wants to expropriate land without compensation and nationalise companies. Zuma's MK also wants to move from constitutional democracy to parliamentary supremacy and to increase the powers of traditional leaders.

How will the elections work?
Almost 28 million South Africans are registered to vote, less than half of the 62 million population. South Africa uses a system of proportional representation. The 400-seat national parliament will vote for the president no later than two weeks after election day.
Rachel Savage

‘We have a direct mission’ Odesa artists determined to keep working



▶ *The artist and curator Valeriia Nasedkina in the Odesa Fine Arts Museum. Below, Dasha Chechushkova, who has an exhibition in the largely empty gallery*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JULIA KOCHETOVA/ THE GUARDIAN



▶ *‘With our presence here, we are insisting that we still exist.’ Nasedkina with Volodymyr Chyhrynets and Vasyl Dmytryk at the latter’s Odesa studio*



Charlotte Higgins
Odesa

Behind a gate presided over by a taciturn doorman, on the shore of the Black Sea in Odesa, is a tumbledown ship repair yard. It is one of many industrial sites in Ukraine that fell into disuse after the fall of the Soviet Union, but in 2016 a community of young artists started cleaning up debris, renovating the old workshops and making studios.

Now, when the city is regularly pounded by Russian missiles, its city streets empty of the tourists who once flocked to its historic centre, there are just a handful of artists willing to withstand the continuous threat to life.

Vasya Dmytryk is one of those artists who has chosen to remain, his studio a cosy cave of books, tools and metal sculptures suspended from the ceiling. On his workbench was a copper-and-steel sculpture recalling the shape of a drone. His plan is to exchange it for a real drone: “We have a very direct mission as artists,” he said. “Raising money for the army.”

At the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion, he had actively considered whether, if the city came to be occupied by the Russians, he would “stay and try to protect Ukrainian culture, or leave and try to present Odesa’s culture in other cities in Ukraine”.

His friend, the artist and curator Valeriia Nasedkina, said: “If everyone leaves, what then? With our presence here, we are insisting that we still exist.”

Nasedkina and her colleague Volodymyr Chyhrynets are curators at the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum, an elegant building in the centre of the city. Last November, a cruise missile struck directly outside it, blowing the windows out and causing plaster to rain from the ceilings on to the artworks.

The bulk of the museum’s historical artworks had already been safely evacuated. Dmytryk had been part of the volunteer effort that began on 24 February 2022: he cycled to the museum at dawn to play his role in the month-long work of taking down, packaging and safeguarding the huge, densely hung collection.

Despite the attack, the museum is still operating. Most of its elegant galleries are echoing and empty. “The last time it was like this was the second world war,” said Nasedkina. But some of the rooms hold temporary exhibitions by contemporary artists. One of them is of delicate botanical watercolours of wildflowers, made on the Bakhmut frontline by Borys Eisenberg, a former nurseryman who volunteered on the first day of Russia’s full-scale invasion and was killed in July 2023.

Another is by Dmytryk – a kinetic sculpture of nails from the boat repair yard, which swerve and collide in complex patterns as unseen magnets are activated below them. As they move, their rust creates a “drawing” on the sheet of paper they lie on – a metaphor, said Dmytryk, for the community of artists in Odesa.

A new exhibition is devoted to work by Dasha Chechushkova. A series of etchings, based on Goya’s critique of the follies of Spanish society, Los Caprichos, are hung along one wall. They were, she said, “a collection of symptoms of helplessness: depressions and thoughts which most of the time we can’t express to anyone else. The work is about loneliness, estrangedness.” Chechushkova, who is 24 and currently based in Kyiv, studied in Odesa.

“A year ago I had a kind of apathy, depression,” said Chyhrynets. “I felt that we don’t need art. One of the themes in Dasha’s work is guilt. There is guilt hanging about art in general. It is a privilege to be an artist.” But, after working on Chechushkova’s exhibition, “I realised I had to do to the maximum of my ability what I am good at until I am mobilised, and for as long as I am alive,” he said. “That is what our future plans look like: to do as much as we can in the time that we have.”

Peace talks Putin would applaud Biden’s absence, says Zelenskiy

Jennifer Rankin
Lisa O’Carroll *Brussels*

Vladimir Putin will give a standing ovation if the US president is not at next month’s peace summit in Switzerland, Ukraine’s leader has warned.

On a visit to Brussels where he signed a 10-year security pact with Belgium, Volodymyr Zelenskiy said it would not be “a strong decision” if Joe Biden failed to attend the talks planned for 15-16 June near Lucerne.

“[The] peace summit needs President Biden and so do the other leaders who look at the reaction of the United States. Putin will only applaud his absence, personally applaud it – and standing, at that,” Zelenskiy said.

The conference is being organised at Zelenskiy’s request to secure “a just and lasting peace” but Russia has not been invited, so it remains unclear what it can achieve.

More than 160 delegations have been invited, including members of the G7, G20, the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN. Zelenskiy said he was also expecting replies from China and Brazil, and stressed that all participation mattered. “Believe me: every voice is important.”

Belgium has pledged to send 30 F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine by 2028, with the first deliveries scheduled for later this year. Zelenskiy said the delivery of jets in 2024 would “make our stance stronger” but voiced frustration with western allies’ restrictions on weapons being used on Russian soil.

He said Ukrainian troops were being killed or forced to retreat as Russian forces attacked them from the border near Kharkiv.

Last weekend at least 12 people were killed and dozens injured when Russians attacked a DIY store in the city.

Hours later, Putin claimed the west had provoked Russia’s latest offensive into the Kharkiv region by ignoring Moscow’s warnings not to allow Ukraine to strike the adjacent Russian region of Belgorod.

Ukrainian strikes on Russia using weapons supplied by the west were only possible with the help of specialists from western countries, Putin said, according to Reuters. This could lead to serious consequences, he added.

Prosecution tells jurors 'ignore the sideshows' as Trump's trial nears end



▼ *Donald Trump's trial and details of the case seem to have had little impact on the 2024 presidential race*

PHOTOGRAPH: STEVEN HIRSCH/GETTY IMAGES

Victoria Bekiempis
New York

Donald Trump's Manhattan criminal hush-money trial neared its end stages yesterday afternoon as the prosecution presented its closing argument, during which jurors were urged to "tune out the noise and ignore the sideshows".

Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass's closing statements came after Trump's defence team presented an hours-long summation that included a claim that conspiracies to win elections happened all the time.

"It doesn't matter if there was a conspiracy to try and win an election," Trump's attorney, Todd Blanche, said of the alleged payoff plot involving Trump, who is accused elsewhere of election meddling and fomenting civil unrest to thwart Joe Biden from taking office. "Every campaign in this country is a conspiracy to promote a candidate."

Blanche's comment came as he insisted to jurors that Trump did not falsify business records – nor did he try to – and that jurors need not even consider his alleged efforts to sway the 2016 race by burying potentially damaging news coverage. Prosecutors allege that Trump plotted a catch-and-kill scheme during a summer 2015 meeting with his then fixer, Michael Cohen, and the tabloid mogul David Pecker.

"Many politicians work with the media to try and promote their image," Blanche said, adding that Pecker had provided favourable coverage to Trump for decades – long before his candidacy – "because it was good for business". He called this symbiosis "standard operating procedure".

Blanche did not admit that Trump had aimed to influence election results with a hush-money payment, and denied that there was a conspiracy or collusion.

At the end of his summation, Blanche provided 10 reasons why jurors should find reasonable doubt – and acquit Trump. Among these reasons were that Cohen had created the invoices for legal services, not Trump, and there was no proof that he ever saw the vouchers or cheques which prosecutors claim were illegal.

No 10 on Blanche's list was Cohen. "Cohen is the human embodiment of reasonable doubt," Blanche said. He referred to the acronym Goat, which refers to athletes and performers at the top of their game, saying "Michael Cohen is the Gloat – the greatest liar of all time."

Trump is charged with falsifying business records related to paying the adult film star Stormy Daniels $130,000 for her silence about an alleged sexual liaison.

Prosecutors argue that the recording of these payments in business records amounts to election interference, as Trump was running in the 2016 race for the White House at the time and seeking to cover up a potentially damaging scandal.

Details of the case have had seemingly little impact on the 2024 presidential race – in which Trump still often narrowly leads Biden in head-to-head polls.

Trump denies all the allegations. If found guilty, he could face jail, though that is mostly seen as unlikely.

Australian flight turns back over naked passenger

Elias Visontay

A Virgin Australia flight from Perth to Melbourne was forced to turn around and land shortly after taking off after a male passenger allegedly ran naked through the cabin and knocked a crew member to the floor.

Australian federal police officers met VA696 when it returned to Perth airport on Monday evening and arrested the man after the plane was turned around an hour into the flight.

A Virgin spokesperson said the flight returned due to a "disruptive passenger".

The federal police said it had been alerted to the incident by airport staff and "officers arrested a man after he allegedly ran naked through the aircraft mid-flight and knocked a crew member to the floor".

The man was taken to a local hospital for assessment, where he remained yesterday. He was expected to be summoned to appear before Perth magistrates court in June, with charges yet to be finalised.



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Cinema apologises for 'distress' caused by Dreyfuss comments

Catherine Shoard

A cinema in Massachusetts has apologised to the audience at a special screening of Jaws and a Q&A with its star, Richard Dreyfuss, who reportedly made a number of sexist and transphobic comments.

Appearing at the Cabot theatre in Beverly, Massachusetts on 25 May, Dreyfuss took to the stage in a house dress to a background track of Taylor Swift's Love Story, shaking his hips suggestively and brandishing his walking stick like a baseball bat.

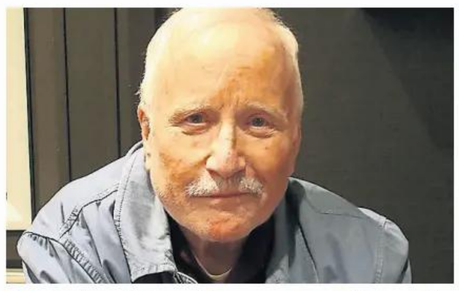
He then reportedly took on targets including Barbra Streisand, the parents of trans teenagers and the Oscars Academy's new inclusivity rules.

No transcript of the event has been released. Social media posts suggest that he called Streisand a "genius" but that he didn't listen to her as she was "a woman, and woman [sic] shouldn't have that power".

Deadline reported that he also said "you shouldn't be listening to some 10-year-old who says they want to be a boy instead of a girl". The Boston Globe reported that he continued by saying that allowing such young people to transition "was bad parenting and that someday those kids might change their minds."

However, a video from the end of the event indicates that many audience members did remain and were highly appreciative of the actor, who cautioned against a decline in critical thinking to considerable applause.

Writing on The Cabot's Facebook page, one attender said: "We walked out of his interview tonight along with hundred [sic] of others



▲ *Richard Dreyfuss reportedly made sexist and transphobic comments*

because of his racist, homophobic misogynistic rant."

Another said: "This was disgusting. How could the Cabot not have vetted his act better. Apparently (I found out too late), he has a reputation for spewing this kind of racist, homophobic, misogynistic bullcrap."

On 27 May, the venue issued a statement, saying they were "aware of, and share serious concerns, following the recent event with Richard Dreyfuss". "The views expressed by Mr Dreyfuss do not reflect the values of inclusivity and respect that we uphold as an organisation. We deeply regret the distress that this has caused to many of our patrons," they said.

"We regret that an event that was meant to be a conversation to celebrate an iconic movie instead became a platform for political views. We take full responsibility for the oversight in not anticipating the direction of the conversation and for the discomfort it caused to many patrons.

"We are in active dialogue with our patrons about their experience and are committed to learning from this event how to better enact our mission of entertaining, educating and inspiring our community."

The Guardian has contacted representatives for Dreyfuss for comment.

Dreyfuss was the then-youngest-ever performer to win the leading actor Oscar in 1978 for his role in The Goodbye Girl. He is best known for his roles in a number of seminal 1970s and 80s classics, including American Graffiti, Jaws, Close Encounters of the Third Kind and Stand By Me.

Ex-spy chief chosen as Dutch PM by rightwing coalition

Jon Henley
Europe correspondent

A top justice ministry official and former intelligence chief has been selected as the new Dutch prime minister, five months after Geert Wilders' far-right Freedom party (PVV) finished first in parliamentary elections.

Dick Schoof was last night nominated as the preferred candidate by the four parties in the Netherlands' rightwing coalition government, the public broadcaster NOS said.

Schoof, 67, formerly a national counter-terrorism coordinator and the director of the AIVD intelligence and IND immigration services, will head a "business" or "extra-parliamentary" cabinet of equal numbers of political appointees and experts.

PVV, with a manifesto calling for bans on mosques, the Qur'an and Islamic headscarves in government buildings as well as a "Nexit" referendum on leaving the EU, won a shock 26% of the vote last November.

But its 37 seats left it short of a majority in the 150-seat assembly and needing an alliance with the liberal-conservative VVD, the BBB agrarian protest party and New Social Contract (NSC), a centre-right startup.

Wilders gave up on becoming prime minister in March in the face of his coalition partners' reluctance to nominate him for the job. The former Labour party minister Ronald Plasterk, dropped out last week.

Wilders and the other party leaders, including Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius, who succeeded outgoing prime minister Mark Rutte as VVD leader, Caroline van der Plas of the BBB and the NSC's Pieter Omtzigt, will sit in the Dutch parliament.

The four parties this month struck a coalition deal including plans for a radical tightening of asylum seeker and immigration policy, an increase in natural gas production and relaxation of green regulations.

Border controls will be tougher, admittance procedures shorter and people denied asylum in another EU country will be sent away immediately, with cuts to labour migration and the flow of foreign students to Dutch universities. Daytime motorway speeds – reduced to 100km/h (62mph) to cut pollution – will return to 130km/h "where possible". Subsidised "red diesel" will be reintroduced for farmers from 2027.



▲ *Former intelligence chief Dick Schoof was nominated last night*

Remains of horses from era of Caesar unearthed in France

Kim Willsher
Paris

French archaeologists have uncovered nine large graves containing the remains of horses from up to 2,000 years ago, in a find described as "extraordinary".

The 28 stallions, each about six years old when they died, had been buried shortly after their death in pits on their right sides with their heads facing south. Nearby a grave contained the remains of two dogs, their heads facing west.

Experts from France's National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research (Inrap), say carbon dating techniques place the remains to the time of the Gallic wars, near the end of the Roman conquest of what was then Gaul and the beginning of the empire of ancient Rome between 100BC and AD100.

They are examining the bones to try to establish whether the animals were buried after being killed in battle or as part of a complex ritual. An episode of animal disease has been deemed unlikely as only male adult horses were buried, but the remains are being examined for parasites.

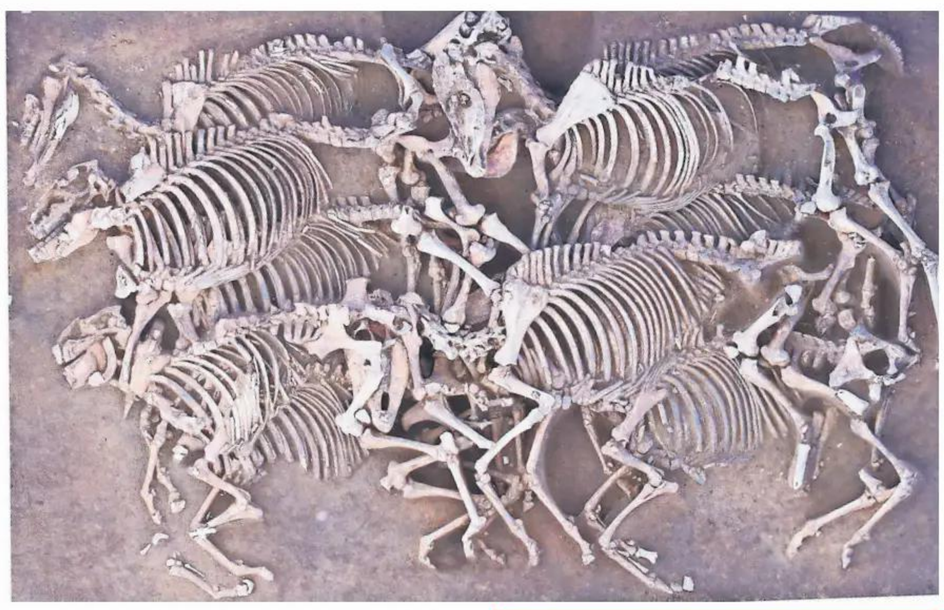
The discovery came as archaeologists excavated a 5th- to 6th-century site at Villedieu-sur-Indre in central France where buildings, ditches and a medieval road have also been found. The first pit uncovered contained 10 complete horse skeletons. The animals, measuring only 1.2 metres, which is said to have been typical of Gallic horses at the time, had been placed two deep in two rows.

The staging of the burial is similar to earlier finds elsewhere in France.



▶ *A researcher with one of the 28 stallion skeletons found in Villedieu-sur-Indre. Each animal had been buried with its head facing south, below*

PHOTOGRAPHS: HAMID AZMOUN; DENIS GODIGNON/ INRAP



In 2002, archaeologists in Gondole in the Puy-de-Dôme uncovered a rectangular grave containing the bodies of eight iron age warriors and their horses in what appeared to be a Celtic burial. The men were all lying on their right sides. Historians believe they may have been warrior companions of a Celtic king who killed themselves after he died violently.

> ***'These horses weren't just thrown into the pit, they were treated with respect'***
>
> **Isabelle Pichon**
> *Archaeologist*

Isabelle Pichon, the head of the archaeological operation for Inrap, said: "We think because of where they were buried that they were linked to the Gallic wars waged by Julius Caesar in the 1st century BC, but this is still just a theory," she said. "We know there was an important battle and the Roman army passed not far from here but we have so little evidence and so far we have found nothing to indicate how they died. However we can't exclude that it was a ritual burial."

Pichon said DNA samples had been taken from the bones and samples of sediment around them.

"We know that the Gauls had small horses of this kind but we also know some of the Roman auxiliaries also had them, so hopefully some of the DNA samples we have taken will give some answers," she said.

"It is an extraordinary discovery because of the rarity of such finds, but it is a mystery. What we do know is that these horses were buried with particular attention. They weren't just thrown into the pit, so they were treated with care and respect."

Business

Film shows touts outlining secret lobbying plans to sabotage Labour's ticket reforms

Rob Davies

Some of the most powerful ticket touts in the UK have discussed a secret plan to try to scupper a Labour crackdown on the industry via a lobbying campaign, footage filmed by the Guardian reveals.

Touts and representatives of major resale websites, including Viagogo and StubHub, attended a private event this month organised by the US-based lobby group the Coalition for Ticket Fairness (CTF), which outlined a plan to target MPs.

They met to discuss Labour's plan to outlaw the resale of gig, theatre and sports tickets for more than 10% above face value. While the government has rejected proposals to strengthen consumer legislation on touting - the business minister Kevin Hollinrake even revealed he had "quite happily used Viagogo on many occasions" - Labour is expected to unveil tough restrictions on the practice in its general election manifesto.

The policy has been drawn up in response to a string of reports of fans being exploited by touts, who often work in tandem with prominent ticket resale sites.

Addressing more than 100 guests, who had each paid $240 (£189) to be there, one of the UK's biggest ticket touts warned that "we are fucked" if Labour's clampdown went ahead.

At the event, held in a basement venue beside the Thames, touts pledged £73,000 to hire a "bullet-proof" political lobbyist to sway politicians. They were given assurances that their names would remain private and would never be linked to the lobbying campaign.

One of the most well-known attenders was Michael Mayiger, who was convicted of a £2m fraud in 2012 after he admitted using false names to obtain Premier League football club memberships.

Mayiger has since set up his own Switzerland-based ticket business called Gigsberg, one of the sponsors of the CTF's event. Mayiger personally pledged £5,000 on the night.

The centrepiece of the evening was a presentation and fundraising effort, with opening remarks by the president of the newly formed CTF UK branch, the veteran ticket trader Tony McGowen.

Attenders were warned of the risks posed by Labour's proposals, designed to prevent touts hoovering up tickets for events such as gigs by Ed Sheeran and Adele, or the West End play Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, in order to charge huge mark-ups.

"We are going to fight parliament, we're going to fight government ... because if we don't, bottom line is we are all fucked," McGowen told guests.

He said CTF was ready to hire a well-known political lobbyist, who had advised a former prime minister and would be able to influence policy.

He said a paid lobbyist could help "guide parliament and to fight back against all the bullshit that a Labour government potentially want to throw at us".

But McGowen insisted that none of the guests would be publicly connected to any lobbying. "No one in this room needs to have their name put near anything that we are doing," he said. "Everything is done through another source, so don't worry about identities coming out, because it's not something that anyone in this room wants and it'll never happen."

The lobbyist who the CTF said it had chosen told the Guardian they had met the organisation once, more than a year ago, but had not agreed to work for it and never would. The

'Pony up'

The dinner that raised £73,000 to sway MPs

Rob Davies

'You've sold concert tickets, you've sold sports tickets, you've sold football tickets, you've sold theatre tickets ... You've made money or you wouldn't be in this room."

The voice of Scot Tobias, one of America's most successful ticket "brokers", boomed from the stage. After an hour of drinking and networking, his pitch was met with cheers by the room full of touts gathered in a subterranean events space in central London.

He was urging them to dip into their pockets to fund a common cause: the existential fight against Labour's pledge to limit how much a ticket for a concert, sports match or event can be resold for.

The UK touting industry, seen by many as the parasitic underbelly of the entertainment world, knows that if Labour follows through with its promised 10% cap on the value of resold tickets, their time is up. The solution, revealed the veteran British ticket trader Tony McGowen, was a counter-offensive, but one that would stay hush-hush.

Undercover filming by the Guardian at that closed-door event sheds light on the secret plan hatched by a lobbying group that calls itself the Coalition for Ticket Fairness (CTF), which hopes to derail the first ever concerted effort by politicians to stop touts exploiting fans at will.

Among the audience at the private dinner at the Underglobe on London's South Bank this month were touts from an array of backgrounds, as well as representatives of some of the biggest businesses in the sector.

There were grizzled football touts who have spent large parts of their lives on street corners outside stadiums. One reminisced about the huge sums made when Tottenham Hotspur played Liverpool in the 2019 Champions League final in Madrid. "It was going up by £500 a day," he boasted.

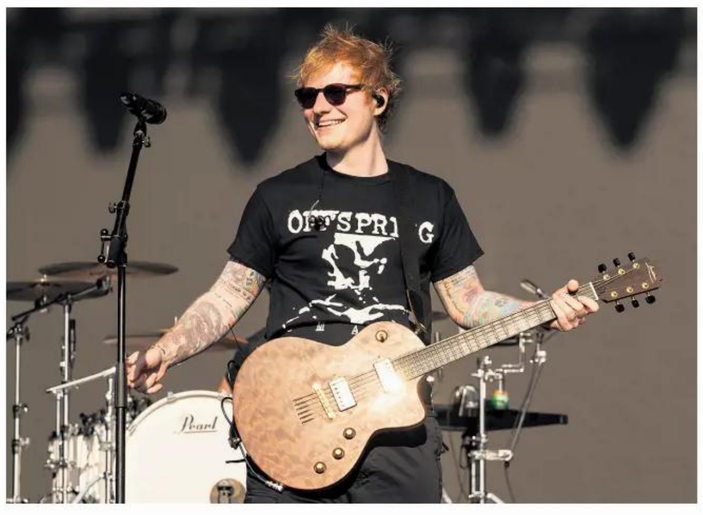
There were web developers who talked of building programs to help beat fans to tickets by automating buying and selling, or bulk-buying email addresses. Also in attendance was Michael Mayiger, convicted of a £2m ticket fraud in 2012 but now doing business in the UK via the Switzerland-based ticket resale website Gigsberg.

And there were the so-called "trainer kids", younger touts who started out cornering the market for in-demand shoes in the pandemic and flogging them for a mark-up online. Many have now expanded into the world of tickets.

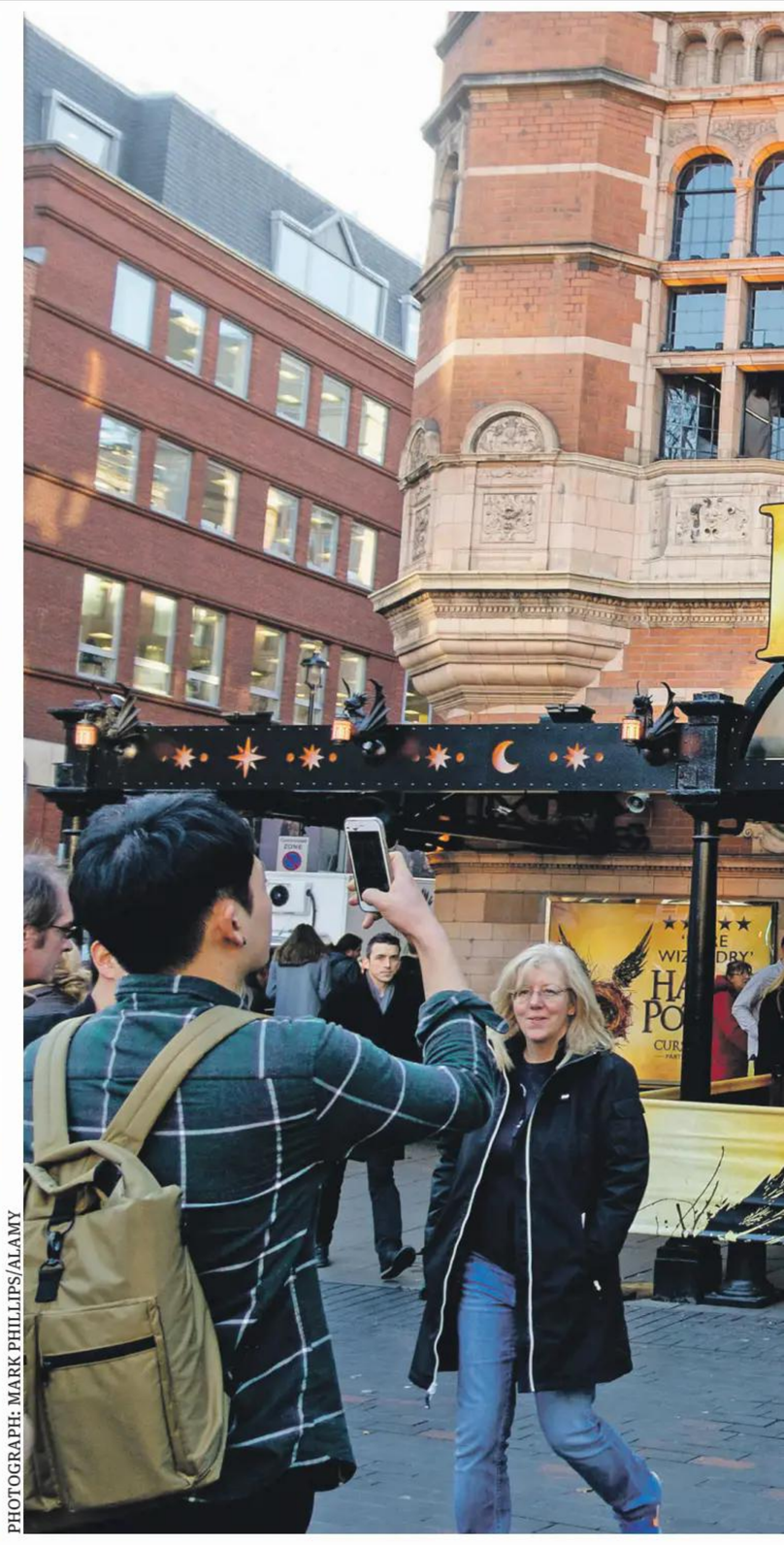
At $240, or £189, tickets to the Underglobe dinner were not cheap. Nor was it widely publicised, other



▲ *Labour's plan aims to stop touts hoovering up tickets for sell-out gigs by the likes of Adele*



▼ *Tickets for an Ed Sheeran concert in aid of a cancer charity were resold at huge mark-ups*



▶ *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child is among West End shows targeted by ticket resellers*

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK PHILLIPS/ALAMY

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
-63.41	-31.23	-204.64	-44.65	1.1750	1.2777
8254.18	4506.79	38864.95	38855.37	-0.0016	0.0000

Guardian has chosen not to name the lobbyist.

McGowen was followed on stage by Jason Berger and Scot Tobias, senior figures from CTF's more established operation in the US, where for-profit ticket resale is much more widespread.

The duo said they had used lobbying to water down anti-tout legislation in multiple US states. "It takes a long time to change a law," said Berger. "It's a lot easier to ... stop the law from being written."

Tobias said politicians who were on the receiving end of lobbying would "come to your aid and they'll change laws in your favour. But this doesn't come for free."

"I don't want to put anyone on the spot," he added, as he moved from table to table encouraging touts to publicly promise to contribute thousands of pounds each.

In less than half an hour, attenders had agreed to put £73,000 towards the proposed lobbying campaign. Tobias said companies including Viagogo and StubHub had already "committed to the cause".

Two Viagogo executives attended the event but the company told the Guardian that they had been there for "networking reasons", adding that it was not funding the CTF.

Gigsberg confirmed that it had sponsored the event "to promote open dialogue on ticket fairness".

Representatives were also there from StubHub International as well as Vivid Seats, which intends to launch a UK business within weeks.

During networking drinks at the start of the evening, some attenders boasted of making huge sums from selling thousands of tickets, using methods that experts say are illegal.

One person said he regularly sold tickets to football matches - a practice that was made illegal in England in response to the Hillsborough stadium disaster.

The resale of gig and theatre tickets is not illegal in itself, although several touts have been convicted of fraud offences in relation to the practices they used to acquire and sell them.

Two touts at the event, one of whom said he had sold £100,000 of tickets last year, discussed buying email addresses in bulk, making it possible to apply several times for access to pre-sale ticket releases for Taylor Swift's UK tour later this year.



▲ *Sharon Hodgson, the force behind Labour's crackdown, was called a 'major threat' to the touting industry*

10%

The cap above a theatre, gig or sports ticket's face value that Labour plans to impose on resales

£189

The price paid by ticket touts and representatives of resale sites to attend an industry event in London

The security consultant and ticketing expert Reg Walker said: "The use of multiple addresses and identities to harvest tickets is fraud. This is supported by several convictions for fraud and fraudulent trading in recent years."

One attender named Labour's Sharon Hodgson, who has been the force behind the party's policy on ticket touting, as a major threat to the industry.

Hodgson told the Guardian that the "outrageous behaviour of these touts will only strengthen Labour's resolve", adding: "I look forward to the day when a Labour government will end this black market and start putting fans first."

A spokesperson for FanFair Alliance, an anti-touting music industry group, said the Guardian's findings appeared to reveal "a deep-seated collusion between large-scale ticket touts and the biggest resale platforms", describing it as a "black market hiding in plain sight".

The spokesperson added: "We urgently need UK politicians to intervene, to protect fans from exploitation and prevent these parasites gaining a stranglehold on our music and culture."

CTF said it was "not currently engaged in any lobbying activities in the UK" and that "we have no timeline to begin doing so". It said: "We have not engaged professional support in the manner described and we have no agreement to do so.

"Like any industry preparing for a potential change in a regulatory environment, we are taking preparatory action which includes bringing the industry together to share insights.

"CTF believes that measures to restrict access to ticketing will create a black market with more transactions driven underground, removing customer security; reduce the availability of tickets to fans; and create further monopolies for vested interests which will see prices driven up for fans."

CTF said it was not aware of, and did not endorse, any discussion by guests of unlawful conduct.

StubHub International and Vivid Seats did not respond to a request for comment.



than through a website shared largely by word of mouth.

Led by Tobias, representatives of CTF held a whip-round, table to table, urging the more than 100 guests to "pony up". In about 15 minutes, CTF had raised more than £73,000, which its representatives promised would help pay for an expert lobbyist to "guide parliament" and sink any attempt to rein in the industry.

Labour's proposals are a response to years of controversy over practices in the ticketing world that range from the ethically questionable to outright illegal.

As the Observer revealed in 2016, an alliance of street-smart touts and corporations has supercharged ticket trading in the UK, taking advantage of any artists and promoters who charge fans less than they could, given the demand.

The Guardian has previously revealed how some touts use fake identities, multiple credit cards, or computer bots to harvest and resell tickets at the expense of fans. They have targeted gigs in aid of cancer charities by Ed Sheeran and the comedian Peter Kay, or sold tickets to events where resale was banned by the venue or promoter, leading to fans who bought tickets from touts being denied entry. Others have brazenly sold football tickets, which was made illegal after the 1989 Hillsborough disaster.

But as touts and resale platforms tested the boundaries of what was legally allowable, and grew in sophistication, the gears of regulation and enforcement slowly started to grind. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) issued a court order in November 2018 demanding that Viagogo - the biggest player in the UK - comply with consumer regulations.

[Interventions by the regulators] only happened because we didn't have a seat in parliament'

Tony McGowen
Coalition for Ticket Fairness

While some touts have sailed close to the wind, others have resorted to plain old fraud.

Peter Hunter and David Smith were convicted and jailed over an £11m ticket scheme in 2020, while a group of touts - including the so-called Ticket Queen, Maria Chenery-Woods - were sentenced last week over a £6.5m fraud. One had boasted, according to court transcripts, that he had "rinsed some twat on [Viagogo] today".

Speaking to the crowd at Underglobe, McGowen said interventions by the CMA and National Trading Standards "only happened because we didn't have a voice in parliament."

McGowen is the UK chair of CTF and sole director of its UK arm, a company incorporated in February, according to Companies House.

The CTF says it was not so much readying a lobbying blitz as "bringing the industry together to share insights". The group believes restrictions on touting will only fuel the black market.

Its US representatives talked of how they had influenced the law in the US, where ticket touting, known there as "scalping", is rampant. Now, it seems, they hope to repeat the trick.

The cold call
and
the hot deal

Three Business | Pixel

Shareholder fury forces Boohoo to call off £1m bonus plan for bosses

Sarah Butler

The online fashion retailer Boohoo has backtracked on a plan to pay three top executives £1m each in bonuses despite reporting widening losses.

Shareholders had complained that bonuses were going to be awarded to directors despite the chief executive, John Lyttle, and Boohoo's co-founders, Mahmud Kamani and Carol Kane, missing targets on sales, profits, cash flow and environmental and IT goals.

Investors had been due to vote on 20 June on whether to approve the bonuses, which were announced last week in Boohoo's annual report.

It showed the retail group, which owns Debenhams, Warehouse, Dorothy Perkins and PrettyLittleThing, built up net debts of £95m in the year to the end of February - down from almost £6m of net cash a year before - after losses widened by 76% to £160m and sales fell to £1.8bn.

The difficult year meant the three bosses were set to receive no bonus, but the group's remuneration committee proposed awarding them a one-off bonus of £1m each - 30% in cash and the rest in shares.

The committee said it wanted to make the award because a zero bonus "is not an accurate reflection of the excellent work carried out during the year to set the business up for future success" and would 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".

However, in a short statement released yesterday, Boohoo revealed it was backtracking after engaging "with certain shareholders".

The Times reported that one major shareholder was "furious" about the proposed bonuses while another said it was "outrageous" they had been released in the annual report without consulting investors first.

The loss of the awards means Kamani's pay for the year will be £503,000, Kane's £524,000 and Lyttle's £713,000. Kamani and Lyttle earned more than £1m in the year before and Kane earned £987,000.

The latest upset comes after a string of wrangles between Boohoo's founders and shareholders over bonus payouts. Last year, shareholders narrowly approved a new "growth share plan" under which Lyttle could receive a maximum of £50m in Boohoo shares, part of a total £175m payout to executives, if the company's share price reaches 395p - and remains there within a 90-day average window within five years.

Boohoo executives would start to receive initial payouts once the share price returned to 95p, close to the level it was at in February 2022. It currently stands at less than 35p.

Kane, who co-founded Boohoo in 2006 with Kamani, would also receive a bonus under the scheme.

£95m

The Boohoo group's net debts in the year to the end of February, down from £6m of net cash a year before



▲ *The fashion retailer has had a difficult year, with losses widening by 76% in the year to February*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANGELA WEISS/AFP/GETTY

Accreditation for heat pump fixers would increase uptake - Which?

Jillian Ambrose

The next government should force all tradespeople who install home heat pumps, solar panels and insulation to sign up to a mandatory accreditation scheme to counter mistrust in the industry, a leading consumer group is demanding.

Which? found that households faced "significant anxiety" in choosing tradespeople to fit low-carbon heating systems after "press stories about poor work and rogue traders".

It warned that 45% of households reported they did not know what qualifications to check and 55% found it difficult to trust the trader information they had access to.

The lack of clear information threatened to delay home upgrades that were essential for Britain to hit its climate targets, Which? said.

Under current rules installers who undertake work through the government's boiler upgrade and energy efficiency schemes must sign up to either the Microgeneration or Trustmark certification schemes.

However, installers who undertake work paid for without government funds are not required to sign up to any accreditation body.

Which? has called on whoever wins the 4 July election to set a clear deadline for all tradespeople to be certified via the same schemes.

Shareholders wait for bids to close on Royal Mail and Anglo American

Jasper Jolly

Shareholders in Royal Mail's owner and the mining company Anglo American are waiting for the final deadline to pass today for firm offers that could see two of the UK's most prominent companies fall into foreign ownership.

The Czech billionaire Daniel Křetínský has made an approach to International Distributions Services (IDS), which runs Royal Mail, while Australia's BHP is trying to buy its rival, Anglo American, a stalwart of London's FTSE 100 index.

Under UK takeover laws, companies have a limited window after making an approach to make a firm offer or walk away - known in the City as the "put up or shut up" deadline. For both businesses the cut-off point is 29 May.

Of the two, the bid for Royal Mail's owner by Křetínský's EP Group, which made its money in coal-fired power stations, appears more likely to succeed. IDS said earlier this month that it was "minded to recommend" the proposal, if a firm offer was made after talks.



▲ *Sorting Christmas post in Glasgow. A firm offer for the Royal Mail by EP Group would face significant political scrutiny* PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY BUCHANAN/AFP

£3.5bn

Valuation of Royal Mail's owner by EP Group's bid - far less than its market value of £5.3bn in late 2021

Křetínský's bid values the postal service at £3.5bn, although that is still well short of the £5.3bn market value that the company reached in late 2021. IDS shares were trading at 324.6p yesterday morning, well below the 370p a share offer from EP Group. Shares generally trade below an offer price if enough investors believe there is a significant chance that the deal will fall through.

On Friday, the IDS board warned that Křetínský's bid could create risk around the company's finances beyond the coming 12 months if the new owners were to struggle to maintain existing loans and secure fresh funding.

If Křetínský does make a firm offer, a takeover of the 508-year-old postal service by a foreign firm would also face significant political scrutiny. The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, has said the government would examine the national security implications, and it is likely whoever wins the 4 July general election will continue that policy.

BHP's attempt to take over Anglo American has so far been more troublesome. Anglo has rejected three takeover offers, the last of which was worth £38.6bn. BHP has raised its offer from an initial £31bn, and some analysts believe there is limited scope to increase the bid, which would already be the largest in the history of the mining sector.

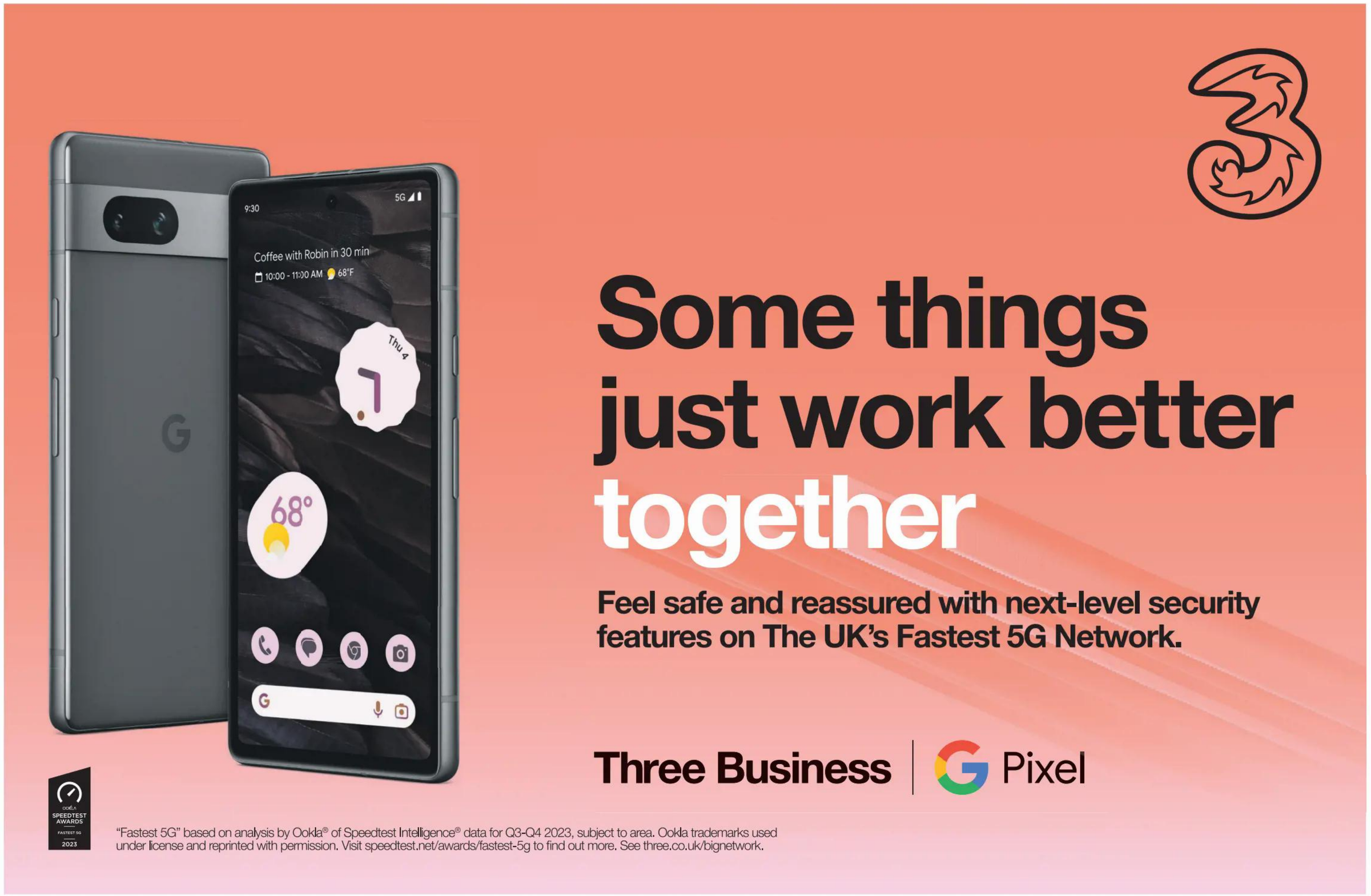
A combined company would be a global player in markets for commodities including iron ore, potash, and metallurgical coal used for steelmaking. Anglo American's copper assets are thought to be particularly attractive to BHP because of the metal's crucial role in the transition to a net zero energy system.

Anglo's chief executive, Duncan Wanblad, has responded to the bid with a strategy to overhaul the 107-year-old company, including a pledge to break up the business and sell its platinum division and its De Beers diamond arm.

The bids have attracted scrutiny because some analysts are concerned that British businesses are fundamentally undervalued when compared with rivals in other countries. Stuart Clark, a portfolio manager at Quilter Investors, said last week investors should beware the "comforting short-term boost" from increased mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activity.

"Instead, there needs to be a renewed focus on improving the competitive landscape for UK business and the UK stock market," he said. "This, combined with an upturn in economic activity, will do far more to investor returns than the sugar rush of acquisitions."

The deadlines could be extended by the Takeover Panel, the UK's independent regulator of M&A activity, if the target companies want more time to talk through a deal. Anglo American has already extended its deadline by a week, reportedly after investor pressure to enter negotiations.



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CALUM SCOTT
CAITY BASER . TIM GALLAGHER . CHARLOTTE JANE

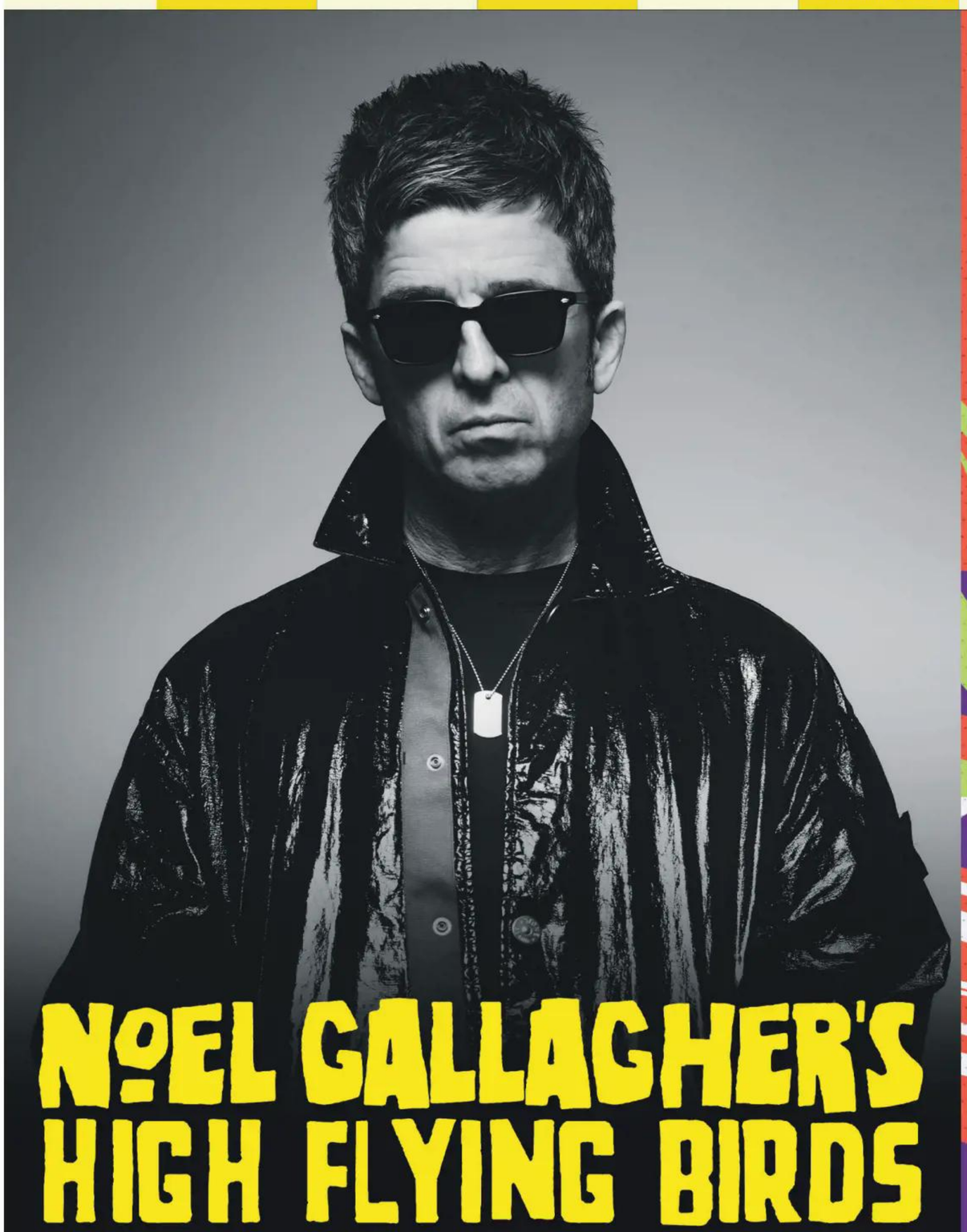
FRIDAY 09 AUGUST
OCEAN COLOUR SCENE
EMBRACE . CAST

SATURDAY 10 AUGUST
MINISTRY OF SOUND CLASSICAL
LINE UP TBA

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST
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RICHARD HAWLEY
THE DIVINE COMEDY • THE CORAL
GILBERT O'SULLIVAN • BROMHEADS JACKET
ED COSENS • CITY PARKING • BIG SPECIAL
MALAH PALINKA • LIAM FENDER • SONNI MILLS • SHANGHAI TREASON

FRIDAY 30TH AUGUST
BECKY HILL
CIAN DUCROT • JOEL CORRY
TALIA MAR • ISSEY CROSS • ADMT
ROSE GRAY • KERR MERCER • BEN ELLIS • ILI
APRIL ES$ • RAINBOW FROG BISCUITS • $AM $AX • SHAYNE GIVEN

SATURDAY 31ST AUGUST
MILBURN
JAKE BUGG • PETER DOHERTY
THE SELECTER • THE RIFLES • THE K'S
SEB LOWE • GIA FORD • BEDROOM HIGH CLUB
ROSADOCS • CINEMATICS • HARRIET ROSE
THE MACAWS • CRUZ • SAM SCHERDEL • MATILDA SHAKES • STAN BUCKROYD
MAT HOOK • GIRLBAND • LUXURY GOODS • THE NOTHINGS • HEAVY SOULS • JEJUNE

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31ST AUG - THU 29TH - SAT

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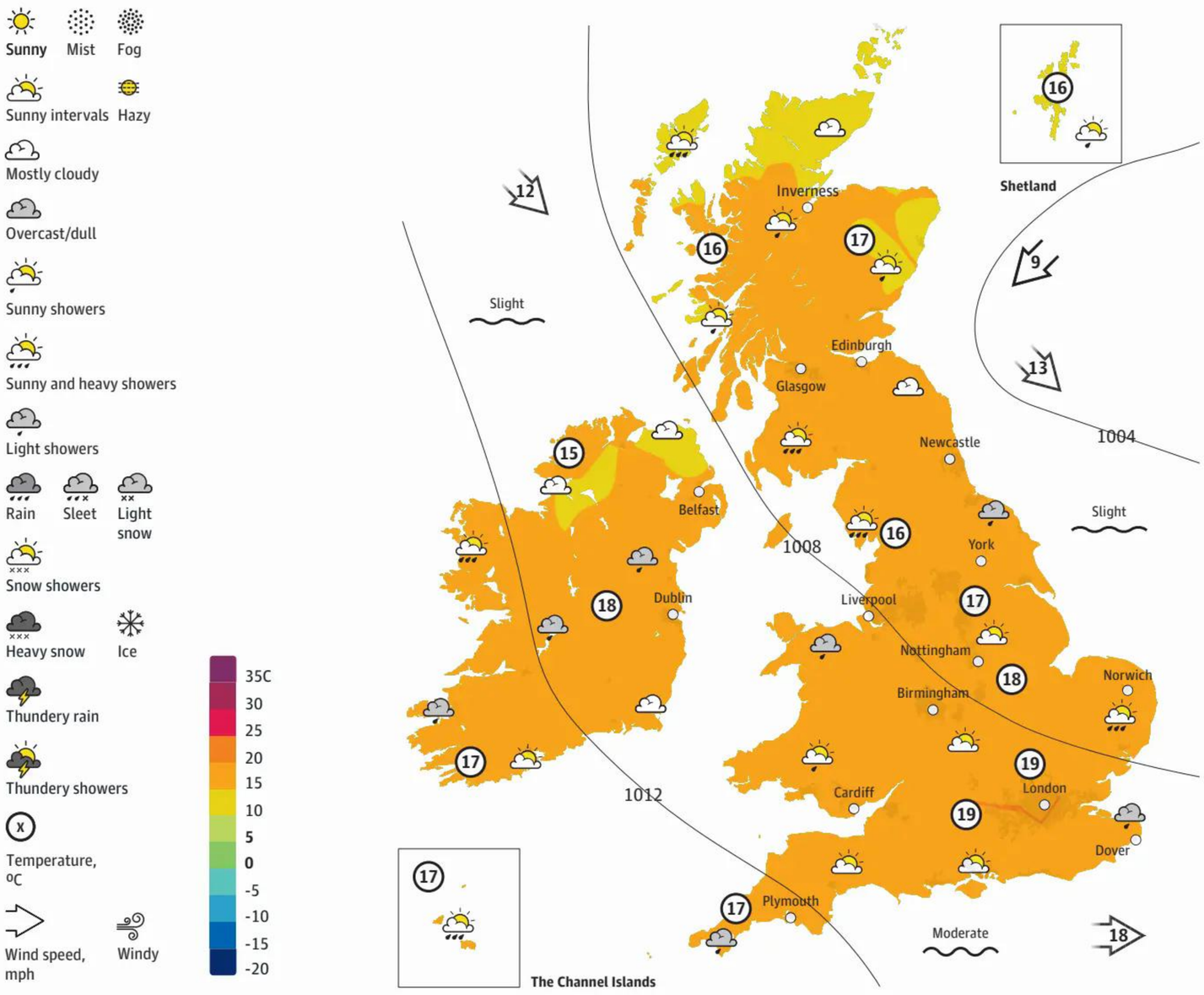
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Weather
Wednesday 29 May 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today



Forecast

Low 10 High 17
Tomorrow



Low 10 High 17
Friday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

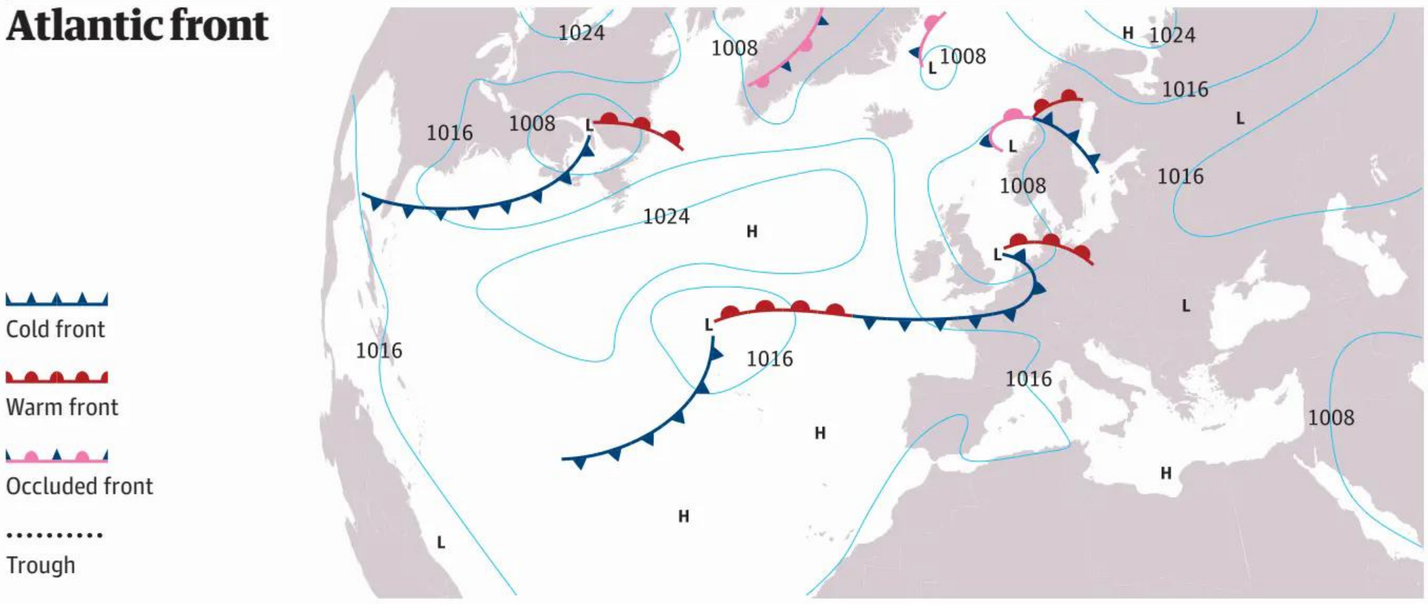
Latest	
27 May 2024	426.65
Weekly average	
19 May 2024	426.68
28 May 2023	423.83
28 May 2014	401.84
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	11 20	80%	Low
Manchester	10 16	65%	Low
Edinburgh	10 18	65%	Low
Belfast	10 17	65%	Low
Glasgow	11 18	85%	Low
Inverness	10 16	90%	Low
Leeds	10 18	65%	Low
Liverpool	11 17	55%	Low
Newcastle	10 18	80%	Low
Sheffield	10 17	25%	Low

Atlantic front



Butterflywatch

The swallowtail, Britain's biggest butterfly, last year had its worst summer since scientific counting began in 1976. What followed was potentially more catastrophic: the deepest and longest winter floods in living memory across the Norfolk Broads, which is the only place where it still breeds.

The swallowtail fixes its chrysalis low down on reed stems and there were fears that many would perish if submerged in flood water. So, two cheers: the adult swallowtail has emerged once again and is flying at hotspots including Strumpshaw Fen and Hickling nature reserve. It is too early to know if numbers will be lower than the 81 recorded in 2023, but it is now very vulnerable.

As the climate crisis causes more Broadland flooding and salination, new sites are needed for its food plant, milk parsley, which dies in salty water. This year the RSPB is scattering milk parsley seeds in less flood-prone locations, hoping to create more climate-resilient homes for the swallowtail.

It sounds simple, but while this plant germinates easily, it has high mortality in its first year. "There are decades of work to do to get ready for these climatic challenges," said Tim Strudwick of the RSPB.

Patrick Barkham

Around the world

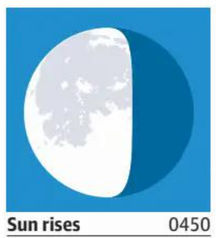
Algiers	28	Lisbon	29
Ams'dam	17	Madrid	33
Athens	26	Malaga	26
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	18
B Aires	16	Mexico C	28
Bangkok	35	Miami	33
Barcelona	24	Milan	25
Basra	46	Mombasa	30
Beijing	28	Moscow	26
Berlin	20	Mumbai	33
Bermuda	25	N Orleans	32
Brussels	18	Nairobi	26
Budapest	26	New Delhi	45
C'hagen	17	New York	24
Cairo	31	Oslo	18
Cape Town	27	Paris	18
Chicago	18	Perth	16
Corfu	25	Prague	21
Dakar	27	Reykjavik	10
Dhaka	34	Rio de J	23
Dublin	17	Rome	25
Florence	27	Shanghai	27
Gibraltar	22	Singapore	33
H Kong	27	Stockh'm	22
Harare	22	Strasb'g	19
Helsinki	25	Sydney	22
Istanbul	23	Tel Aviv	26
Jo'burg	21	Tenerife	25
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	24
K'mandu	33	Toronto	19
Kabul	26	Vancouv'r	15
Kingston	32	Vienna	23
Kolkata	36	Warsaw	24
L Angeles	23	Wash'ton	24
Lagos	33	Well'ton	12
Lima	20	Zurich	17

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0554	3.8m	1857	3.6m	**London Bridge**	0628	6.6m	1845	6.1m
Avonmouth	--	--	1159	11.2m	**Lossiemouth**	0414	3.5m	1712	3.4m
Barrow	0357	8.2m	1636	7.8m	**Milford Haven**	1104	5.8m	2333	6.0m
Belfast	0336	3.3m	1629	3.0m	**Newquay**	0959	5.8m	2228	5.9m
Cobh	1019	3.5m	2250	3.6m	**North Shields**	0803	4.5m	2100	4.3m
Cromer	--	--	1104	4.5m	**Oban**	1025	3.0m	2303	3.3m
Dover	0328	5.9m	1601	6.0m	**Penzance**	0930	4.6m	2202	4.8m
Dublin	0414	3.8m	1705	3.5m	**Plymouth**	1037	4.6m	2250	4.9m
Galway	1017	4.2m	2233	4.3m	**Portsmouth**	0358	4.2m	1655	4.3m
Greenock	0442	3.3m	1729	3.0m	**Southport**	0258	8.1m	1525	7.6m
Harwich	0421	3.6m	1634	3.5m	**Stornoway**	--	--	1218	3.7m
Holyhead	0253	5.1m	1533	4.7m	**Weymouth**	1102	0.7m	2319	0.9m
Hull	1052	6.5m	2351	6.2m	**Whitby**	0836	4.9m	2130	4.7m
Leith	0713	4.9m	2000	4.8m	**Wick**	0346	3.0m	1641	2.8m
Liverpool	0338	8.4m	1612	7.9m	**Workington**	0401	7.4m	1638	7.0m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0450
Sun sets	2105
Moon rises	0142
Moon sets	1031
Last Quarter	30 May

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2147 to 0457
Birm'ham	2117 to 0452
Brighton	2102 to 0454
Bristol	2115 to 0501
Carlisle	2135 to 0442
Cork	2140 to 0522
Dublin	2140 to 0505
Glasgow	2148 to 0442
Harlech	2128 to 0459
Inverness	2158 to 0429
London	2105 to 0450
M'chester	2124 to 0449
Newcastle	2131 to 0437
Norwich	2106 to 0439
Penzance	2120 to 0519

Sport

Football

Meet earthquake survivor now eying Euro glory

Page 46 →

Rugby union

Farrell faces tough choices a year out from Lions tour

Robert Kitson, page 48 →



David Squires on ... Manchester United's FA Cup glory and what the future holds

David Squires archive Peruse our resident cartoonist's previous work at *theguardian.com/profile/david-squires*

Women's football

Raphaël Jucobin

Székely Land v FA Sapmi is a World Cup like no other

While preparations for the Olympic tournament this summer are in full swing, next week will feature another international competition fighting for recognition. Kicking off next Tuesday, the 2024 Conifa Women's World Cup will be the second edition of the tournament, organised by the governing body that brings together non-Fifa affiliated teams.

FA Sápmi, a football association representing the Sámi people indigenous to a vast stretch of northern Scandinavia, will be the hosts. The tournament will be held over five days in Bodø, the northern Norwegian city that is this year's European capital of culture.

At Conifa's first women's World Cup, held in 2022, the Sápmi team travelled to northern India for a double-header of matches against a squad of Tibetan exiles, winning 22-1 on aggregate. This year, the two teams will be joined by Székely Land - the Hungarian-speaking population of Transylvania, in Romania - and a diaspora team representing Tamil Eelam.

Marja Sofe Holmestrand Hætta was part of the squad in India and also took part in Conifa's first international women's match in 2018, between Sápmi and Northern Cyprus. The goalkeeper has been involved with the Sámi setup for almost 15 years, since she was a teenager.

"Every time I get the call, it's a big honour," she says,pointing out that this year's tournament has already received more media attention than their trip to northern India and could provide a platform for greater recognition: "It's good that the other Norwegians will be able to see that we're here - look at us."

The 29-year-old lives in the south of Norway - as is the case for most of the squad - and plays for the Kristiansund-based side Våg FK in the fourth tier. "I'm very excited to see what happens here, and afterwards.

"I don't think many people know that we have a Sápmi national team. I live in southern Norway, and when I told my friends that I'm going to represent Sámi in a world championship, they ask me: 'What is that?'"

The FA Sápmi head coach, Elin Nicolaisen, says: "Marja is very proud of her identity. She wears the national Sámi dress and when she puts on the captain's armband and the national anthem plays she gets very emotional."

Nicolaisen, a former Norwegian top-flight player, set out to create a women's team when she joined FA Sápmi in 2014, an initiative first championed by the longtime president, Håkan Kuorak. She is optimistic about the team's chances of retaining the title, but the scheduling of the tournament - midway through the Norwegian league season - means she is unable to call up any first division players who could be eligible.

The value in Conifa's international tournaments, according to Nicolaisen, lies especially in the opportunities for cultural exchange between the teams. The most enriching part of the 2022 trip, she says, were the discussions her players had with their Tibetan counterparts, when they compared their vastly differing stages of recognition in their respective homelands.

If logistical hurdles and inherent political complications hinder the organisation's work in men's football, those struggles are amplified in the women's game. The Conifa president, Per-Anders Blind, who is of Sámi origin, says that women's football within the organisation "is still in a development phase". With the notable exception of the Sápmi setup, women's teams are ostensibly an afterthought for many participants - "they are the marginalised within the marginalised" as the former referee puts it.

While Blind laments that some members are not as "serious" about their women's teams - he cites the last-minute withdrawals that led to the tournament next week going from six teams to four - he is nevertheless confident growth will come eventually. "It's important for us to convince our members that we need to invest in women, and create equal tournaments," he says.



▲ *Sápmi celebrate winning the first Conifa Women's World Cup in 2022*

Europa Conference League final

El Kaabi making the most of unlikely career path

Striker was a late developer but he could help Olympiakos become first Greek side to win a European trophy

Michael Yokhin



Initially, fans were not excited by the anonymous 30-year-old but they adore him now

MILOS BICANSKI/GETTY IMAGES

Final details

Olympiakos v Fiorentina
Venue AEK Arena, Athens (8pm)
TV TNT Sports 1
Join Scott Murray from 7pm for minute-by-minute coverage at theguardian.com/football

The Olympiakos coach, José Luis Mendilibar, is hoping to lift his second European trophy in two years when he faces Fiorentina in the Europa Conference League final in Athens tonight. He won the Europa League with Sevilla a year ago and could become the second manager to triumph in Europe with different clubs in successive seasons after Rafa Benítez, who won the Uefa Cup with Valencia in 2004 and the Champions League with Liverpool 12 months later.

In both campaigns Mendilibar has relied on a Moroccan centre-forward. Youssef En-Nesyri scored six times for Sevilla in Europe last season, including two goals in the 3-0 quarter-final win over Manchester United. This term, though, Ayoub El Kaabi has done even better, especially against Premier League opponents.

The Olympiakos forward almost single-handedly dismantled Aston Villa in the semi-finals, netting a hat-trick in the 4-2 win in Birmingham, then scoring both goals in the 2-0 second-leg triumph in Piraeus. Incredibly, though, those five goals are only a third of his total in European competitions this season.

El Kaabi's most impressive contribution before facing Villa came in the last-16 games against Maccabi Tel Aviv. Olympiakos lost 4-1 at home and seemed to be on their way out but produced a stunning comeback in the return leg, with El Kaabi forcing the tie into extra time with a magnificent overhead kick. They won 6-1 and have not looked back since.

Now they are 90 minutes away from becoming the first Greek club to win a European trophy. Panathinaikos, led by Ferenc Puskas, have come the closest but lost to Ajax in the European Cup final in 1971.

Mendilibar, whose Sevilla side beat Roma on penalties in the final a year ago, will be hoping El Kaabi can continue his run of scoring. He has already broken a single season record in Europe by an African player. Granted, Samuel Eto'o and Didier Drogba never took part in 18 matches in a single campaign, but it is a sensational achievement nevertheless – even more so considering this is El Kaabi's first European campaign.

He is not a young rising star, however, and he turns 31 next month. He got his first professional contract in his homeland at the age of 23. For a long time, El Kaabi could not imagine he would be able to make a living from football. In his youth, he worked as a carpenter and a builder to help his father. "I learned that one can only reach success through hard work," he has said.



◀ *Ayoub El Kaabi made his name in the 2018 African Nations Championship for Morocco*

Whereas En-Nesyri studied at the state of the art academy established by King Mohammed VI, El Kaabi never had any football education. He played for a small team in Casablanca, before joining second division Racing in 2016. A year later, he moved to modest Berkane in the Moroccan top flight and prolific form led to his inclusion in the national team squad for the 2018 African Nations Championship (Chan) – a tournament established exclusively for players from local leagues and not to be confused with the Africa Cup of Nations.

El Kaabi scored nine goals in six matches en route to winning the trophy and European clubs finally showed some interest. He was linked with a move to Atlético Madrid in the Spanish press, while more realistic options included Espanyol, Málaga and Saint-Étienne.

However, after taking part in the 2018 World Cup, El Kaabi moved to China. "Hebei's offer was too good to refuse. Having come from a modest background, Ayoub wanted to secure his family's financial future," the Moroccan football expert Hanif Ben Berkane said.

From the career development point of view it turned out to be the wrong decision. A year later, El Kaabi moved back to Morocco, joining Wydad Casablanca. That was his first experience at a top club by local standards and it was largely unsuccessful. Despite scoring frequently, he was criticised for glaring misses and his poor contribution to team play. He was blamed for the Caf Champions League semi-final defeat by Kaizer Chiefs and eventually left.

Wydad supporters failed to appreciate El Kaabi's true qualities – he is a penalty-area predator who knows how to position himself and get numerous scoring chances in every game. His composure in front of goal improved after joining Hatayspor in the summer of 2021, and he became a local idol, scoring 26 goals in 53 Turkish Super Lig matches.

The disastrous earthquake in February 2023, which destroyed the city and claimed lives of thousands, including Christian Atsu and numerous club officials, put a cruel end to the adventure. Morocco suffered its own earthquake in September and El Kaabi helped to raise funds for survivors.

By that time, he was playing for Olympiakos, who signed him in the summer to replace Cédric Bakambu. That was a difficult task, but El Kaabi was more than up to it, exceeding even the most optimistic expectations. Initially, fans were not excited by the anonymous 30-year-old who was not considered good enough to make the Morocco squad for the 2022 World Cup, but they adore him now and fear losing him.

"Ayoub's composure in front of goal is superb, but this is probably his only season in Piraeus as there are big offers from Qatar and Saudi Arabia," the Greek football writer Costas Bratsos said.

His career is a case of what might have been. The Moroccan has flourished too late to earn a transfer to a top league and his time in the spotlight could be short. Tonight's final could be his last game in European football but, based on his incredible form, he could make it a farewell to remember.

United 'confident' Nice link will not harm them

Jamie Jackson

Sir Jim Ratcliffe is confident Manchester United will not be demoted from the Europa League and will be allowed to compete next season alongside Nice, the French club he also owns via his company Ineos.

Uefa regulations prevent an organisation or person from wielding "decisive influence" over more than one club in the same competition. Ratcliffe has a 27.7% stake in United and controls the club's football policy, and Ineos has owned Nice since 2019.

Uefa has a deadline of Monday for clubs to satisfy its rules. Ineos believes it must indicate by then the adjustments it will make. Rulings will be delivered by Uefa in the summer and if United were to lose the case they would be demoted to the Europa Conference League as they finished lower in the Premier League (eighth) than Nice did in Ligue 1 (fifth).

United qualified for the Europa League by winning the FA Cup final against Manchester City. An Ineos statement said: "We are aware of the position of both clubs and are in direct dialogue with Uefa. We are confident that we have a route forward for next season in Europe."

Manchester City and Girona, who each qualified for the Champions League, have to make a similar case to Uefa. This is because City Football Group owns 81% of the English champions and 44.3% of the Spanish club.

Ineos believes it has conducted positive discussions with Uefa over the past months, it is understood, and that the precedent of other multi-club organisations playing in the same European competition points to a solution.

RB Salzburg and RB Leipzig competed in the 2017-18 Champions League despite each being owned by Red Bull GmbH. Uefa investigators found the company exerted a strong influence over both clubs but found there were not enough grounds to believe there was influence running between the two clubs after certain members of staff linked to Red Bull and loan arrangements between the teams had been removed.

Last July three sets of partner clubs – Brighton and Union Saint-Gilloise; Aston Villa and Vitória Guimarães; and Toulouse and Milan – were allowed to compete in the same European competitions. Uefa referred then to "significant changes by the clubs and their related investors" to comply with the rules.

27.7%

*Size of **Sir Jim Ratcliffe's stake** in Manchester United. His company, Ineos, also owns French club Nice*

44.3%

*Share of Spanish club **Girona owned by City Football Group**, which also controls Manchester City*

▼ *Jürgen Klopp speaks to the audience of 11,000 at his farewell evening*
JOHN POWELL/LIVERPOOL FC/GETTY



Klopp ready to party again as he bids Liverpool farewell

Andy Hunter
M&S Bank Arena

Jürgen Klopp said he would celebrate with a bus parade if Liverpool were awarded the two Premier League titles they lost by a point to Manchester City as he bid a tearful farewell to fans at a "Danke Jürgen" tribute night.

The former Liverpool manager returned to the city for a rousing send-off from 11,000 fans at the M&S Bank Arena, nine days after his final game at Anfield. Klopp revealed he has held "good talks" with his successor, Arne Slot, and broke down in tears as fans repeatedly chanted "I'm so glad that Jürgen is a red" after a montage was played of his Liverpool highlights. All proceeds from the event went to the Liverpool Foundation, the club's charity of which Klopp is to be an ambassador.

During a lengthy Q&A session hosted by the comedian John Bishop and the LFC TV presenter Peter McDowall, Klopp lightheartedly mentioned he had been told not to discuss TNT Sports and 12.30pm kick-offs, referees, Manchester City, financial issues and VAR. Bishop, however, raised the subject of Liverpool being pipped to the title by a single point by City in 2018-19, when Klopp's team finished on 97 points, and again in 2021-22.

"You leave this club having won the Premier League once," Bishop said. "There could be a court decision that means you've won the Premier League three times..." Klopp interrupted: "If you organise a bus parade, I'm in! How long it takes I don't care."

The 115 charges against City for alleged breaches of Premier League regulations was one of the most requested questions by Liverpool fans on Bishop's Instagram. City continue to deny the charges.

Another was whether Klopp felt he received sufficient financial backing from the club's owners, Fenway Sports Group. He replied with a dig at Chelsea's owners, and their decision to sack Mauricio Pochettino at the end of last season.

"Can you imagine LFC as the club with unlimited money?" said Klopp. "Imagine Kylian Mbappé came here. Imagine Bellingham came here, Haaland. It is not us, it just does not fit. We won what we won and we did it the Liverpool way. We had hard conversations and other clubs didn't do that in the same time.

"We built two new stands, a new training ground, we bought Melwood back."

In what could also be viewed as a dig at Manchester United's treatment of Jadon Sancho, Klopp said it was a manager's responsibility to stand by a struggling player. He added: "If the whole world loses trust and faith in the player then the manager has to be the one behind the player. I cannot just buy into that 'he's useless' stuff like other clubs did by the way. Buying a player for £80m and then sending him out on loan!"

One in five players admit using snus or nicotine

About one in five male and female professional players who took part in a new survey are using snus, nicotine pouches or both. The study by Loughborough University, commissioned by the Professional Footballers' Association, also identified that two out of five had tried the pouches at least once.

The report states the true usage figures are likely to be higher owing to players not wanting to disclose use, even in an anonymous survey. Of the 628 male players surveyed, at Premier League or EFL clubs, 18% said they used it, while 22% of the 51 Women's Super League players surveyed said they were users.

Improved mental readiness was cited as a key perceived benefit by users (29% and 55% respectively), and 41% of male players users said they used it to help relax, most commonly after training and matches. That figure was 64% among female players. One of the 16 professional club performance and medical staff members interviewed said players used it as a "coping mechanism".

The report highlighted the potential negative physical impacts, in particular of using snus. A review of available evidence suggests use is associated with an increased risk of oesophageal and pancreatic cancer in comparison with non-smokers and with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Snus contains tobacco and is not legally available to buy in the UK, whereas the tobacco-free nicotine pouches – that were found to be more commonly used – are legal to buy. The pouches are usually placed between the upper lip and gums. The survey found users often started using the products in an effort to fit in with other, often more senior, teammates – 56% of male users gave this as a reason, rising to 73% among women.



▲ *56% of male footballers using snus or nicotine do it to fit in*

This prevalence of use was identified as a barrier to quitting, with one player admitting: "I have quit twice for eight months but always seem to start doing it again. [I] find it hard to quit when I'm around it all day."

A staff member at a club said they had come across a player whose career had been spent mainly in the Premier League and Championship who described themselves as a "heavy user", and had told the staff member: "I'd love to come off it, but I can't. It's just everywhere I look. [I] go to fill my car up and it's at the pump stands. It's just too easy."

About half the users in the men's game indicated wanting to quit in the next 12 months, but most users in the WSL did not intend to. **PA Media**

Return to office or go, Ratcliffe tells United staff

Continued *from back page*

recognises that not everyone wants to work from the office full-time so has provided options for staff who don't wish to return to the office to step away now."

Ratcliffe, the 27.7% minority owner, believes the workforce can be trimmed and has previously cited email traffic statistics to staff as the basis for a ban on working from home, telling them to seek "alternative employment" if they were not willing to come to club offices. In an email sent to staff last Friday, plans for an end to home working were outlined.

"To ensure we have enough space for colleagues to work safely, we will convert the Trinity Club, the Knights Lounge and the 1999 Suite in East Stand into office space," the email said. "This is addition to existing facilities in the Engine Room and elsewhere across the stadium. Each desk will have a monitor, keyboard and mouse.

"The London office will be reconfigured to allow additional space for teams. Some teams will also be based at the Ineos office at Hans Crescent in Knightsbridge."

Ratcliffe is this week leading a season review, which was not expected to be concluded yesterday. Sir Dave Brailsford, Ratcliffe's key lieutenant, Jean-Claude Blanc, the acting chief executive, and Jason Wilcox, the technical director, are the others most prominently involved. Joel Glazer, the United co-owner, will also be consulted.

Once the review is completed a decision will be confirmed on the future of the manager, Erik ten Hag.

'The club has provided options for staff ... to step away now'

United spokesperson

Wembley on high security alert for final

Continued *from back page*

fan park in Hyde Park before the game, while those from Real may use a facility on Victoria Embankment housing 13,600. Should the demand materialise, screens in those locations may be used to broadcast the final to supporters without tickets. Each team was given an allocation of 25,000 tickets for the 86,600-capacity stadium.

Asked about Uefa's involvement in light of the mayhem over which it has previously presided, Bryant said the parties have a "very good working relationship", adding: "We've worked with them a lot in the past in terms of the Euro finals and the women's Euros as well. Between ourselves and Uefa, we absolutely have embraced the learnings and lessons from Paris in the delivery of this event. That is clear. We embedded that into our planning and our thought process."

Bryant described the events at Euro 2020 as "incredibly sad" and emphasised that Saturday should leave a positive legacy. "It was a difficult and disappointing day," he said. "It wasn't the way we deserved to end the tournament. A massive amount of work has gone into this, an event of national significance and a chance to show London is fantastic at delivering big events."

Farrell fires up Saracens as he looks to sign off in style

Talismanic captain targets the two victories that would lead his boyhood club to glory

Adam Hathaway

The clock is ticking on Owen Farrell's Saracens career and the fly-half knows the hands will reach midnight if they fail to overcome Northampton at Franklin's Gardens on Friday.

Brad Barritt, the former captain, was at training in St Albans yesterday as a reminder of the days when the London club were nearly invincible. But that aura has gone as they contemplate the Premiership semi-final against Saints and the break-up of a golden generation with the Vunipola brothers also leaving for France at the end of this campaign.

Barritt got a standing ovation when he walked into the team room on a visit from his home in South Africa and Farrell can expect the same whenever he returns to the club after his summer move to Racing 92.

But for now, Farrell must face up to his squad's moment of truth in the Midlands and Mark McCall, the Saracens director of rugby, explained how at times such as this Farrell lights the fire under the team.

"He leads by example on the field for sure," McCall said. "But day to day here people listen when he speaks and there is a difference in weeks like this about him and his focus on it. Everyone can tell he is at it and on it and he makes everyone feel good. We have had two great leaders, Brad was here today - one of the great leaders of this club and we have been lucky to have those two as captains."

Saracens' season has been marked by massive highs, such as the 52-7 win against Harlequins in Tottenham in March, and lows such as the 41-30 reverse to Saints a week later when the scoreboard flattered them. They lost seven out of 18 regular-season games and the 20-10 defeat against Sale cost them a home playoff tie and lumbered them with a trip to the form team in the league.

But Farrell is confident his side can put in a big performance on Friday - and the Saturday after, at Twickenham, if it comes to that.

"We've been consistently inconsistent over the course of the year but there's been a bit of a change in mindset these last couple of weeks," the 32-year-old said. "There's been a real hunger to get it right and we've only got to get it right twice now.

"The good thing from the message that was given to us after the Sale game was that we have turned it around pretty quickly a good few times this year so that is not an issue for us.

"We've had other years were we've lost seven games in a block. We've not had that this year. When it's gone well, you look back and tell yourself the story that the year's been class. It's never normally like that. We're getting clearer on how we want to be, and we want to test that on Friday."

The game on Friday will pit Farrell against Fin Smith, one of the contenders to take his No 10 England shirt on the summer tour to Japan and New Zealand, when the former England captain will be settling into life in Paris.

Smith, a decade younger than Farrell, has been the spark for Northampton's attacking game but also managed them in tense situations notably the away Champions Cup win in Munster in January.

"He's come on leaps and bounds this year," Farrell said. "He was obviously a fantastic player last year, but he's really kicked on. He's nice and relaxed when he plays the game - but he won't be sitting back. He wants to be at the front of everything, which is a good mix. He's has had some big moments this year. Him and George Furbank have been key to how they attack. They always seem to be in the fight - he's come on really well."

> ***'There's a hunger to get it right and we've only got to get it right twice now'***
>
> **Owen Farrell**



▲ *Owen Farrell believes Saracens can bounce back from their defeat by Sale*
NIGEL FRENCH/PA

Analysis
Robert Kitson



Lions coach has one year to decide who will tour Australia

Just imagine, for a second, you are Andy Farrell, head coach of the 2025 British & Irish Lions. There is not limitless scope for leisurely reflection, given Ireland's Test series in South Africa and with his son Owen about to make an emotional farewell to Saracens. But the thunderous Champions Cup final last Saturday is still fresh in the imagination and now is an obvious time to ponder the best available squad to face Australia next year.

The first priority, as ever, is to dig out the domestic fixture list for next year. The Lions' first game is scheduled to take place on 20 June in Dublin against Argentina, before the squad departs for Western Australia. The Premiership and United Rugby Championship finals are the previous weekend, a welcome improvement from 2021 when the former clashed with the Lions' game versus Japan at Murrayfield.

Among the most critical pieces of the whole jigsaw, however, is the date of the 2025 French Top 14 final, scheduled for 28 June. By then, the Lions will have been in Australia for almost a week. At least three of the 10 tour games will have been played by the time any Top 14 final representatives have sobered up, flown halfway around the world, done some meaningful training and are ready to play competitive rugby with some unfamiliar teammates.

If Toulouse, say, end up reaching a final against Racing 92 it puts a significant asterisk against the names of Jack Willis, Blair Kinghorn, Owen Farrell, Will Rowlands and Henry Arundell, all tour contenders. Alternatively, Farrell Sr could consider that quintet as high-end replacements, ready to travel should a vacancy materialise. But what if Hugo Keenan goes down in a heap towards the end of Leinster's season? With Kinghorn committed elsewhere, what then?

And so on and so on. Selecting a Lions squad is as easy as nailing a multicoloured jelly to a moving wall. In some ways, deciding whether Farrell should select his own son will be the simple part - the pair have never allowed sentiment to cloud their day jobs. Rather harder will be gauging whether the growing number of narrow big-game defeats for Leinster's top players is merely a blip or a flashing amber warning. Or how different the squad he would select today will be from the one he eventually names?



▲ *Andy Farrell is likely to pick a big contingent from his Ireland side*
BILLY STICKLAND/INPHO/SHUTTERSTOCK

There would appear to be 23 or 24 probables at this early stage, fitness permitting, with Leinster heavily represented. Caelan Doris, Joe McCarthy, Ryan Baird, Dan Sheehan, Tadhg Furlong, Andrew Porter, Jamison Gibson-Park, James Lowe and Keenan are all pretty much nailed on and either Garry Ringrose or Robbie Henshaw will probably join them. Add Connacht's Bundee Aki, Mack Hansen and Finlay Bealham and the Irish contingent is bound to be healthy.

> *At least three of the 10 tour games will have been played by the time any Top 14 final representatives are ready to play*

Others in this rarefied category? Maro Itoje, Ben Earl and the fast-emerging Immanuel Feyi-Waboso from England, plus Tom Curry if he can return fit and firing from injury. Scotland, as a bare minimum, will send Finn Russell, Sione Tuipulotu, Duhan van der Merwe, Zander Fagerson and Kinghorn, with Wales likely to be represented, at the very least, by Dafydd Jenkins and Jac Morgan.

At this point, though, things become trickier. Take the back row. Doris - a possible tour captain - Baird, Earl, Morgan and, potentially, Curry are great options but what about Willis, unavailable for England but colossal against Leinster? Or Courtney Lawes, who has declared he would tour with the Lions "in a heartbeat" if asked? Or England's coming men, Chandler Cunningham-South and Alfie Barbeary? Not forgetting Peter O'Mahony, Jack Conan, Josh van der Flier and Will Connors. Or Wales's Tommy Reffell. Or Scotland's Rory Darge, Andy Christie and Jack Dempsey. Only seven specialist back-rowers will probably travel.

One or two other positions remain wide open. Hooker, for example. Dewi Lake and Jamie George will fancy it but try telling Ronan Kelleher, Luke Cowan-Dickie, Theo Dan, Rob Herring and George Turner that selection is already a done deal. Similarly, among the half-backs, will Farrell Sr really choose Marcus or Fin Smith - or both - over his own flesh and blood? And which of Tomos Williams, Alex Mitchell, Harry Randall and Ben White best complement Gibson-Park and the eventual choices at 10?

Outside bets? Looking at the gaps still to be filled, the two young Englishmen Tommy Freeman and the uncapped Quins loosehead Fin Baxter are worth a modest wager, in addition to Cunningham-South. Some genuinely exciting Red Rose talents are emerging and this tour may just come at the right moment for them.

But everything ultimately boils down to how long Farrell Sr can risk waiting for his best French-based talent. On the evidence of Saturday, Willis and Kinghorn would be among the first names on anyone's squad list. Farrell Jr, as he hopes to underline in his final days with Saracens, remains a supreme competitor, while Arundell could be prime X-factor wildcard material. As Farrell Sr strokes his chin and contemplates his 2025 options, some pivotal decisions await.



▼ *The temporary stadium in Eisenhower Park will host India v Pakistan in the T20 World Cup*
J CONRAD WILLIAMS JR/NEWSDAY RM/GETTY

Cricket ready to strike gold in the land of opportunity

Investors who made fortunes in Silicon Valley are behind latest attempt to put the sport into US mainstream

Andy Bull

Manhattan's skyscrapers are built on cricket fields. There was one under Pier 17 at the Seaport on the East River, another beneath the North Meadow of Central Park, and a third on 1st Avenue and East 32nd St, below the car park of NYU's Langone Medical Center.

In 1844, a crowd of about 5,000 New Yorkers watched the first international match there, between the USA and Canada. "Cricket was the first modern team sport in America," says Chuck Ramkissoon, in Joseph O'Neill's great New York novel Netherland, "a bona fide American pastime". He's right. It was, once.

There were dozens, even hundreds, of clubs in the US in the middle of the 19th century. Historians have never settled on a single reason why cricket died there. The civil war was one factor. "We had a large number of good young men playing the game up to that time, and then the war fever took over them," one player wrote in the American Cricketer at the beginning of the 20th century.

Baseball was an easier game for the soldiers to pick up and play because it didn't need a rolled wicket, specialist coaching or equipment. When they made it professional in 1869, it was packaged and sold as the indigenous American sport. The patriots' game.

There were places where they carried on playing cricket, around Philadelphia in particular, but even that scene sputtered out during the first world war.

Which made Netherland a hard novel to sell. "When I was writing it, people would ask: 'What's it about?'" says O'Neill. "I'd say: 'It's about cricket in New York,' and people didn't know what to say back."

O'Neill played himself. "When I first arrived in New York in 1998, it was a question of driving around and spotting people playing cricket, stopping and asking them: 'Can I play?'"

There has always been more cricket in the outer boroughs than anyone but the players knew. "It's a very different cricket culture," says O'Neill. "The people who love cricket here are often the ones out driving taxis all night."

Everyone I talk to in US cricket seems to be chasing a dream of one kind or another, even if it is only a little weekend time playing the game they loved in the home they left behind. "There's a reason they call it the land of opportunity," says Ali Khan.

He was a teenaged tape-ball player when his family moved from Pakistan in 2010. He assumed he would have to give up cricket because he didn't think they played it in the US until his uncle took him to their local club in Dayton, Ohio. He played his first proper game that same weekend. Now he is going to be opening the bowling for the national team in the T20 World Cup.

Among the dreamers, there have always been some who were thinking even bigger. O'Neill knew one and based the character of Ramkissoon on him. In the novel, Ramkissoon dreams of building a proper stadium outside New York. "An arena for the greatest cricket teams in the world, twelve exhibition matches a summer, watched by eight thousand spectators at fifty dollars a pop."

There are others. I still have a box in the attic filled with promotional leaflets Allen Stanford sent out to the confused locals of Fort Collins, Colorado, which was the test venue for his own effort to break cricket in the US. There was the Pro Cricket League, which began and ended in 2004 after an opening game that was delayed 50 minutes because nobody had any stumps. The Cricket All-Stars series, led by Shane Warne and Sachin Tendulkar, managed three matches. "The USA can be the capital of cricket in the western hemisphere," Don Lockerbie, the chief executive of the old cricket association, used to say.

Ramkissoon's stadium is finally there, a temporary build in Eisenhower Park, 30 miles outside the city. "A game between India and Pakistan in New York City?" he says in the book. "In a state of the art arena with Liberty Tower in the background?"

It's finally happening. The match, on 9 June, is one of the hottest tickets in sport in 2024.

US cricket isn't a game for shift workers any more. The men who run it now are leaving long, lucrative careers in Silicon Valley. They launched Minor League Cricket in 2021, Major League Cricket in 2023 and they are still building. MLC's investors include the managing director of the largest media conglomerate in India, the chief executive of Microsoft, the former chief executive of Adobe and the former director of technology at Amazon. They have credibility, capability, capital, and connections. English cricket now has serious competition in the summer months.

"It was 10 years ago, when I realised the T20 format is here to stay, that I felt, for the first time, there is an opportunity for this sport in this country," says Soma Somasegar, who co-owns the MLC's Seattle Orcas.

He grew up in Pondicherry in India and fell in love with cricket from listening to the commentary on his pocket radio. He moved to the US to study, rose to become a senior vice-president at Microsoft and now runs a venture capital firm.

The Orcas have set up an academy and are starting work on a new stadium in Seattle. "The next time the World Cup comes to the US," he says, without stopping to add an if or but, "we will host games in Seattle."

Somasegar has a dream, too. "In my mind, the only thing is to see cricket become a mainstream sport here," he says. "Not just for the diaspora, but to see if we can break through and make cricket a major sport in the coming decades."

He makes the comparison with football, which, he says, nobody took seriously in the US until after the 1994 World Cup. "Now you can't go to a park without seeing a bunch of kids kicking around a soccer ball, right? Well, ask yourself, why can't we see something similar with cricket?"

Welsh washout



England's third T20 international against Pakistan was abandoned without a ball bowled due to persistent rain in Cardiff. The home side lead the four-match series 1-0 with the final game set to take place at the Oval tomorrow.

Cross excited by progress before Pakistan showdown

Kate Cross feels England's emerging talent makes it "a really exciting time" heading into this summer's T20 World Cup and beyond. Jon Lewis's side will bid to follow up their T20 clean sweep against Pakistan by sealing a 2-0 one-day international series win against them today in Chelmsford, weather-permitting.

A hectic schedule lies ahead for England, who face series in both formats against New Zealand and Ireland before the T20 World Cup begins in Bangladesh in October.

"We've got a lot of youngsters coming through now," Cross said. "The way Dani Gibson's stepped up in that T20 series [against Pakistan], opening the bowling and playing the role of a No 7 that we'd want is really impressive.

"She's worked really hard on her all-round game. When you've got someone like Nat Sciver-Brunt as your blueprint to follow for the world's best all-rounder, then it's nice to have someone to role-model that.

"Lauren Bell has worked really hard on becoming a better bowler and trying to swing the ball both ways now, not just be an inswinging bowler and reduce her predictability for power-play bowling and stuff. The way she's gone out there and tried to do that in games is a really brave thing to do.



▲ *Kate Cross faces Pakistan today hoping to seal a 2-0 series win*

"Then we've got Bess Heath and Linsey Smith, who have had limited opportunities [over the] winter. But those people being around the squad just really excites me for what's to come.

"We've already spoken about the calendar being absolutely packed, but you are going to need to rely on those people at some point. It's a really exciting time for us as a group."

England will tour South Africa in November after the T20 World Cup before heading to Australia at the start of the year for the Ashes. Cross said England were focused on becoming more ruthless in pivotal stages of matches after their unconvincing 37-run ODI win against Pakistan last week in Derby.

The 32-year-old said: "That's something we saw glimpses of in the Ashes [in 2023]. To go toe-to-toe with the best team in the world for the last 10 years and beat them in two white-ball series was an incredible achievement.

"I don't think we've lost an ODI series under Jon Lewis, I think we've only lost two games, so we're doing a lot of really good things." **PA Media**

Can Nadal's body keep up with his everlasting hunger?

Despite physical ailments the Spanish great, 38 next week, feels he is making progress and is targeting the Olympics

Tumaini Carayol
Roland Garros

Shortly after his first opening-round defeat on Court-Philippe Chatrier, Rafael Nadal arrived at the press conference room in a jovial mood. After a career of dominance at Roland Garros, where he has so often been untouchable even against some of the sport's greatest players, he would have been forgiven for feeling a sense of injustice and frustration with a straight-sets defeat in the first round against Alexander Zverev. Instead, he felt progress. "I was not that far," Nadal said. "That's my feeling."

His demeanour further underlined what has been increasingly clear over the past few weeks. If this really is the end and retirement is imminent it will be because his body made the decision, not his mind. It seems clear that the player who turns 38 next week would love to further elongate his career and he is determined to do everything possible to try.

A month ago, Nadal returned to competition in Barcelona and Madrid still unsure about whether he would even make it to Roland Garros. He had good reason to doubt. After the countless physical issues he has endured, from hip surgery to complications and many unrelated injuries, his ambitions were low. He simply wanted to be sure his body could physically withstand the load of competing at the highest level across the best of five sets.

By those parameters, Nadal's presence at Roland Garros was actually a step forward. He made it back to the most important court of his career performing at a decent level, he made life uncomfortable for one of the tournament favourites, and he departed still feeling in good physical shape.

Nadal felt he could have beaten many other players in this year's field, and a better draw would have allowed him the opportunity to build his form round by round. Roland Garros came too late in his recovery and he was handed a nightmare draw, but it was easier to accept than being out of the game without a hope of making progress.

"I cannot tell you if I will be or not will be [ready] in one month and a half, because my body has been a jungle for two years. You don't know what to expect. I wake up one day and I found a snake biting me. Another day a tiger," Nadal said, smiling. "[It] has been a big fight with all the things that I went through, no? But the dynamic is positive the last few weeks. I felt ready. I think tomorrow I will be ready to play again if I have to. But I will not have to."

On the court, being able to train consistently for five weeks has allowed Nadal to gradually improve, and to eventually reach the point where he was able to train without limitations this week for the first time in 15 months. He has also been travelling with his entire family, including his parents, wife and, for the first time, his son. After such a difficult period, he has been able to return to the familiar lifestyle of a tennis player, a sensation that has been energising.

This has been a fascinating period for farewells and the varying motivations of players late in their careers. Last week Dominic Thiem, who faced Nadal in consecutive French Open finals in 2018 and 2019, affirmatively contested his final French Open at 30 years old, losing in the qualifying draw.

After injuries and burnout, it was unusual and interesting to hear Thiem describe his decision to retire in logical and rational terms. He argued that continuing into his late 30s, like Nadal and his rivals, is still abnormal. "I had a very intense career," Thiem said. "I don't really feel like I'm 30 or 31, I feel tennis-wise a bit older, to be honest, so that was very intense."

Despite his long list of injuries and ailments, Nadal does not appear to have reached that point. He is still determined to commit himself to the work ahead, to push himself to see how far he can go. The looming question over the coming months will be whether his body ultimately scuppers those ambitions. Limiting the risk of injury will also likely mean no Wimbledon. After his struggles, the prospect of switching from clay to grass and then back to clay in time for the Olympics in late July is too risky for him to compete on grass.

"I need to give myself a little bit longer chances to see if my level is growing and my body is holding, and then let's make a decision," Nadal said. "But give me two months till Olympics, and then let's see if I am able to keep going or I say: 'OK guys, it's more than enough.' Let's see."



Rafael Nadal departed Roland Garros after defeat in the first round



▼ Novak Djokovic progressed to the second round in straight sets
LISI NIESNER/REUTERS

Djokovic plays it cool to overcome wildcard Herbert

Novak Djokovic	6	7	6
Serbia, 1			
Pierre-Hugues Herbert	4	6	4
France			

Tumaini Carayol
Roland Garros

Novak Djokovic arrived in Paris for his French Open title defence with ample reasons to doubt himself. He is struggling badly for form, there has been a significant upheaval in his support team, and the 98-time ATP title winner still has not even reached a single final this season.

He is still Novak Djokovic, though, and still the best player in the world over the past 52 weeks, meaning his presence alone marks him as one of the tournament favourites and a true force. Last night, he began his title defence in the French capital with a hard-fought 6-4, 7-6 (3), 6-4 victory against Pierre-Hugues Herbert, a French wildcard, to reach the second round.

It was not always easy. In front of a packed, partisan crowd furiously cheering on their own player, Djokovic struggled to summon his best tennis in Herbert's service games as the Frenchman kept Djokovic at bay with his wicked kick serve and forays into the net.

"Monte Carlo, Rome, and Geneva tournaments started really well for me," Djokovic said.

"First matches I played were great. Then second matches, third matches was quite different. So I don't want to get too excited.

"I thought it was a good performance for me, solid. Of course I could have done better, I think, on return games, but also credit to him for serving very well, for changing things up, for seeing every time I would step back for second serve, you know, give him a little bit different look, he would see that, he would come in."

While Djokovic was still far from his best, with too many unforced errors off both groundstrokes during the second set, he was sharper in the decisive moments. From 5-6 in the second set, Djokovic won nine of the next 10 points, establishing a 5-1 lead in the tiebreak before easily seeing out the set. After struggling to break Herbert down on his serve throughout the final set, he sealed the match as the Frenchman's resistance finally fell and he served a double-fault on match point.

This event marks Djokovic's first grand slam tournament since splitting with his longtime coach Goran Ivanisevic, and after travelling on the ATP tour with the former doubles No 1 Nenad Zimonjic he is joined in Paris by Boris Bosnjakovic, who previously worked as head coach in Djokovic's tennis centre in Belgrade.

> *'I feel a bit embarrassed ... anything but a title is not satisfactory'*
> **Novak Djokovic**

Djokovic's attempts to gain match-play and rhythm in Geneva last week only added further question marks to his current level of play as he fell in the semi-finals against Tomas Machac. Before the tournament, Djokovic had described his approach to the tournament as having "low expectations and high hopes" but he also noted he came here to win.

"I almost feel a bit embarrassed to say what my expectations are. Anything but a title for me is not satisfactory," he said. "So it always has been like that. I know, it might sound arrogant to a lot of people, but I think I have the career that backs it up."

Now he is in the game, the goal, as usual, will be to build his form and work his way into the tournament in time to face tougher opponents in the rounds ahead. Djokovic will next face Roberto Carballés Baena of Spain, a natural clay-courter who will attempt to test Djokovic's patience in long, grinding rallies.

After numerous questions of his motivation and energy in some of his matches this year, Djokovic said he was particularly pleased with how he conducted himself throughout the victory, as his mind shifts towards round two: "Again, this is only one match here," he said.

"So we have to see, see how I progress in the tournament, how the feeling evolves, but it was good. You know, I was fist-pumping, I was focused, I was there, I was present. So I'm pleased with the way at least I behaved or had a mindset on the court. That was something that I was looking for. And where are you going to feel that way if not in grand slam?

"So it's something that I have been saying from the beginning of the year and from the last whatever years that grand slams are the ones that are basically getting me up from the bed every day and knowing that I have to hit the practice courts."

British hopes end at Roland Garros as pigeons leave Evans in a flap

Boulter beaten 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 by Badosa after impressive opening set from British No 1

Tumaini Carayol
Roland Garros

A miserable tournament for Great Britain's singles players at the French Open came to an end last night as difficult defeats for Katie Boulter and Dan Evans meant that British players have failed to win a singles match in Paris for the first time since 2020.

Shortly after Evans was outclassed 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 by the 13th seed Holger Rune in their well-contested first-round match, Katie Boulter put herself in position to record a stellar win against the former world No 2 Paula Badosa before narrowly losing 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 in an excellent battle late last night. With their defeats, British players in the men's and women's singles draws finished with a 0-6 record at the French Open this year.

"Honestly, I can't speak for the others," Boulter said. "I can only speak for myself and I've worked so hard to be in this position and I've just lost out in the finest of margins. Ultimately, I've done the best that I can and I will keep doing the very best that I can and put my heart on the line every single match I can play."

Additionally, this is only the fourth time in the 21st century that no British male player has managed to reach the second round in the French Open. "It's just been a bit of a tough tournament I think," Evans said. "I think we're actually in the best spot we've been in with the clay for a long time. I think Draper will win a lot of matches here, everywhere. I just think it's a bit of not a great tournament."

After his defeat, which pushed him to 3-13 on the ATP this year, Evans described himself as "fed up with the umpires, flat full stop" after a second umpiring controversy in as many tournaments following an umpiring mistake during his match against Fabio Fognini in Rome.

This time Rune and the umpire, Jaume Campistol, argued with Evans as he led 4-2, 15-15 on his serve in the third set. Evans lost the subsequent three points, allowing Rune immediately to break back, and he lost four games in a row to lose the match.

"The match was flowing great and then fucking just stopped in the middle and I don't understand what the umpire's ... but anyway, that's not the reason I lost and that's just part of the issue, part of the problem, but he'll be back in work again tomorrow," Evans said. "On the whole the umpiring is good. The clay is a difficult surface. But definitely having a conversation on somebody else's serve, you don't see it in any other sport. In rugby they get 10 metres or whatever, squash you're not allowed, it's no talking. We just sit there and have a conversation. We've seen many cases of it."

Evans will remain in Paris to join Andy Murray in the doubles as the first non-French pair to receive a men's doubles wildcard in 20 years, and Boulter will pair with Heather Watson as they face Chan Hao-ching and Veronika Kudermetova today.

Roland Garros had to wave a third emotional farewell in three days after Alizé Cornet lost her first-round match. Sales of tissues must have rocketed in Paris after the departure of Murray on Sunday, and then the 14-time champion Rafael Nadal's goodbye 24 hours later. The popular Frenchwoman Cornet announced last month that she would be retiring after this year's home tournament.

The 34-year-old former world No 11, who twice made the fourth round at Roland Garros, bowed out of her 20th French Open tournament with a 6-2, 6-1 defeat against the seventh seed, Zheng Qinwen, on Court Philippe-Chatrier.



▲ *Pigeons took the eye on court but did little for Dan Evans's focus*





◀ *Dan Evans (left) and Katie Boulter (right) were knocked out of the French Open in the first round to leave no British singles players standing in Paris*

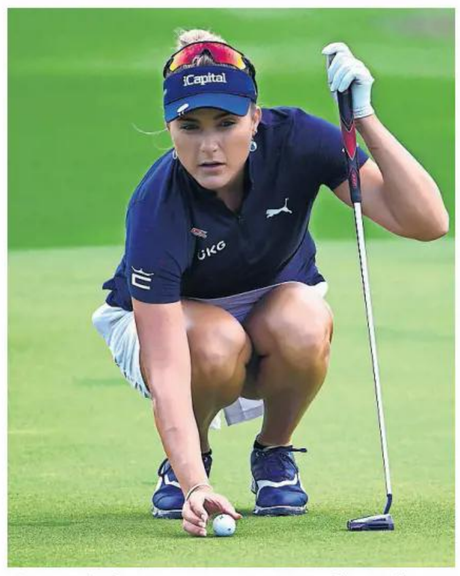
DIMITAR DILKOFF/ AFP/GETTY IMAGES; LISI NIESNER/REUTERS

Sport In brief

Athletics

Former gold medallist Braz handed doping ban

Thiago Braz da Silva, the Brazilian pole vaulter who won Olympic gold on home soil in 2016, has been banned for 16 months after he was found to have violated anti-doping regulations. In a statement, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said Braz was deemed to have breached the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules (ADR 2.1) relating to "presence of a prohibited substance or its metabolites or markers in an athlete's sample". Braz is set to miss this summer's Games in Paris as a result of his ban. The 30-year-old, who also set an Olympic record of 6.03m at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, has filed an appeal with the court of arbitration for sport (Cas). Braz has been suspended since last July, when he tested positive for the banned substance ostarine glucuronide, which he said he inadvertently consumed through sports supplements. Braz has argued that he did not knowingly use the substance as he had been given supplements containing ostarine by his sports nutritionist to improve his health and had been assured that none of the supplements contained banned substances. Ostarine is used to enhance muscle growth and athletic performance. The AIU is considering an appeal after it had sought a four-year ban for Braz. The disciplinary tribunal ruled that he had not manifestly disregarded the risk, which he had been informed of, because he relied on his medical team for advice. **Reuters**



▲ *Lexi Thompson was 12 when she qualified for the US Open in 2007*

Golf

Solheim Cup star Thompson to retire

Lexi Thompson has announced she will retire from full-time golf at the end of the season. Thompson, 29, an 11-time LPGA Tour winner who appeared in the Solheim Cup six times, said in an audio letter on Instagram that she will be "stepping away from a full professional golf schedule" at the end of 2024. Currently preparing to compete at the US Women's Open in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Thompson said: "While it is never easy to say goodbye, it is indeed time. At the end of 2024, I will be stepping away from a full professional golf schedule. I'm looking forward to the next chapter of my life. Time with family, friends, and my trusted companion, Leo." Thompson burst on to the world scene as a 12-year-old in 2007 when she became the US Open's youngest-ever qualifier at the time. She then spent nine years, from 2013 to 2022, as a permanent fixture in the top 10 rankings, represented the US at both the 2016 and 2020 Olympics and will be appearing in her 18th successive US Open this week. **PA Media**

Results

Football

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY
Indonesia 5 Singapore 1

Cricket

THIRD MEN'S T20 INTERNATIONAL
Cardiff England v Pakistan. Match abandoned, rain.

Tennis

FRENCH OPEN (Paris)

Men: First round: T FRITZ (US, 12) bt F Coria (Arg) 2-6 6-1 6-2 6-1; **A Davidovich Fokina** (Sp) bt V Vacherot (Mnc) 4-6 6-2 6-2 7-6 (7-2); **J Munar** (Sp) bt R Bautista (Sp) 6-1 4-6 6-4 6-1; **T Machac** (Cz) bt N Borges (Por) 7-6 (7-3) 6-4 6-3; **A DE MINAUR** (Aus, 11) bt A Michelsen (US) 6-1 6-0 6-2; M NAVONE (Arg, 31) bt P Carreño (Sp) 5-7 6-1 6-3 6-0; **A Rinderknech** (Fr) bt A Walton (Aus) 6-2 6-4 7-5; **C RUUD** (Nor, 7) bt F Alves (Br) 6-3 6-4 6-3; **T ETCHEVERRY** (Arg, 28) bt A Cazaux (Fr) 3-6 6-2 6-1 6-4; **G Zeppieri** (It) bt A MANNARINO (Fr, 22) 4-6 6-2 6-1 6-2; **D Goffin** (Bel) bt G Mpetshi Perricard (Fr) 4-6 6-4 6-3 6-7 (4-7) 6-3; **R Carballés Baena** (Sp) bt C Lestienne (Fr) 6-3 7-5 4-6 6-2; **J Struff** (Ger) bt R Burruchaga (Arg) 6-3 6-2 6-1; **F Cobolli** (It) bt H Medjedovic (Ser) 6-2 6-3 6-7 (2-7) 6-3; **L Darderi** (It) bt R Hijikata (Aus) 6-3 7-6 (8-6) 6-1; **H RUNE** (Den, 13) bt D Evans (UK) 6-4 6-4 6-4; **T GRIEKSPOOR** (Neth, 26) bt M McDonald (US) 6-3 6-4 1-6 6-2; **N DJOKOVIC** (Ser, 1) bt P Herbert (Fr) 6-4 7-6 (7-3) 6-4; T Kokkinakis (Aus) bt A Popyrin (Aus) 4-6 7-6 (10-8) 6-3 5-7 6-3; **A BUBLIK** (Kaz, 19) bt G Barrère (Fr) 6-4 7-5 6-3.

Women: First round: D KASATKINA (Rus, 10) bt M Frech (Pol) 7-5 6-1; **A SABALENKA** (Blr, 2) bt E Andreeva (Rus) 6-1 6-2; **A Rus** (Neth) bt A Kerber (Ger) 6-4 6-3; **P Stearns** (US) bt L Ciric Bagaric (Cro) 6-3 6-7 (8-10) 7-6 (8-6); **T Korpatsch** (Ger) bt A Krueger (US) 4-6 6-4 7-6 (11-9); **E Avanesyan** (Rus) bt Zhu L (Chn) 6-2 6-4; **A Blinkova** (Rus) bt S CIRSTEA (Rom, 28) 6-3 3-6 7-6 (7-5); **E MERTENS** (Bel, 25) bt ML Carlé (Arg) 6-3 7-6 (10-8); **P Martic** (Cro) bt K Mladenovic (Fr) 6-4 6-4; **ZHENG Q** (Chn, 7) bt A Cornet (Fr) 6-2 6-1; **E RYBAKINA** (Kaz, 4) bt G Minnen (Bel) 6-2 6-3; **M Andreeva** (Rus) bt E Bektas (US) 6-2 6-3; **M Sherif** (Egy) bt Yuan Y (Chn) 6-1 6-3; **E NAVARRO** (US, 22) bt Z Sonmez (Tur) 6-2 6-0; **M KEYS** (US, 14) bt R Zarazúa (Mex) 6-3 6-2; **S Errani** (It) bt AK Schmiedlova (Svk) 6-3 6-2; **M Uchijima** (Jpn) bt I Burillo Escorihuela (Sp) 6-1 6-1; **Y Putintseva** (Kaz) bt S Stephens (US) 6-1 6-2; **V AZARENKA** (Blr, 19) v N Podoroska (Arg) 6-1 6-0; P Badosa (Sp) bt K BOULTER (GB, 26) 4-6 7-5 6-4.

Basketball

NBA PLAYOFFS
Conference finals Indiana 102 Boston 105 (Boston won 4-0); Dallas L Minnesota L (Dallas lead 3-0)

Ice hockey

NHL PLAYOFFS
Conference finals Edmonton 3 Dallas 5 (Dallas lead 2-1); Florida L New York Rangers L (New York Rangers lead 2-1)

Greg Wood's racing tips

Beverley **1.40** Unthinkable **2.10** Powdering **2.40** Puella Law **3.10** She's Got Bottle **3.40** Scarriff **4.10** Cloudy Rose **4.40** Jamih **5.15** Opal Storm

Newton Abbot **2.28** Walk Of The Roses **2.58** Juniper **3.28** Coconut Twist **3.58** Monjules **4.28** Phoenix Way **5.03** Our Dylan

Hamilton **2.50** Milford **3.20** Ebony Maw **3.50** Contacto **4.20** Catherine Chroi **4.50** Arkenstaar (nb) **5.20** We Still Believe (nap)

Cartmel **5.50** Haarar **6.20** Toscan Genius **6.50** Imperial Data **7.20** Ilikedwayurthinkin **7.50** Augharue **8.20** Dreal Deal **8.50** Gaboriot

Kempton **5.42** Embarked **6.12** Bint Havana Gold **6.42** Cervaro Della Sala **7.12** Change Sings **7.42** Brindavan **8.12** Bigger Than Giga **8.42** Gold Aura

Fixtures

Football
Uefa Europa Conference League
Final Olympiakos v Fiorentina, Athens (8pm)
UEFA Under-17 Men's European Championship
Quarter-finals Austria v Serbia (6pm); Czech Republic v Denmark (3.30pm)
Women's international friendlies
Curaçao v Aruba (midnight); Guatemala v Chile (10pm); Mali v Seychelles (2pm); Tanzania v South Sudan (5pm)

Cricket
Third women's one-day international
England v Pakistan, Chelmsford (1pm)

Ice hockey
NHL playoffs
Conference finals Edmonton v Dallas (1.30am)

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Sport

French Open
Roland Garros pain for Boulter and Evans as they crash out



Page 51 →

Fire starter
Farrell fully charged up for one final push with Saracens



Page 48 →



PETER BYRNE/PA

“‘I’d have a bus parade’
Jürgen Klopp says final farewell and lines up party if City are found guilty

Andy Hunter Page 47 →

Ratcliffe offers United staff early bonus if they resign

Exclusive
Jamie Jackson

Manchester United staff have been offered early payment of an annual bonus if they resign by next Wednesday, as part of Sir Jim Ratcliffe’s edict to get all employees into the club’s offices and his push to trim the workforce.

United have made it compulsory from 1 June for staff to work from their offices in either Manchester or London rather than at home. Staff were informed in an email yesterday that anyone who does not wish to conform can quit and claim their bonus early for this season.

It is understood the terms are also on offer to those who work exclusively from the offices but want to take the opportunity to leave with a payoff. The bonus, which will otherwise be paid in September, can be worth four-figure sums for some staff. United employees have until noon next Wednesday to confirm they wish to resign.

The email said of the office-only policy: “Whilst many have welcomed our new approach, we are aware that a number of colleagues prefer not to commit to this new way of working and are keen to understand their options. With this feedback in mind and the fact that we respect each colleague’s right to choose their approach to work, we will allow those who wish to resign now to claim their bonus early for this season if they cannot work from our offices from 1 June.”

United believe, the email said, that “a return to office will bring substantial benefits for individuals, teams, and the wider club and support our journey to return Manchester United to footballing success”.

A United spokesperson said: “This isn’t a voluntary redundancy programme. The club 47 →



Sir Jim Ratcliffe wants his staff working in the office full-time

Ring of steel
Wembley beefs up security for Champions League showpiece

Nick Ames

Wembley will implement its biggest security operation for the Champions League final on Saturday in an effort to avoid any repeat of the chaos that has surrounded recent showpiece events at home and abroad.

More than 2,500 stewards will oversee crowds attending the match between Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund, while a £5m investment in beefed-up infrastructure is intended to ensure the scenes that marred the Euro 2020 final are not repeated.

A review into the disorder that unfolded three years ago found that more than 2,000 people gained access to the national stadium without tickets, with a further 6,000 outside waiting to charge the gates in the event that England defeated Italy.

With the 2022 Champions League final in Paris having been brought to the brink of disaster by organisational failures, and the event in Istanbul last year also being heavily criticised, there is pressure on Uefa and local authorities to hold a trouble-free event this time.

“It’s vital we deliver and do everything we can control in the best possible way,” said the FA’s tournaments, events and interim stadium director, Chris Bryant. “We want this event to be as successful as possible for every reason, not least for the fans and the event in itself, but we know a lot of people will think about the [Euro 2020] final as well. We are in a really good place, we’ve been planning in detail for 18 months.”

> ***‘We’ve been planning in detail for 18 months’***
>
> **Chris Bryant**
> *Interim stadium director*

Those measures have included a strengthening of all Wembley’s doors, with a further lock system added. Some supporters attempted to rip emergency exit doors open during the dangerous scenes in July 2021, which were detailed recently in a Netflix documentary. New gates and perimeter fencing have also been erected while a “Zone X” control room will monitor movement in areas outside the stadium. Stewards will be fitted with extra body cameras and there is an expectation the digital ticketing implemented by Uefa will deter touts.

Fans will face two checks, the first at the stadium’s outer secure perimeter, before presenting their tickets for entry. Organisers have received intelligence that a number of ticketless Dortmund supporters may arrive in London for the occasion, although not in a quantity that currently poses concern; confidence is high that the plan to ensure only ticketed visitors approach the stadium is robust.

Dortmund fans will have access to a 20,000-capacity 47 →

The Rafah attacks are part of Israel's brutal, losing strategy *Paul Rogers, page 3*

Yes, your pint is short – but try not to complain *Imogen West-Knights, page 4*

Morgan Spurlock, film-maker best known for Super Size Me *Obituaries, page 6*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Wednesday 29 May 2024

Journal

Opinion and ideas



Prepare for a Tory storm – and unexpected dividing lines

Henry Hill



Populism is one of those political words that conceals as much as it illuminates. While I'm sure there are academics who could give me some rigorous definition, like most political insults it is thrown about with relative abandon, and often signifies nothing more than dislike of this or that policy. But one version of it I've found useful when writing about the Conservative party is its current habit – on issue after issue – of speaking loudly while carrying a very small stick.

This is how we have ended up in the weird position of many commentators talking about the government in blood-curdling terms; not just populist, but sometimes "far right" too, when its actual record is anything but, for the most part. Rishi Sunak's main priorities were banning smoking and reforming A-levels, hardly policies to set the heart racing.

At the same time, voters to whom all the rhetoric, and individual policies such as the Rwanda scheme, is supposed to appeal are left cold by the substance of the government's programme. Even if ministers *had* managed to get a plane in the air before the election, would that really have offset their overseeing the highest levels of net immigration in modern history?

The prime minister's proposal of bringing back national service is in exactly the same vein. Labour will be able to fire up younger voters with the threat of conscription, while voters who support national service will be disappointed to learn it's not conventional conscription at all (only about 4% of 18-year-olds would be able to do the military component – and not one of them in combat roles).

With the result of the election an all but foregone conclusion, attention is already starting to turn to what happens to the Conservative party afterwards, and understanding this gulf between rhetoric and reality will be essential to making any sense of the battle to come. Because despite what the tone of much of the coverage might suggest, it is actually more complicated (and much more interesting) than a straightforward clash between moderate centrists and rightwingers, at least in the medium term.

There will, of course, be the usual struggle between realists and utopians that afflicts parties that lose power. Free from the responsibilities of office, every wing of the Conservative party will be at liberty to make bold claims about what it would have accomplished if only its ideas had been given a chance. But the split between

ILLUSTRATION: THOMAS PULLIN

* **Henry Hill** *is deputy editor of the website Conservative Home*

Prepare for a Tory storm – and unexpected dividing lines

Henry Hill

← *Continued from front*

the utopians and the pragmatists won't necessarily map directly on to the split between rightwingers and centrists.

Guardian readers won't need me to tell them about the right's proclivity to descend into fantasy politics. But moderates aren't immune to it either: the politics of being sensible can too easily stray into the politics of the easy, short-term decision, even as the long-term costs become increasingly unsustainable.

There is, after all, nothing especially "realistic" about refusing to face up to unsustainable projections of Britain's public spending obligations, importing hundreds of thousands of people a year into an acute housing crisis or talking a big game about Britain's place in a more dangerous world without making plans to spend substantially more on defence.

Rightwing MPs have bad answers on all those issues and more, of course, and are just as prone to failing to walk the walk on their key issues; many are the law and order hardliners who have fiercely resisted the construction of a new prison or asylum processing facility in their constituency.

That doesn't, however, mean they're always wrong. When Robert Jenrick says half measures on immigration don't work, or Miriam Cates that our taxation, childcare and welfare systems are skewed against families, they have a point. Even if you don't agree with their answers, they are at least acknowledging the real trade-offs involved in making policy – choices that successive ministers have tried for too long to sweep under the carpet.

A Conservative party that engaged more seriously with the consequences of its policy preferences would lead to a more coherent programme for government, a better choice for voters and more honest politics.

But it wouldn't necessarily be a Conservative party that progressive or liberal commentators actually *liked* any more than the present one. Politics is not a two-dimensional spectrum where the measure of a good party is simply how close to the "middle" it is.

I'm often asked whether the party will move to the right after the election or tack back towards the sort of politics it offered under David Cameron. This seems like a misleading binary: was Boris Johnson's red wall-winning 2019 offer, with its promises of higher spending and focus on so-called left-behind areas, more "rightwing" than the southern-focused, austerity-centred one of 10 years before?

What about using the power of the state to rebuild Britain's domestic industrial base versus favouring the free movement of capital and labour and letting the market sort it out? Restructuring the tax and benefit systems to better support families versus trying to maximise workforce participation and wring every last drop of GDP out of each potential worker?

On a host of questions, it isn't immediately obvious which option is more "rightwing", except for the vibe given off by the people who advocate it. For that reason, the eventual battle lines of the great Tory reckoning might surprise outsiders.

Liz Truss and Danny Kruger are both on the "Tory right", for instance, but their economic priorities and principles could not be further apart. A "moderate" One Nation MP might easily favour different policies over an equally "moderate" Treasury drone. And the eventual winner, should one emerge, will be the person or faction who can build an agenda in which every faction plays a role – on the winner's terms.

It's too early to know what such a settlement will look like. But there are parts of each faction's agenda that tessellate better than others: deregulation to unlock housebuilding, for instance, or a focus on training, productivity and wage growth as essential to weaning our economy off its dependence on imported labour.

That will take a while to work out. In the immediate aftermath of the election, recrimination will be uppermost in many Conservatives' minds. The ones who conquer that instinct fastest will have a head start on defining the future of the party.

The Guardian

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Israel

Joe Biden should back a UN security council resolution to end the fighting in Gaza

The Israeli strike that killed at least 45 displaced Palestinians, many of them women and children, at a tent camp in Rafah this weekend clearly crossed Joe Biden's "red line" over the need to protect civilians in the Gaza conflict. France's Emmanuel Macron did not doubt what should happen next. "These operations must stop," he posted on X. "There are no safe areas in Rafah for Palestinian civilians. I call for full respect for international law and an immediate ceasefire."

Those in Israel who believe that they still need to make an appearance of deference towards US sentiments pleaded that the whole episode was a "mishap" rather than a deliberate political insult. Mr Biden is inclined to give Israel's forces the benefit of the doubt, and give himself wriggle room to say his line hadn't been crossed. Despite the international outcry over Sunday's deadly blast, Israel stepped up its military offensive yesterday, sending tanks into Rafah and leaving a score more civilians dead when it apparently struck a tented area.

The US president defends Israel's right to retaliate against Hamas for the murderous rampage it carried out on 7 October. But Israel's indiscriminate use of tactics and weapons has caused disproportionate harm to a civilian population deprived of humanitarian assistance. Aryeh Neier, the founder of Human Rights Watch, wrote that he has become persuaded that "Israel is engaged in genocide against Palestinians in Gaza".

A perceived lack of sympathy for the Palestinians has also harmed prospects for Mr Biden's re-election. But resolving the conflict is a moral rather than an electoral question. The US should back a UN security council resolution to end the fighting, as Mr Macron suggested on Tuesday. Mr Biden's support for Mr Netanyahu has wavered. In March the US declined to use its veto to block a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire. Mr Biden moved again in April when the Israel Defense Forces killed seven foreign aid workers.

But the US has actively shielded its ally from a bitter reckoning over the Gazan war. Washington even went as far as to belittle South Africa's case before the international court of justice, which last week issued provisional orders to "prevent the commission of acts" in Gaza that violate the genocide convention.

Mr Biden's decision to stand by Israel in this manner risks undermining the rules-based international order that America should be defending. In fact, the US may itself face legal consequences for being complicit in international crimes, should genocide be established in Gaza. The nub of the problem is that Israel thinks its needs are exceptional, and the US all too readily agrees. When the chief prosecutor of the international criminal court said on Friday that he was seeking arrest warrants for senior Hamas and Israeli officials for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the US secretary of state shamefully threatened to impose sanctions on the court.

It will probably take more than a threat from The Hague to change a mafioso mindset. An investigation by the Guardian and the Israeli-based magazines +972 and Local Call revealed how Israel has spent the best part of a decade attempting to intimidate the court into dropping its investigations into Israeli war crimes – with its top spy chief personally involved in the campaign. The country's leaders believe that they can operate above the law. It is incumbent upon allies, particularly the US, to disabuse Israel of this notion.

Rail transport

Incompetence and wrong priorities are driving a vital industry into the buffers

The vertiginous pace of events since Boris Johnson's 2019 election victory has been such that pledges made only a few years ago seem almost to belong to another era. "I am a great believer in rail," said Mr Johnson in 2021, announcing a major programme of reforms to the country's network, "but for too long passengers have not had the level of service they deserve."

Travellers habituated to late-running, overcrowded and over-expensive trains knew how right he was. But to reprise the famous assertion of Mr Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, three years on "nothing has changed". This week, the last word on successive Conservative governments' incompetent handling of the railways was delivered by the House of Commons public accounts committee. The MPs' damning report concluded that since the "root and branch" Williams review was commissioned in 2018, following timetabling mayhem in the north of England, "very little" has been achieved, and that "no one is putting the needs of passengers and taxpayers first".

Taken in the round, the multiple failures of recent rail policy betray a staggering level of strategic incoherence, contradictory priorities and misguided short-termism. The hapless handling of HS2, and the wilful neglect of northern England's dated network, amounted to a masterclass in mismanagement. For a while, the west coast mainline went into almost total meltdown. The MPs noted that, while the Department for Transport worked constructively with the rail unions during the pandemic, that approach didn't last. And the creation of a much-heralded new public body, Great British Railways (GBR) – intended to act as a guiding mind overseeing services and infrastructure – was allowed to fall off the parliamentary agenda by an uninterested Rishi Sunak. Shunting GBR into the sidings has led to stasis and inertia, as key stakeholders wait to see what happens next.

Perhaps most damagingly of all, the report suggests that cost-cutting ordered by Whitehall risks shrinking industry revenue by making rail travel less attractive. This would be boneheaded, myopic economics at the best of times, fuelling a depressing spiral of decline. In an era when investment in green public transport of all kinds is an environmental priority, it is also a deeply irresponsible approach to take. Meanwhile, the delays and no-shows continue to stack up; almost 14% of trains were late in 2022/23, while cancellations were at record levels earlier this year.

A new parliament will offer an opportunity to turn the page on this dismal record. Journeying from Johnsonian empty rhetoric to the counterproductive and shortsighted bean-counting of the Sunak premiership, successive Conservative governments have taken our railways down a policy dead end. The Labour party's commitment to nationalise the network during a first term in office suggests an overdue shift to viewing our train services primarily as a vital public good, rather than as a business like any other.

The ferocious recent backlash against plans to close station ticket offices underlined the extent to which that perspective is shared by the British public. But Westminster policymakers, beguiled for decades by marketising rhetoric, have failed to keep up. After a period in which the shambolic running of the railways has become an emblem of national dysfunction, this week's public accounts committee report should be seen as a full stop at the end of a sorry chapter. Time for a new departure.

These Rafah attacks are part of Israel's brutal, losing strategy

Paul Rogers



The killing of at least 45 Palestinians in a humanitarian zone near Rafah has caused anger that reaches far beyond the Middle East. And yet Israel's offensive is expected to continue, with several Israeli tanks spotted in the centre of Rafah yesterday, witnesses told Reuters news agency. It comes after the international criminal court sought arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, along with three senior Hamas leaders – all for alleged war crimes.

Separately, the international court of justice demanded that Israel cease its assault on Rafah. And for a few days last week, there seemed to be signs that Israel was refraining from an all-out assault.

This has ended with the bombing of the Tal al-Sultan area, where the IDF onslaught caused a huge blaze in a tented area for displaced people. Netanyahu may describe the airstrike as a tragic accident, but that cuts little ice after more than seven months of constant Israeli attacks.

The Netanyahu government has repeatedly stated that Israel is using force directed against Hamas, not civilians, but this is at odds with the actual conduct of this war and the whole Israeli way of fighting. Right from the start, the IDF was extending attacks well beyond Hamas's paramilitary units. Schools, hospitals, water treatment plants and the like were all early targets, as were journalists, aid workers and medical staff.

This use of "disproportionate force" may constitute an extension of the Dahiya doctrine, which is thought to have originated in a district of Beirut in the 2006 war in Lebanon against Hezbollah. It stems from an IDF acceptance, rarely admitted in public, that it is nearly impossible to defeat an entrenched urban insurgency.

Under the Dahiya doctrine, protracted and widespread force is used against the general civilian population in order to achieve two specific aims: to undermine the support for an insurgency, and to act as a deterrent to future paramilitary movements of any kind. To put it bluntly, what has been done to Gaza is what will happen to any movement that challenges Israeli security, there or elsewhere.

But to understand the carnage, destruction and killings of the current war, and why Netanyahu retains sufficient support to continue it, two other elements must be recognised. One is the lasting impact of the Hamas assault last year. The Israeli losses on 7 October have shaken Israeli society to the core.

For decades now, Israel has existed in a security contradiction: apparently impregnable yet consistently insecure, because of the fundamental conflict over land and peoples. This "insecurity trap" will persist indefinitely unless a just settlement with the Palestinians can be achieved.

The second element is that the war is going badly for the Israelis. Despite the IDF's massive use of force and the destruction of much of Gaza, Hamas survives and keeps on reconstituting itself.

The IDF failure was already becoming clear several months ago, but the Netanyahu government has nowhere else to go, and the US president, Joe Biden, will not yet take the one key step of cutting off all arms shipments to Israel. As long as the US, and indeed Britain, refuses to accept the ICC and ICJ decisions, Netanyahu can survive.

There is, however, one hopeful sign: that the public mood in Israel is slowly but surely changing, as the Guardian's Bethan McKernan and Quique Kierszenbaum reported on Monday. After last October's attack by Hamas, 70% of Israelis thought the war should continue until Hamas was eliminated, but one recent poll found that 62% thought that goal was now impossible.

Israel remains a deeply polarised society, but that means it is just possible that an end to the war could come from within.



A Palestinian man inspects damage to makeshift tents in Rafah yesterday after an Israeli attack PHOTOGRAPH: ANADOLU/GETTY

* **Paul Rogers** *is emeritus professor of peace studies at Bradford University*

Starmer versus Sunak, times six? Cancel my TV licence

Zoe Williams



For the 2008 televised vice-presidential debate in the United States, Sarah Palin was opposite Joe Biden. Reportedly, she'd so frustrated the efforts of her team to get her on point with her arguments that they had simply taught her 40 minutes' worth of script. She says at one point: "I may not answer the questions that either the moderator or you want to hear." Which is to say: I can't answer the question unless it corresponds directly to a gobbet I prepared earlier.

When you put one agile politician against one who has learned some patriotic lines by rote and has no intention of engaging with the questions, the whole thing is inert. So nobody can win in the classic sense, which means the less impressive party has scored a victory by definition. You can ask a sample of the audience for verdicts in real time, but you'll never get to the heart of what happened because there was no button for "I got bored and stopped listening."

So the real jeopardy of a TV debate – especially in these times, when politicians will say literally anything – is to enter the studio as the more serious figure. You'll go in with your galaxy brain, and you'll come out no better than anyone else. Or were you better? Nobody will be able to remember. They got bored and stopped listening.

Rishi Sunak knew that his demand of six debates against Starmer between now and 4 July was unreasonable and pointless. If, in some brain-melt moment, Starmer actually agrees, by the sixth debate voters will be equally sick of everyone involved.

Historically, British prime ministers have refused to debate for precisely this reason – because the format is at least as likely to alienate voters as it is to convince them. Gordon Brown's motivation in being the first prime minister to agree to a debate, in 2010, is opaque. Some mornings he must have woken up feeling he had nothing to gain; on others he must have thought he was up against such lightweights, in David Cameron and Nick Clegg, that all the country needed was to see a giant among pipsqueaks and we'd understand. The result, of course, was Cleggmania.

If I were Starmer, I would refuse to debate with Sunak at all, and instead offer to debate with the Greens, the Lib Dems and Reform (the SNP and Plaid Cymru also welcome). That could yield quite an interesting four-way, in which the progressive parties made an honest account *for once* of how much tactical voting and campaigning they were hoping for from their supporters, and what kind of goodwill and consensus they could build in return.

Instead, Starmer has already agreed to two debates, despite having said many times that he already knows what Sunak is going to say. So he's setting us up for boredom. Or perhaps, with so little to gain, he's even hoping to dent the viewing figures.



Yes, your pint is short – but try not to complain

Imogen West-Knights



I have frequently felt robbed at the pub. You know the feeling. Tapping your card on the reader and seeing £6.70 drain from your bank account in exchange for the most average glass of IPA in the world; doing it again, a third, maybe even a fourth time, shuddering internally. News last week, however, confirmed the worst: actually, you really have been getting robbed at the pub.

Last week, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute published a study of drinks served at 77 pubs and bars around the UK. They found that, out of 137 orders of pints, half pints and 175ml glasses of wine, about 70% contained less drink than they were supposed to and 29% of these short measures were under by 5% or more. Beer was the drink where there were the most discrepancies: 86% of orders were short-measured. For the average beer drinker, these losses add up to £88.40 a year of beer paid for and never actually served.

There is, I can't deny, something funny about the notion of clandestine agents roving the country's drinking houses and measuring their pours, down to the millilitre. But let's take these findings seriously. Let us imagine that this is, in fact, one of the most pressing issues facing consumers. And let us focus specifically on beer, as this seems to be where the problems are greatest.

What exactly a perfectly poured beer should look like is a tricky question. Some people like a bit more head on their pint of lager than others.

This argument is reflected in the survey: 23% of people felt that the head should be included in the pint measure, and 35% felt it shouldn't. On the other hand, the Campaign for Real Ale (Camra) – the UN security council of beer-drinking – maintains that the pint measure should not include the head, and that consumers have a right to what it is pleased to call a "100% liquid pint". These are divisive issues.

Some people will happily just look at their pint, see it's a little short, and ask the bartender to top it up. I'm not one of those people. I just can't bring myself to do it, except perhaps in really egregious cases of underpouring. This is because there is a human being standing there who just gave me the pint. We have a culture of OK service in the UK. We don't generally go in for the thrilling rudeness of, say, Parisian waiters, or the obsequious attention you get from US servers. I like it this way. I don't want to feel actively shunned by service staff, but I also don't want to feel like there's a grim-faced manager in the back office whipping my waiter to smile at me more.

And when I worked behind a bar, if someone asked me to top up their beer, especially if the pub was busy, and especially if they did so with a look in their eye that implied I had intentionally shortchanged them, I hated it. I hated them. Oh, do excuse me, did sir want a thimbleful more beer? Will that be all, my liege? Does master's pint meet with his approval now?

Now, from the other side of the bar, and in the face of the concrete figure of £88.40 in lost beer, I sort of see the point of those who ask for the top-up. You buy a pint, you should get a pint. If people didn't get a completely perfect 568.261ml of imperial pint when I was serving, it was because I wasn't careful enough in pouring it. I realise now that I mostly wasn't angry at them. I was angry about being on my feet all day, and the smell of the storage room in the basement, and having a manager who made us watch him do magic tricks and took too much interest in my colleague's recent boob job.

But ... while it might be correct to the letter of the law to get a full imperial pint every time you order one, it does not feel true to the spirit of pints to quibble about it. Of those 86% of beers that were underpoured, the average deficit was only 4%. We are talking about less liquid than a single espresso.

Sure, if someone hands you a beer that is visibly shit – three inches of foam and a clearance of air in the glass on top of that – by all means ask them to finish the job. And if you're in one of those cool beer-bore places where a man in an ironic cap smugly serves you a "schooner" of mango sour for eight complete pounds, it is going to rankle not to get a full glass. All right.

But for marginal cases, suck it up. A pint is, to a point, an idea. It is a lovely yellowy brown glass of "having a nice time". The exact measurement should, rightly, be neither here nor there. Put the tape measure away and enjoy your beer. Cheers.

* **Imogen West-Knights** *is a writer and journalist*

Established 1906

Country diary

Holywell, Flintshire

I'm dipping into one of our garden ponds on a glorious sunny day, as grasses, buttercups, wild blue geraniums, pink lady's smock and red spikes of sorrel sway in the breeze. I've recently been on a workshop on microscopic pond life, where the tutor, Wyn, was well-practised at using a telescopic-handled golf ball retriever for reaching into the middle of ponds with a tiny sample pot. I bring back my catch and peer through a microscope at a single drop.

Rotifers, Desmidiales, *Daphnia*, *Volvox* and tardigrades: it sounds like the cast from Doctor Who. But these are a whole world of tiny organisms – some part animal and part plant, most measured in thousandths of a millimetre – that most people never see, and food for many creatures and plants further up the food chain. There are glassy, ghostly ovals, such as *Euglena*, which use flagellae to whiplash themselves along, or others that exude mucus in order to move.

There are long, flattened rows of algae with lime-green lipid globules – their own fatty food. Ciliates with tiny transparent hairs beating and wafting even tinier creatures into their mouths. So much variety. Many, like the spherical *Volvox*, spiral along with glass-like walls displaying their insides. And at this time of year they are all multiplying, due to higher temperatures and more sunlight.

My two ponds are only about 200 yards apart, but they have different suites of plants and ecology; at first I thought this was because one was acid and the other alkaline, but testing them, I find they are the same: pH 7.6. The bigger one next to the road has more pollution, but its ammonia and nitrates levels are near zero. Bog bean, spearwort and bulrush have choked one but died out in the other. Investigations will continue.

I'm reminded of pond-dipping with my brother many years ago. We made nets out of canes and mother's old stockings. We took home a couple of jam jars and left them on the windowsill. Days later, long tubular things had grown, with a tentacled head and bits budding off. I suddenly remembered the diagrams I had drawn of *Hydra* for O-level biology. Ideally, children should be shown the real things first before having to study them.
Jan Miller

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Make the Tories pay for their crimes against us

Yes, Jonathan Freedland, the Tories' cruelty, neglect and lies are appalling, but they didn't start 14 years ago (Don't forgive or forget: punish these Tories with your votes, 25 May). It was between 1979 and 1997, when they last held power, that the Tories began to degrade everything they touched.

Two items Freedland mentions – rivers and seas polluted with sewage, and the lack of affordable housing – can be traced directly to the privatisation of public assets. We should see that as theft. No matter how hard we punish the Tories, even if they never have power again, it's hard to see how we can regain even the assets given away in the last century, let alone those we are still losing. The long list only starts with libraries, swimming pools and playgrounds. It includes family centres, youth clubs, theatre, art, music, health, heritage, trust, decency – life's essential services, assets and resources shrivelled, as Freedland says, by deliberate neglect.

It's hard to think of what these Conservatives wish to conserve. Depriving them of power for as long as necessary is the most important punishment voters can deliver.
Janet Dubé
Peebles, Scottish Borders

● I agree with Jonathan Freedland's comprehensive damning of David Cameron and George Osborne's disastrous austerity policy. He describes so fluently the appalling damage done to so much crucial infrastructure, water quality, local authority services and low-income families' living standards. And I agree about the insanity of Boris Johnson's shameful behaviour over Brexit.

But I cannot imagine what use punishment could be, however tempting it may feel. Those men are no longer prime minister or chancellor. Those policies, although sadly not their effects, are in the past. All that matters now is what can be done to retrieve what has been lost, and to start rebuilding. Apart from the lunacy of the Rwanda plan, I believe that Rishi Sunak is a good, honest and very intelligent man. How many more of these are there in any of the political parties? We need them more than ever before.

I do not know how I will vote. But wanting to punish old Tories seems the least valuable basis for deciding.
Dione Johnson
Hartley Wintney, Hampshire

● Jonathan Freedland rightly condemns the appalling and destructive record of Tory governments over 14 years, and the many incompetent and dangerous ministers. However, he omits to mention that many of these people have personally profited hugely over this period while citizens have been thrown into poverty and debt.

The vested interests of top Tories, most of whom have large property portfolios, are rarely detailed in any media. These wealthy landlords and their mates will be delighted that the calling of a general election has sunk the (already diluted) renters reform bill; evictions will continue and excessive rents will flourish.
Steve Richards
Bath

● Such eloquence and sad truth in Jonathan Freedland's article. The Tories have indeed degraded everything they have touched – their slash-and-burn policies on public services and the NHS, corruption, hypocrisy, lies, appalling treatment of refugees and more have turned the UK into a difficult place to live. Roll on 4 July, their long-awaited day of reckoning.
Vicky Wolmuth
London

● Jonathan Freedland's article is such a devastatingly accurate critique of the past 14 years that I'm keeping a copy by the front door as a response to Conservative party canvassers.
Stephen Bibby
Silchester, Hampshire

Beware pitfalls of Labour's new towns policy

As a former town planning policy adviser to both Tony Blair and David Cameron, I have only one question about Labour's proposed new towns: who will benefit from the significant increase in land value arising from granting planning permission for them (Labour to pledge new towns by end of first term, 21 May)?

Postwar new town legislation forced landowners to sell land to the state at the existing use value. The surplus from the later resale of the land at market prices paid for infrastructure and affordable housing. Angela Rayner gave no suggestion that Labour would deploy such heavy artillery. But if it does, it would be well advised not to announce new town locations until it has control of the land, "grey belt" or otherwise.

Alternatively, existing tools such as planning obligations and community infrastructure levies could be used to tax this value out of the hands of the landowner beneficiaries, with the proceeds spent locally. These raise £7bn annually across England, mostly in areas under the biggest housing pressure. They could raise much more, helping to pay for the high-quality places that Labour wants, and which neighbouring communities will demand as the price of consent.

One thing is certain. Neither the Treasury nor local authorities can afford a new town policy unless it is accompanied, from the start, by a credible and preferably pre-emptive land value capture strategy of some sort.
Miles Gibson
London

Our universities should not be run for profit

Zoe Williams' article (Students are being ripped off – and we should be raging, 21 May) shows that what is happening in our universities was entirely predictable following the government's misguided attempt to marketise them.

When the teaching grant plus fee of £6,000 was replaced by a student fee of £9,000, universities reacted like lemmings by increasing student numbers to make a profit. The result has been a rise in fixed costs to pay for vast building programmes, and in administrative overheads to deal with more students and increased regulatory demands. The ratio of academic staff to students has barely shifted, classes are crowded and young academics are on insecure short-term contracts.

Students leave with high debt and a punitive payback regime that adds to the public debt on which the Treasury (that's us) pays interest. Universities are about academics and their students, both of whom are in a worse state than before this experiment. If a student fee had to be introduced, at least it could have been on more favourable terms (zero interest, for example) and in return the money spent on a much-improved service for the same number of students, spending the increased money on the things that count.

Relying on overseas students to make up for no increase in home fees and high fixed costs was always a risky policy.
Norman Gowar
Professor emeritus and co-author, English Universities in Crisis

Corrections and clarifications

● **An article said: "EU members Ireland, Norway and Spain formally recognised a Palestinian state". Norway is not a member of the European Union ('There's hate on all sides': Cracks in Israeli unity as conflict drags on, 27 May, p24).**

● **A Quick crossword clue, "Charles I's hiding place", referred to the wrong monarch. It was his son, the future Charles II, who hid in the 3,4 (No 16,866, 27 May, G2, p12).**

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Tone-deaf response to a patient's needs

Your report on deaf people struggling to access healthcare in the NHS (27 May) reminded me of an incident that my profoundly deaf uncle said occurred when he turned up for an 11am appointment at an NHS audiology clinic. He still hadn't been seen by midday, and when he asked what was going on, a nurse said: "Oh, we called out your name several times."
Karl Sabbagh
Defford, Worcestershire

● Re phones in concerts (Letters, 28 May), why don't more venues do what Bob Dylan does? He has tried continually for years to stop recordings and photographs. Now, when you enter the concert you must place your mobile in a wallet, which is then locked. You keep the wallet with you, and as you leave it is unlocked.
Lloyd Mills
Norwich

● Re the north-south divide (Letters, 28 May), when I was a student in Birmingham in the 1960s, I had a friend from Bristol who discovered seriousness. When he returned to Henbury at Christmas, he asked his newsagent to order the Guardian. The newsagent replied: "What's that, my love? A comic?"
Paul Clements
Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan

● If your bra is uncomfortable, you aren't wearing the right size (After a lifetime of discomfort, I stopped wearing a bra..., theguardian.com, 27 May).
Magali Fradet
Jávea, Alicante, Spain

● A clue in yesterday's quick crossword (G2, 28 May) read: Ceylon, as was (35). Surely that should have been: Sri Lanka, as was (6).
Pete Wolstencroft
Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire



Morgan Spurlock

American film-maker best known for his acclaimed 2004 exposé of the fast-food industry Super Size Me

Few film-makers can say that their work has made a change to the real world, but Morgan Spurlock had a stronger claim than most. His 2004 documentary Super Size Me, an exposé of how the fast food industry was fuelling America's obesity epidemic, appeared to have direct repercussions for the world's largest fast food chain, McDonald's.

Shortly before the film came out in May that year, the company introduced its Go Active! menu, which included salad items; six weeks after its release, the company abolished its supersize portions entirely. McDonald's claimed these menu changes were a coincidence. But the director, who has died aged 53 of complications from cancer, struck a timely blow at the business when awareness about fast food's corrosive role in public health was on the rise.

Super Size Me's high-concept premise – eating three McDonald's meals a day for 30 days straight – was key to conveying Spurlock's message. With the director gaining 11kg, plumping out his body fat from 11% to 18% and inflicting heart palpitations, impotence and depression on himself, his gonzo approach put him at the forefront of the early noughties boom in cinematic documentaries instigated by Michael Moore.

Doubts later emerged about Spurlock's experiment in bodily attrition, after he refused to release his diet logs from the period; and then when it later emerged that he was an alcoholic who had also imbibed during the shoot.

A twinkly-eyed showman, he was not going to let these details affect either the purity of Super Size Me's marketing line, or his career as a documentary star; a budding Moore for the Jackass generation. He would consistently target totems of modern capitalism and consumerism, though none of his subsequent works had the same kind of influence as his 2004 lightning-bottler.

Spurlock was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and grew up in Beckley in the Methodist household of his auto-repair shop-owning father Ben and mother Phyllis, an English teacher and high-school counsellor. Though his parents later divorced, he credited his mother in particular with instilling in him a sense of activism: "She was one of those people who would speak up when she didn't agree with things. She was a collector of people too: if you had the ability to help people, you should," he told the International Documentary Association.

Spurlock at the Los Angeles premiere of Super Size Me in 2004. The documentary was based on him eating three McDonald's meals a day for 30 days to demonstrate the effect that fast food has on the human body
MARK J TERRILL/AP

A childhood fan of British humour such as Fawlty Towers and Monty Python, he was already exercising his entertainer's streak doing "funny walks" around the house aged six or seven.

Rejected five times by University of Southern California's film school, he graduated from the New York University Tisch School of the Arts in 1993. "I wanted to be Spielberg. I wanted to write and direct scripted movies," Spurlock told Interview magazine. He originally showed promise in this direction, winning an award for his stage play The Phoenix at the New York international fringe festival in 1999.

After stints as a personal assistant on Woody Allen's Bullets Over Broadway and Luc Besson's Leon (both 1994), Spurlock first stepped in front of camera as a promotional spokesman for Sony Electronics. But his breakthrough came though hitching himself to the reality TV bandwagon with the self-created internet webcast, and, later (in 2002), MTV show, I Bet You Will. As one of the presenting team, Spurlock goaded members of the public into humiliating themselves for money – with stunts such as being "wedgied" or eating a worm burrito.

Super Size Me grossed $22m on a $65,000 budget, making it one of the most profitable documentaries of all time. Spurlock believed his body never fully recovered – though he lost the weight thanks to a special diet concocted by his then girlfriend, the vegan chef Alex Jamieson (the pair married and had a son, Laken, in 2006, before divorcing in 2011; Spurlock had been previously married to Priscilla Somer between 1996 and 2003).

"As a child he was a fan of Fawlty Towers and Monty Python. He was doing 'funny walks' aged six or seven"

He also later expressed doubts about the longer-term impact of Super Size Me on fast-food corporations, later reflecting: "People say to me, 'So has the food gotten healthier?' And I say, 'Well, the marketing sure has.'"

Spurlock could not skewer the zeitgeist again to create a second "doc-buster", despite tilting at big-hitter topics such as terrorism (in 2008's Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden?) and product-placement and advertising (POM Wonderful Presents: the Greatest Movie Ever Sold in 2011). With his trademark handlebar moustache, he settled into a reliably affable front-of-camera presence nosing around socio-cultural issues.

In total, he directed and produced nearly 70 films and series, including a One Direction hagiography in 2013 and a Super Size Me sequel in 2017. But he retained a keen business sense and marketing nous throughout this prolific output. "He taught us that we have to be chief executive artists," his fellow documentary-maker Ondi Timoner told Variety.

Towards the end of Spurlock's life, his career was on hold after he confessed in a 2017 blogpost to sexually abusive behaviour, including an allegation of rape while at college and paying off a production assistant he had harassed. "I have been unfaithful to every wife and girlfriend I have ever had," he also wrote, explaining he had been sexually abused in his youth. He divulged all this possibly pre-emptively in anticipation of future accusations in the upswell of the #MeToo movement.

Making himself the focus of the story was true to his modus operandi, and his professed desire for self-improvement could have made a fascinating documentary.

But the mea culpa proved an effective self-cancellation, with him resigning from the production company, Warrior Poets, he had founded in 2004 and being sued by Turner Entertainment Networks for an aborted project.

He and his third wife, the producer Sara Bernstein – with whom he had a second son, Kallen – divorced in 2024. His final documentary credit was for a mockumentary creating a fake history around the classic 1992 Simpsons episode Homer at the Bat.

Spurlock is survived by his children, Laken and Kallen, his parents and his brothers, Craig and Barry.

Phil Hoad

Morgan Spurlock, director and producer, born 7 November 1970; died 23 May 2024

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Jim Lawrence

One of the last sailing barge skippers working on the Thames who later set up his own business

There were more than 2,000 sailing barges carrying cargo on the River Thames at the beginning of the 20th century. By the time Jim Lawrence got his first command in 1951, that number was down to around 160. Jim was then 18 and the youngest sailing barge skipper on the Thames. It was a dying trade, however, and when he carried his last cargo in 1963 there were only six barges still working under sail alone. The last sailing cargo-carrier on the Thames, the Cambria, finally packed up in 1970.

A firm believer in the importance of traditional sail, Jim, who has died aged 90, switched to charter work, taking punters out on Thames barges and other working boats around the east coast of England.

Then, in 1971, he opened his own sail loft, making bespoke sails out of flax and later combining modern materials with traditional sailmaking techniques. It was both a retrograde and revolutionary approach, and Jim was soon being sought out by owners of traditional boats around the world. His sails featured in TV programmes such as The Onedin Line, Shackleton and Scott of the Antarctic – and a long-running Beck's lager ad campaign.

In this way, Jim served his passion for sail in three ways: keeping sailing barges working and economically viable for as long as possible, then introducing landlubbers to the pleasures of sailing on these magnificent vessels, and finally by physically making hundreds, if not thousands, of sails for boats of all sizes. He also sang about sailing, while playing his banjo or accordion.

Born in Colchester, Essex, the son of Beatrice and Walter, Jim learned to sail at a young age. His first "boat" was the garden gate, which he unscrewed and carried a mile to float on a nearby stream. It sank as soon as he stepped on it, which taught him an important lesson in form stability.

His first "barge" was made in 1944 from a pair of aircraft fuel tanks lashed together to make a simple catamaran. In a sure sign of the times, Jim made the boat's sails from old barrage balloons and parachute cloth. He and his friends picked blackberries, which they transported on their makeshift vessel two miles down the River Colne to Rowhedge, where Mrs Maudesley paid 4½d per pound and turned them into jam to sell in her grocery store. Aged 11, Jim had found his vocation.

As he wrote in his 2018 memoir London Light, Jim and his friends at Wilson Marriage school in Colchester were determined "not to let school interfere with our education" and spent all their spare time helping out on the sailing barges that moored on the town quay, known as the Hythe.

He got his first job on a barge called Gladys at 15, and the moment he stepped on board was given a test: to climb the mast and attach a new flag to the topmast, some 100ft in the air. If he failed or refused to do it, he would be deemed unsuitable. Jim succeeded and was soon clambering all over the rigging.

Gladys was the first of at least nine barges Jim would serve on during his 15-year career in working sail. The Thames barges were unique vessels: between 80ft and 95ft long, 20ft wide, capable of setting a spectacular 3,000sqft of sail (bigger than a tennis court) and carrying up to 170 tons of cargo (the equivalent of four articulated lorries). Flat out on a beam reach, they could fly along at 12 knots (about the same speed as an America's Cup yacht of the era). Not only that, but they could be sailed, famously, by "one man, a boy and a dog" – though, as Jim said, it would have to be "a bloody good dog". It was a phenomenally efficient means of transport, and all without expending a drop of fuel.

Like all working boats, the barges' income related closely not just to volume but to speed. For Jim, this concern with performance translated into an interest in sail design. Even while he was working as skipper, he would use the winter months to repair and improve his and other boats' sails. When the market for sail cargo eventually died in the 1960s, Jim already had a reputation as a fine sailmaker who made sails in a traditional way that also performed well.

Jim opened his first sail loft in a former baby clothes shop in Brightlingsea. When he outgrew those premises, he moved to the former Foresters' Hall. As well as making sails for the remaining sail barges – now all used for charter work – Jim became the sailmaker of choice for all manner of craft, from dinghies to square riggers. His biggest commission, the four-masted cruise ship Sea Cloud, set 30 sails totalling 32,000sqft of canvas.

His historically accurate sails for TV series and films included the 140ft brigantine Søren Larsen, which featured in The Onedin Line. Even the bottle-green suit of sails he made for the German sail training ship Alexander von Humboldt, which featured in the Beck's beer ads from 1984 until 2007, were made in the old manner.

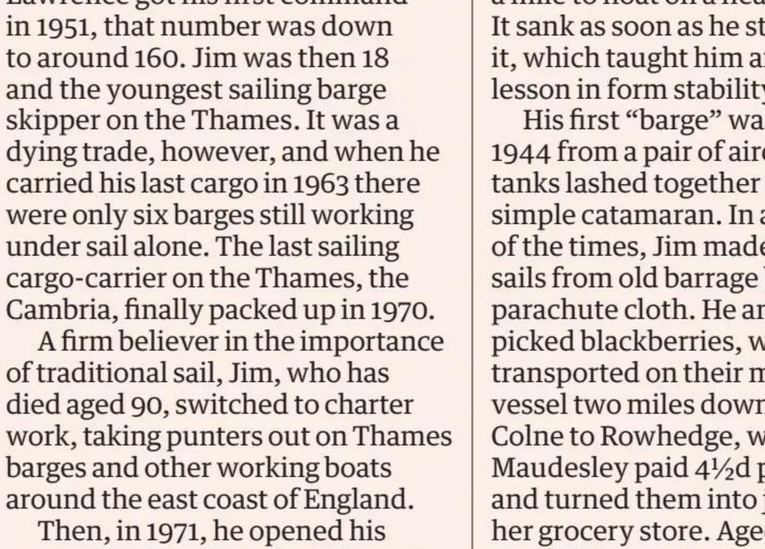
As well as running a successful business, Jim was a hugely popular character on the east coast boating scene. Never seen without his trademark red neckerchief, he had a bosun's locker full of sailing stories and amusing anecdotes. He was, as the local paper put it, the sort of person "with whom a chance meeting never failed to brighten your day". I met him only a couple of times, but I can vouch for his sunny demeanour.

He retired in 1997, handing over the business to his son-in-law Mark Butler, who himself retired in 2021, and the James Lawrence sail loft is now closed.

Jim married Pauline (nee Rouse) in 1961. She died in 2018. He is survived by their three daughters, Sara, Diana and Rachel.

Nic Compton

James Lawrence, barge skipper and sailmaker, born 5 August 1933; died 20 January 2024



Portlight, a steel Thames barge, pictured in 1994. Lawrence, right, skippered it in the mid-1950s. He went on to establish a successful sailmaking business, which he started by opening his own sail loft in Essex

NIC COMPTON; JIM LAWRENCE COLLECTION





His first 'barge' was made from a pair of aircraft fuel tanks lashed together to make a simple catamaran

Birthdays

Annette Bening, actor, 66; **Lord (Michael) Berkeley of Knighton**, composer and broadcaster, 76; **Melanie Brown (Mel B)**, singer and broadcaster, 49; **Laverne Cox**, actor and trans activist, 52; **The Right Rev Steven Croft**, bishop of Oxford, 67; **Lord (Quentin) Davies of Stamford**, former MP and Labour minister, 80; **Danny Elfman**, film composer, 71; **Melissa Etheridge**, singer and songwriter, 63; **Rupert Everett**, actor, 65; **Mike Freer**, Conservative MP and justice minister, 64; **Noel Gallagher**, musician and songwriter, 57; **Prof Sir Chris Husbands**, academic and educationist, 65; **La Toya Jackson**, singer and musician, 68; **Sir Alan Langlands**, former vice-chancellor, Leeds University, 72; **Robert Largan**, Conservative MP, 37; **Sir Julian Le Grand**, professor of social policy, London School of Economics, 79; **Moazzam Malik**, former diplomat and civil servant, 57; **Sarah Millican**, comedian and writer, 49; **Jessica Morden**, Labour MP, 56; **Nanette Newman**, actor and author, 90; **Agnes Oaks**, ballet dancer, 54; **Helen Phillips**, former chair of the Legal Services Board, 58; **Martin Pipe**, racehorse trainer, 79; **Lord (David) Prentis of Leeds**, former general secretary, Unison, 76; **The Right Rev Gene Robinson**, former Episcopalian bishop of New Hampshire, 77; **Francis Rossi**, rock singer and guitarist, 75; **Irmin Schmidt**, musician and composer, 87; **Dame Barbara Woodward**, diplomat, 63.



The actor and author Nanette Newman is 90. Her notable roles include Seance on a Wet Afternoon, 1964, and The Stepford Wives, 1975

Announcements

Deaths

CREIGHTON, Sean, aged 76, local activist, historian, researcher, died 15/5/2024. Funeral 2.45pm, 11 June, Lambeth Cemetery, Blackshaw Road SW17 0BY. Family flowers only please. Donations welcome to St Christopher's Hospice or The Working Class Movement Library. Enquiries to creightonann01@gmail.com.

For Announcements, Acknowledgments, Adoptions, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Births, Deaths, Engagements, Memorial Services and In Memoriam, email us at announcements@theguardian.com including your name, address and telephone number or phone 0203 353 2114.

Reread our obituaries of the Olympic swimmer David Wilkie, the singer Frank Ifield and the cancer campaigner Kris Hallenga **theguardian.com/obituaries**

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

1	2	9	5	4	6	3	7	8
7	6	3	8	2	9	4	1	5
5	8	4	1	3	7	9	6	2
4	5	2	7	9	3	1	8	6
6	3	8	4	1	2	5	9	7
9	7	1	6	5	8	2	3	4
8	9	5	2	7	1	6	4	3
2	1	7	3	6	4	8	5	9
3	4	6	9	8	5	7	2	1

Medium

4	7	9	5	8	2	3	6	1
3	8	2	1	6	4	7	9	5
1	6	5	3	9	7	2	8	4
5	9	7	8	2	3	1	4	6
6	2	1	9	4	5	8	3	7
8	4	3	6	7	1	9	5	2
2	1	8	4	5	9	6	7	3
9	3	4	7	1	6	5	2	8
7	5	6	2	3	8	4	1	9

Codeword

P	■	A	■	C	■	O	■	T	■	R	■	S		
R	A	N	C	H	■	B	A	U	X	I	T	E		
I	■	O	■	I	■	L	■	B	■	S	■	X		
S	I	R	O	C	C	O	■	A	D	O	P	T		
T	■	A	■	■	■	N	■	■	■	T	■	E		
I	N	K	L	I	N	G	■	O	C	T	E	T		
N	■	■	■	N	■	S	■	Z	■	O	■	■		
E	X	P	E	L	S	■	P	O	S	S	U	M		
■	■	A	■	A	■	O	■	N	■	■	■	E		
S	A	N	D	Y	■	F	R	E	E	S	I	A		
Q	■	D	■	■	■	F	■	■	■	T	■	N		
U	S	E	R	S	■	S	U	B	J	E	C	T		
A	■	R	■	A	■	I	■	O	■	E	■	I		
S	W	E	R	V	E	D	■	D	U	R	U	M		
H	■	D	■	E	■	E	■	Y	■	S	■	E		

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,394

■	B	E	H	I	N	D	T	H	E	E	A	R	S	■
C	■	I	■	N	■	O	■	A	■	L	■	H	■	S
O	L	D	S	T	A	G	E	R	■	K	N	O	U	T
L	■	E	■	O	■	Y	■	D	■	H	■	M	■	R
T	H	R	O	W	■	E	U	P	H	O	R	B	I	A
F	■	D	■	■	■	A	■	U	■	U	■	■	■	I
O	N	O	F	F	E	R	■	T	A	N	K	I	N	G
R	■	W	■	O	■	■	■	■	■	D	■	D	■	H
T	E	N	D	R	I	L	■	D	I	S	S	E	N	T
Y	■	■	■	E	■	I	■	A	■	■	■	A	■	F
F	A	C	E	S	A	V	E	R	■	H	A	L	A	L
I	■	H	■	I	■	E	■	K	■	A	■	H	■	U
V	Y	I	N	G	■	D	O	W	N	T	O	O	L	S
E	■	L	■	H	■	I	■	E	■	H	■	M	■	H
■	B	E	L	T	A	N	D	B	R	A	C	E	S	■

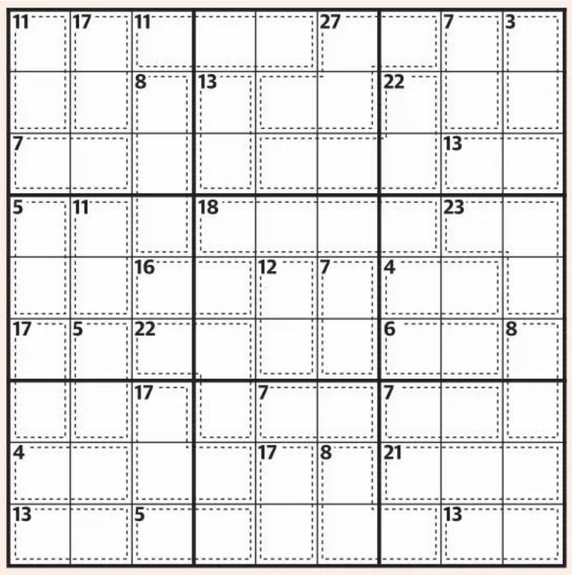


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Call **0330 333 6946** for customer service (charged at standard rate).
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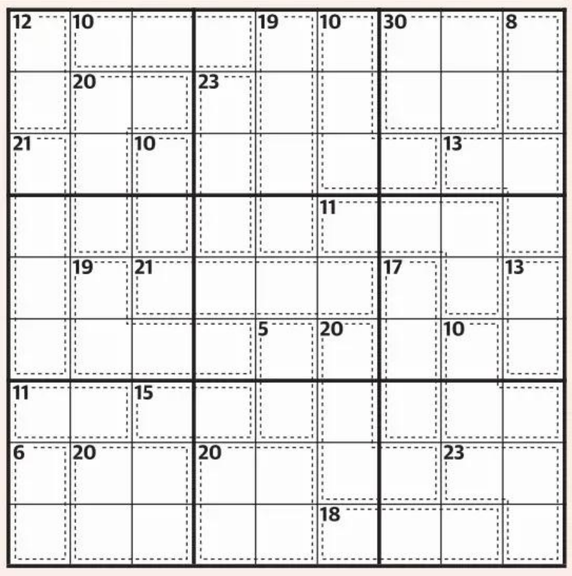
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



Medium



Codeword

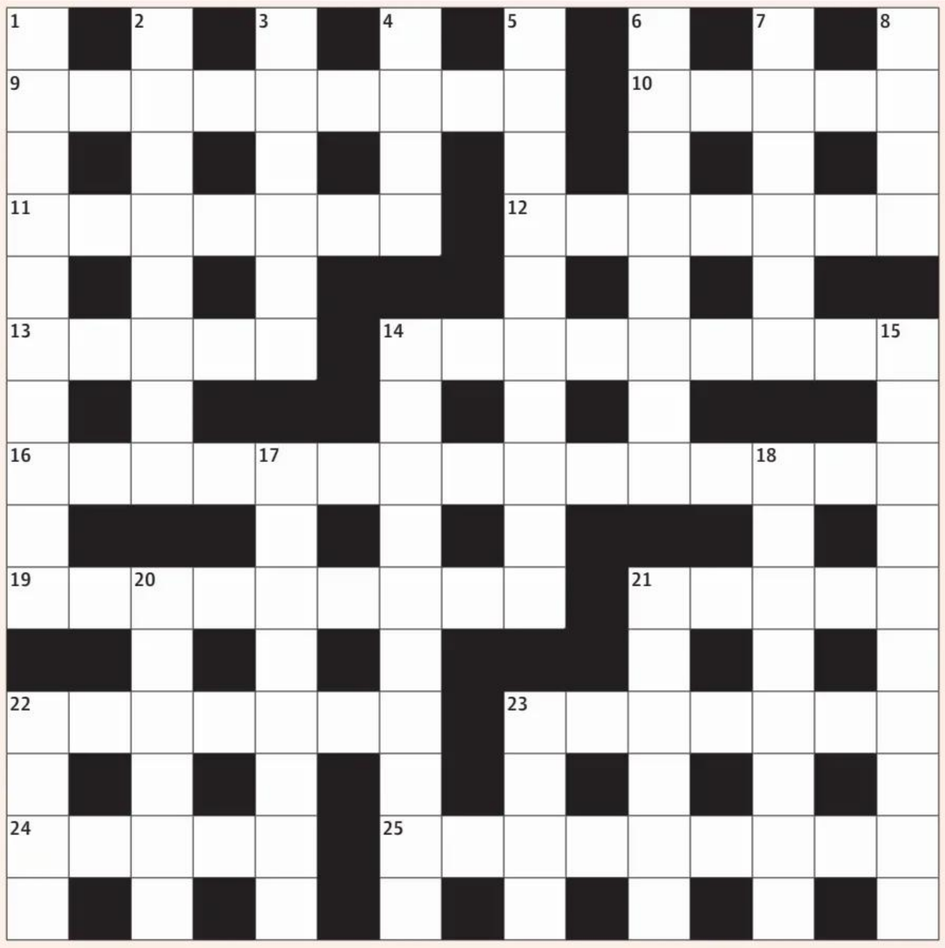
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

■	24	■	11	■	8	■	9	24	3	18	18	6
2	3	21	22	11	4	7	22	■	11	■	19	■
■	18	■	22	■	23	■	19	■	3	13	7	10
■	13	22	7	23	4	13	26	■	12	■	9	■
■	3	■	21	■	7 N	■	4	1	10	3	21	18
17	21	6	4	7	25	■	15	■	■	■	22	■
■	■	■	25	■	■	■	19	■	10	26	13	20
■	3	■	20	3	19	26	10	19	24	■	14	■
18	13	19	26	■	7	■	■	■	18	■	■	■
■	13	■	■	■	3	■	16	4	26	26	10	24
20	22	9	7	22	9	■	22	■	16	■	5	■
■	18	■	10	■	3	4 I	24	18	20	4	2	■
18	26	10	16	■	26	■	26	■	4	■	10	■
■	10	■	10	■	10	26	20	6	21	10	7	10
3	1	22	24	10	1	■	6	■	10	■	1	■

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4 I	5	6	7 N	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,395 set by Picaroon



Across

9 Yogi breaks cane when spanked - it's deviancy (9)
10 Backstreet in Paris? Within it, the French and Swiss whizz (5)
11 Game to don legwear this person's possibly returned for a fee (7)
12 Basic textbooks right to be adopted by 3, 5 and 13? (7)
13 Relation of audiobook version of Zola novel? (5)
14 Refused or declined to smuggle dope from the east (9)
16 Clumsily lost Ed Sheeran CD, showing no emotion (4-11)
19 London venue millennial's outside, with Dua Lipa playing (9)
21 Pick up £1,000 tip (5)
22 This prevents experiments with Spooner's ideal complexion (4,3)
23 Singer of a lot of rock, as well as Gershwin (7)
24 Maybe Guardian compiler welcomed by Lady Gaga (5)
25 Injured hip? Need package of rare drug (9)

Down

1 In the main, one may use this item, roughly cutting bread (7,3)
2 Friend, without hesitation, getting *Boy's Own* (8)
3/21 Singer of song inspiring an incredible energy (6,6)
4 What's inhaled by queen - king's rolling a joint (4)
5 Observer getting excited, tweeting French word that comes up (7,3)
6 Get ticked off like a barrister or a judge? (8)
7 Harry Styles, foxier than everyone else (6)
8 Flipping painful love for Oedipus (4)
14 Worked out base 3 in Asian location (7,3)
15 Uninterested in big news for the Spencers in 1981 (10)
17 Rash son holds former pupil up, and senior ones (4,4)
18 Shunning company using computers, I see, after trifling returns (8)
20 Female's left reeling as life's a bitch in Hollywood (6)
21 See 3
22 Barber's poignant adagio band played finally (4)
23 Note banks periodically loth to give a bit of capital (4)

G2

The Guardian



The rebirth of Tracey Emin

A moment that changed me

A marauding moose forced me to confront my fears

Every night, **Michelle Spencer** was kept awake by anxiety. Then a wild animal broke her water supply and everything shifted



'My fears felt manageable against the backdrop of so much beauty'

It was clear the moose was to blame for the lack of water. Halfway down the ravine, far from the house in southern Alberta, Canada, tracks circled our well. The moose had punched straight through the plywood cover, exposing the pump and pipe to freezing temperatures. For 20 years, my husband and I had been saying we should replace the flimsy wooden lid with a metal one, but it was never a priority. That is, until last winter, when we lost our only source of water.

Regaling my therapist with stories of the moose was an easy way to start our session. She laughed along when I told her about hauling jugs of water from our neighbour's place, about my dirty hair and how there was just enough water to wash the critical bits. But when she paused and then clicked her tongue, I knew the fun was over. "How do you feel about having a guided conversation with your fear?" she asked. She thought that a free-flowing chat, a one-on-one with my imagination, might help me with my sleep problem.

Because my therapist was based in the city, 60 miles from where we lived – a postage stamp at the foot of the Rockies – we talked on the phone. So she didn't see me nod in agreement when she said it's normal to feel sceptical about the exercise and that folks who favour using the logical part of their brain sometimes find it strange. It was her kind way of saying I wasn't the perfect candidate. I would be too self-conscious.

"It's not necessary," I reassured her. "The moose business has cured me." As soon as these words left my mouth, I knew it sounded ridiculous. And it wasn't true. For the better part of two years, worries about my health had been preventing me from getting a proper night's sleep. Once I was awake, I couldn't stop thinking about my breast cancer. A funny phrase, since it wasn't even my breast cancer any more. In 2022, it had been cut, poisoned and burned out of my body. But, at night, thoughts of it coming back lodged in my brain, the neural pathway hot-wired. I tried everything, but I couldn't seal the hole in the night. I kept falling through it.

But the moose incident meant our nights were now interrupted as we tried to thaw the pump and pipe that had so reliably brought water to our house with a gas-powered generator, which required fuel every five hours, for nine days.

At first, I had been reluctant to take a night shift carrying gas to the generator. But, by the time I reached the well, my fears about what I would find in the night, such as cougars and wolves, had shifted. Soon, even the idea of being inside, let alone sleeping, began to feel like a crime. In the stillness and intense cold, the pressure to sleep – the necessity, even – seemed to evaporate. Instead of being worried about the night, I felt emboldened by all the beauty. Brave.

But my therapist wasn't buying it. Wandering around in the dead of night didn't get to the root of the problem. She wanted me to square up with my fear. I had been prepared for it to be awkward, and it took me a while to engage in this conversation with my fear as an imaginary foe, but once we got started it was fair and measured. Its big beef was my lack of vigilance, my inability to avoid illness.

"So, your fear is trying to protect you?" the therapist asked. "Yes, but it insists I plan for every eventuality. It doesn't account for plain old bad luck." We agreed this was unreasonable. I should tell my fear that there are limits. It was like saying goodbye to an old friend after a strained visit. I said: "I'll check in with you, but not in the middle of the night." Then I looked out of the window towards the well. Gently, I told my fear about my discovery – that night is reserved for snow and stars and wayward moose with their gangly legs and destructive hooves. I told my fear not to worry. We would stay in touch.

My sleep improved almost immediately. I still woke in the night, but my brain no long saw this as an opportunity to latch on to things. Within weeks, I was getting six hours of sleep and then, like dominoes, other pieces of my life started to fall into place. I would wake up rested, so I went for runs and lifted weights. I made good meals for my family and plans with friends. I even found the energy for a puppy. I went to bed feeling a good kind of tired, collapsing like a child after a long day of playing outside. With better sleep, eating well and moving my body came easily.

> **I could finally sleep and, like dominoes, other pieces of my life started to fall into place**



I still go to therapy and try not to push away the things that inevitably bother all of us. When they do creep in, I know it's time to have an impromptu chat with the worries clamouring for my attention. It's important maintenance.

This spring – long after the water was flowing to our house – a moose passed through our place. It occurred to me it might be the same moose, but there was no way to know. What I did know was that when the moose introduced me to the night, my fears felt manageable against the backdrop of so much beauty. And this shift in perspective, like a blast of cold air, turned things around for me. It was the moment when I was finally brave enough to step into the daylight.

Michelle Spencer is a writer based in Alberta

Has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60? Fill in the online form at theguardian.com/new-start-after-60

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK CROCKETT/PEAK TO PRAIRIES PHOTOGRAPHY; COURTESY OF MICHAEL GERRAND

Arwa Mahdawi



Lady Gaga's Covid confession proves grind culture is back

Should you go into work when you have a contagious virus? Lady Gaga has spoken and the answer, it seems, is: "Sure, why not?" During a recent Q&A for an HBO concert special based on her 2022 Chromatica Ball tour, the pop star was asked to reveal something she had never shared before. In response, she said that she had performed five shows while sick with Covid. It probably would have been wise never to share that little titbit, to be honest, and it is disturbing to nonchalantly share it now. Still, rather than seeming troubled by this information, the crowd watching the Q&A appeared to cheer and applaud while Lady Gaga grinned.

To be fair, Lady Gaga isn't a monster: she made it clear that she did have a little think about the ethics of spewing infectious droplets into an enclosed space. The singer said she shared her diagnosis with everyone on her team at the time and told them they didn't have to work if it made them uncomfortable. As for the concertgoers? "The way that I saw it is the fans are all putting themselves in harm's way every day coming to the show," she reasoned.

These revelations have had a mixed response on social media. Some Lady Gaga fans marvelled at her work ethic and physical stamina. (And, morals aside, the fact that she could perform with Covid is impressive; I could barely wash my face.) Others called her selfish and wildly irresponsible. Someone even claimed, in a viral but unsubstantiated tweet, that their aunt died of Covid after going to a Lady Gaga concert. "We wouldn't have gone if we knew Gaga had Covid," the person wrote.

> I thought the world might emerge from the pandemic a better place. But nope

As Lady Gaga noted, there is clearly an automatic level of risk involved in going to a stadium show packed with 50,000 screaming fans. Chances are that some of them will be Covid-positive. Does the fact that the headliner definitely has Covid significantly add to that risk? I am obviously not qualified to give a statistical analysis, but I am qualified to say: "Dude, that was messed up."

I mean, we do all remember that Covid killed at least 3 million people and left millions more with debilitating long Covid, right? I know that many of us have blanked the pandemic out of our minds, but we do understand that Covid hasn't disappeared. And, in 2022, when Gaga was performing, the worst days of the pandemic were still a raw memory. Most people were vaccinated, but a lot of people were mourning loved ones who had died from the virus. It feels disrespectful for her not to have let her fans make an informed decision about going to her shows. Did we learn nothing from the pandemic?

Unfortunately, the answer to that question seems to be: "Nope." There was a brief moment, in 2020, when I was naive enough to think the world might emerge from the pandemic a better place. Maybe we would all reassess what was truly valuable. For a while, that seemed to be case when it came to hustle culture. There was a lot of chat about how Covid had started a trend of "quiet quitting" and got everyone to step away from toxic productivity.

But capitalism is gonna capitalism and it feels as if we're right back to the bad old days of rise-and-grind culture, where your inner worth is measured by your output.

You can see it in Kim Kardashian's viral advice telling women to "get your fucking ass up and work". You can see it in the weird platform that LinkedIn has become, where every post is now someone building their personal brand with a 5,000-word piece of productivity pornography. (The intro to one recent, egregious example: "I proposed to my girlfriend this weekend. Here's what it taught me about B2B sales.") And you can see it in the cheers that Lady Gaga's admission of singing-while-sick received. It looks as if we're firmly back in a world where coming into work while ill, and knowingly putting others at risk, isn't just tolerated – it's celebrated.

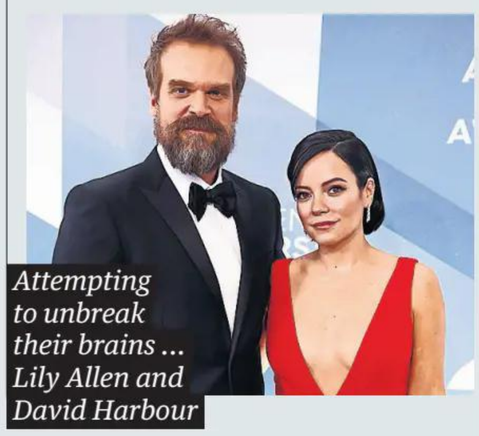
Beware – your toddler is watching your phone face

An annoying thing about being a parent is that you have to consistently model good behaviour. You can't just shove crisps in your mouth and stare at your phone when you need a break.

I've always spent an unhealthy amount of time staring at my phone, but I didn't worry about my habit until I had a toddler. The thing with toddlers is that they have more sophisticated surveillance techniques than Facebook. Even when you think they're completely absorbed in emptying the contents of your cupboards on to the living room floor, they know when you're looking at your phone and not at them. And, according to various alarming studies, this guarantees a lifetime of therapy bills. One 2023 study, for example, found parental phone use is associated with "still face". This means that you look like a depressed robot while scrolling – and it can affect a child's emotional development.

Still, it's worth remembering we all have the power to unbreak our brains. The singer and actor Lily Allen and her husband, David Harbour, have come up with a novel way of doing this. In a recent Sunday Times interview, Allen said she has stopped her daughters from using a smartphone until they're 14 and that she is also using a kids' phone (Pinwheel), with no social media or browsing capabilities. Her husband controls what apps she is allowed to use and she does the same for him.

I haven't tried this approach, but I have discovered my own antidote to spending too much time on social media. I've dramatically curbed my addiction because I can't bear scrolling past images of unprecedented suffering in Gaza – more than 10,000 dead children and imposed mass starvation – interspersed with chatty tweets about the Kardashians. My Twitter habit may be broken, but so am I.



Attempting to unbreak their brains … Lily Allen and David Harbour

COVER: HARRY WELLER. THIS PAGE: LOADEDWORLD.COM; RICH FURY/GETTY IMAGES

Pass notes



№ 4,701

Loaded

Age: 30.
Appearance: A reanimated mag for reanimated lads.
Wow, Loaded is 30? Well, yes, on and off. Since its 90s heyday, it was sold to several small publishers before the print publication folded in 2015, although a website lived on.
So the message is that there hasn't been an appetite for this sort of magazine for a decade. Well, this is awkward. The message was supposed to be that Loaded is back with Elizabeth Hurley as the cover star.
Sorry, Loaded is back? Yes! The Dubai-based businessman Stewart Lochrie has backed a new relaunch. Its executive editor is a woman named Danni Levy.
A woman?! Yes, but don't worry, lads: Levy won't fill the magazine with feminist tutting or knitting patterns. She's a fitness influencer who appeared in the 2015 reality show Life on Marbs. Luckily for Loaded readers, she also seems to think the world has "gone PC mad".
Does she? "Our goal is to bring back all those things that 35- to 55-year-old men are being cheated out of by society," she has said.
Like what? Affordable energy bills? Not quite. They're being cheated out of "being able to ogle beautiful women like Liz Hurley, Melinda Messenger or Pamela Anderson".
Men are being cheated out of looking at pictures of women who were known for being sex symbols 25 years ago? Yes! In fact, men who enjoy that are the relaunch demographic. Levy has said that its audience will be "the original Loaded audience who are now living happily at home with their wife and kids but still reminisce about their nights spent clubbing until 3am, drinking £1 shots, with a bedroom covered in posters of half-naked women".
That might be the most depressing sentence I've ever read. Grim, isn't it? Loaded: the magazine for middle-aged men who can't face up to the reality that they're expected to function as adults in society.
This sounds like a disaster in the making. Levy also made a better argument about Loaded hoping to occupy a "safe space" between the "attitude that no one can say or do anything" and the torrent of online pornography that is "giving youngsters a warped idea of sexual normality".
A safe space?! This is PC gone mad! Well, yes. Also, Levy went on This Morning in 2016 to argue that cat-calling should be a hate crime, so maybe her anti-woke credentials aren't as strong as she'd have us believe.
Who cares? Men finally have a place where they can look at boobs again! Listen, have you heard of a little thing called the internet?
Do say: "Loaded is back!"
Don't say: "For six months, tops."

‘I didn’t want to die being some mediocre YBA’

In the last four years, Tracey Emin has survived an aggressive cancer, opened her own art school – and produced some of her most stunning work. She discusses sobriety, suffering and second chances with **Simon Hattenstone**

A man and woman are depicted having sex on the huge white canvas: their bodies outlined in blood-red lines, faces barely there, legs wrapped over and into each other like a chain puzzle. Above the couple, and merging with them, are the words: “You keep fucking me,” repeated 12 times in horizontal lines. Look at it vertically and at one point it becomes: “You keep fucking you.”

It could only be painted by Tracey Emin – the scratchy primitivism, the intensity of the act, the words. Words have always been important to Emin. The painting is a celebration of carnality, a howl of emotional abuse and a nod to narcissism. It sums up Emin’s work perfectly.

You Keep Fucking Me is one of the highlights of a new exhibition of her paintings, all of them created since her diagnosis with a cancer that should, by rights, have seen her off. Emin says that only 33% of people survive the squamous cell bladder cancer five years after diagnosis. She is in her fourth year – and in remission. It’s slowed her down in many ways (she is often exhausted), but she is more prolific than ever, determined to paint and live like never before.

The exhibition is called By the time you see me there will be nothing left. It’s a reference to the cancer – there could be nothing left because she has had so many parts cut out to keep her alive, or she may be dead.

“I’ve had my urethra removed, a full hysterectomy, lymph nodes, part of my bowel, bladder, urinary tract and half my vagina removed. Seven and a half hours! My surgeon said: ‘It doesn’t get much bigger than that! Hehehe!’ She chortles at her achievement. “Whatever. It’s cool! I got through it.”

We meet at the Xavier Hufkens in Brussels – a gorgeous white snowscape of a gallery. Emin looks older and frailer these days. When she emerged in the mid-1990s as one of Charles Saatchi’s YBAs (Young British Artists), she was blazing with sexuality, style and attitude. Tracey from Margate, who left school at 13, seemed to be flashing a joyous V-sign at the ossified art establishment. In a way, she was. But, as so often, it was more complicated than that.

Emin, 60, is wearing a T-shirt that says “The Time Is Always Now”, from a recent exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. “For someone like me who spends a hell of a lot of time thinking about the past and hoping for the future, I do spend more time now than I ever have in the present. And it does actually make you happy.” Has it taken till now to get there? “It took a massive bout of near-death cancer to make me realise how good time is now. The present. Cancer changed everything for me.”

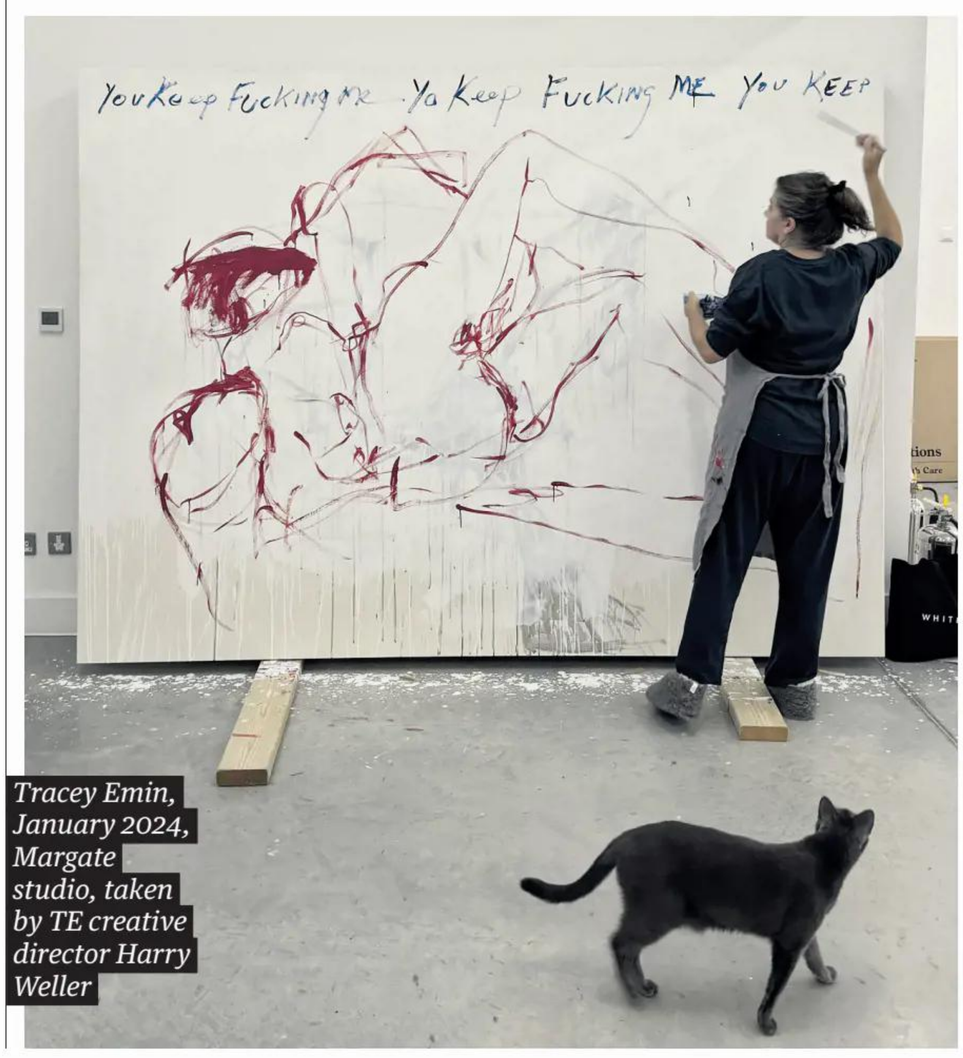
Emin no longer drinks or smokes. She blames the smoking for her cancer and wishes she had stopped drinking decades ago. “When you think you’ve got six months to live, you really don’t want to have a hangover or forget what happened the night before. You need every single moment. You want to be aware and heightened – touch, feel, smell, memory, everything. So the idea of drinking didn’t seem a good idea – and then I stuck to it.”

Was drinking a way of finding clarity or obliterating the world? “The alcohol was a big cloud to stop people getting to me, or me getting to them, or me touching life. Now, I look back on it, it’s like the way I used to chain-smoke 50 cigarettes a day. I had a big cloud of smoke around me.” She is astonished by the lucidity with which she now sees things. “It’s not just like I’m a better person because I don’t drink. It’s not as boring as that. Every bit of me feels better. It’s like being born again.” She stops and says that would make her friend the journalist Lynn Barber puke, but it’s true. “Like having a second chance. And I haven’t fucked up yet.”

Cancer brought home another reality, she says. She had turned into somebody she didn’t like. “You know how you have these different phases in your life? It’s only after that you see them clearly. Well, when I was young, I was eager and hungry and excited and learning at art school. And then there was this middle bit where I was just this complete twat. The lowest of the low.” She is referring to a period in her late 30s and 40s. “If you’re reading this really good novel, there’s always a bit where they go into the cave and it’s really dark. My cave was like a giant fucking pothole that went underneath the earth.”

How did she become “a twat”? “All the celebrity stuff, the sparkly bits of fame. Red carpet. Hair. Eyeshadow. You name it. Shoes I can’t walk in. How I conducted my life on a day-to-day level. Also how unhappy I was on a day-to-day level and didn’t do anything about it.”

She says her mother, who died in 2016 and whom she adored, noticed the change. “My mum said I’d become a snob. I said: ‘I’m not a



Tracey Emin, January 2024, Margate studio, taken by TE creative director Harry Weller





Tracey Emin, I wanted to be clean, 2023 (left) and (right) Tracey Emin, June 2023, south of France studio, taken by TE creative director Harry Weller



snob. It's hard for me to be a snob!'" After all, she is the working-class girl from Kent who was patronised by the art establishment from the off. "But, looking back, I know what she was saying. Maybe it was because I wanted to live differently from where I'd come from. I wanted to be someone else from somewhere else. I didn't want to be this person who suffered so much when I was little, who had this fucked-up upbringing and poverty. I wanted to throw it all behind me so it didn't exist, like: 'I'm all right now.'"

How had she become snobbish? "I think Mum meant I forgot where I came from." Did she become flash? "A bit flash, maybe." She stops. "Not just flash." There is a long pause. "Not as kind as I should have been." Had you been kind before? "Yes. And then there's this bit that became a bit nasty. A spikiness. I think, now, it's gone full circle. What's also gone full circle is going back to Margate." She moved back to her home town in 2021. "I love it more than I could ever, ever imagine. I feel so good. I'm in the right place, I'm walking in the right streets."

Before she moved back, Emin still mined Margate in her work, but she was calling on the ghosts of memories and not the real thing. She also realised she had lost her chief source of inspiration - her chippiness. "I had millions of chips. And suddenly the chips start falling off and you're much more breezy, walking through everything, and of course you're not yourself." She had become a chipless member of the establishment with a CBE, an honorary doctorate from the Royal College of Art and pots of money - and she was miserable as sin.

It was cancer that made her reassess everything. "I was in intensive care and waiting for the prognosis - whether I was going to live or not. I had four days to wait and I thought: if I get through this, *if,* I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, I'm not going to do this and that. And the biggest thing was I didn't want to die being some mediocre YBA artist from the 90s. I thought: that's not me. What have I been doing?" Now, Emin believes, she has started to make her mark.

Emin became known soon after Saatchi bought her work Everyone

Continued on page 6 →

When you think you've got six months to live, you really don't want to have a hangover

← Continued from page 5

I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995 (also known as The Tent) for a reported £40,000 in 1997. Saatchi included it in his seminal 90s exhibition Sensation, alongside the work of contemporaries such as Sarah Lucas (with whom she opened an art shop called The Shop), Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread, Gary Hume, Marc Quinn and the Chapman brothers. All the YBAs were radical (Lucas for conceptualising fried-egg breasts; Whiteread for sculpting the space inside objects; Hirst for his cows in formaldehyde; the Chapman brothers for attaching penises to everything; and Hume for daring to paint figurative pictures, even if they were in Dulux).

Emin was 33, although she looked and often sounded far younger. She soon became known for falling out of cabs and into parties, glass in one hand, fag in the other. The first time many of us came across her was on a late night Channel 4 show Is Painting Dead?, alongside a group of crusty, snotty art critics (nearly all of them male). She was slurring her words, obviously drunk, and she said so. Most of the critics, notably Roger Scruton, treated her and her work with contempt. Eventually, she swore rather sweetly, said she had had enough and stumbled off the set.

She believes the way she was treated that night was unacceptable. "They have it on record, me saying: 'I've been drinking, I can't do this,' and someone saying: 'Give her a cup of coffee, she'll be OK,' and then making me sign a release form when I was drunk." Today, she says, the producers would never be allowed to do that. "They'd be sued. It was what it was, but suddenly to be launched into the world with Oliver Reed as 'one of the most drunk moments on television in the 20th century' wasn't really what I wanted to be known for."

Did it go on to define you? "Yeah, a *bit*!" She smiles, and when she does she looks like the Emin of old - mischievous, challenging, fun. From then on, Emin became fixed in many minds as the drunken chancer who boasted about her promiscuity and called it art. The reality couldn't have been more different. "I was making work about abortion, rape, teenage sex, abuse and poverty, but it was dismissed by a lot of people as being attention-seeking or moaning. *Moaning*!"

Perhaps the very seriousness of her work is what distinguished her from some of her British contemporaries. There was no irony, no satire; it was all from the heart. Could the critics see that? "No. I think the consensus about me 30 years ago was that I was loud, brash, ladettish and common." And were you? "No. I was feisty and sexy and vivacious, which I'm not now, but essentially I was the same Tracey."

She says it was partly her fault that few people made a case for her work. She couldn't have been a worse advocate for herself. Yes, she had left school at 13 without qualifications, but by 20 she was studying for a print-making degree and emerged with a first before getting a master's in painting - achievements that seem all the more admirable because of her early struggles.

When she talked to the media, she says, she was "blase" about her work. She could have talked eloquently about autobiographical art and the influences of Egon Schiele and Edvard Munch (over the past decade, there have been exhibitions in which her work has been hung alongside both artists) or Frida Kahlo and Louise Bourgeois. "This goes back to being a twat, right? Why should anyone respect me when it didn't appear that I respected myself? I should have explained the context of where my work fitted within art. But I never did that. I wouldn't talk about anything in art that mattered or that would matter to an art person. I would always be coasting on life or what had just happened to me."

Of all the YBAs, Emin was given the hardest time - a tent stitched with the names of all the people she had slept with, *art*? But The Tent was so poignant - as well as lovers such as the artist Billy Childish and the curator Carl Freedman, the names included family, friends, her aborted twins and abusers. "It wasn't about sex at all. It was like carving out tombstones, writing those names and remembering all those people. People go into The Tent thinking they're going to see who I slept with, but come out thinking about who they've slept with, who they've been intimate with, who they've loved, who's hurt them, who abused them, who raped them. It was like a filter for other people to go through." In 2004, The Tent was destroyed in a fire. "So it never had a chance to exist within a historic context. It just went."

The Tent was an attempt to make sense of her past and draw a line under it, she says. "I felt so scummy and so slutty when I was young, and I was trying to work out why. Then I was amazed that I'd had sex with so *few* people. I thought: 'Is that all?!'"

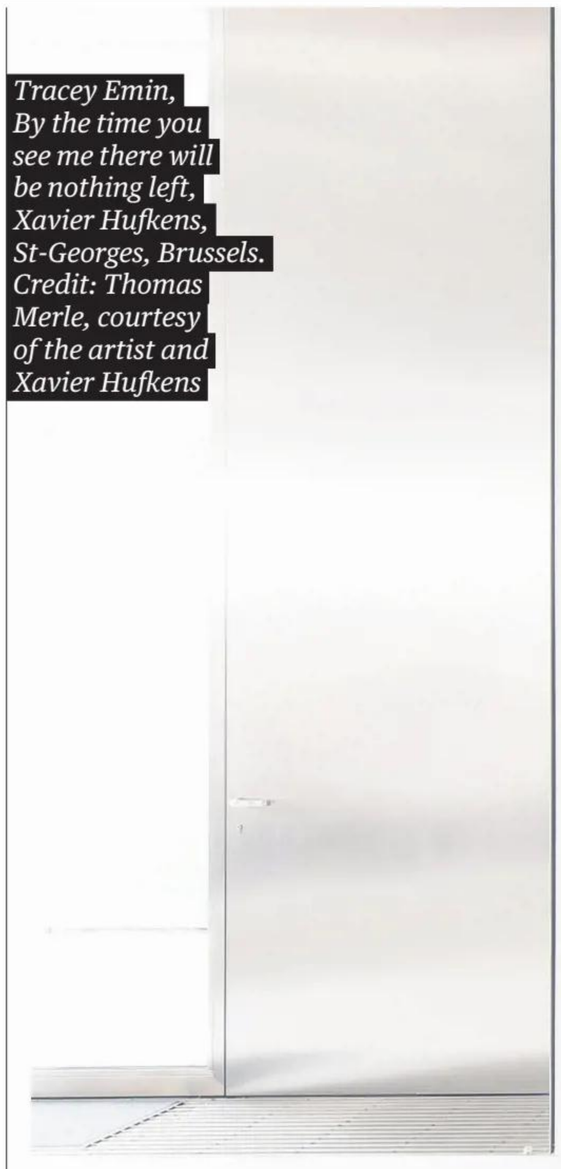
At the same time as The Tent, she made a wonderful documentary about her teenage years in Margate, called Why I never became a dancer. (She was a fabulous dancer, as we see in the film.) Again, it was dismissed as exhibitionism. But, among other things, it is about being slut-shamed by her peers. "Some respected art people - women, actually - saw that film recently and said: 'Oh God, we had no idea it was about that.' I said: 'That's because you weren't listening to what I was saying. It was about being humiliated and vilified.'"

Three years after The Tent came My Bed, which was bought by Saatchi for £150,000 and sold in 2014 for £2.2m. Detractors dismissed it as another brazen slop of self-publicity. But what Emin showed in the used condoms, bloodied sheets and general chaos was the desperation of a woman on the verge of giving up. She was suicidal when she created My Bed. Originally, it had a noose, but she removed it.

Emin says her new exhibition is about love, as so much of her work has been. Love in all its forms - erotic, ecstatic, desperate, obsessive, spiritual, solitary, unrequited. "It's the best show I have ever done," she says.

For much of her adult life, Emin has been single, but I had heard that recently she fell in love again. Yes, she says, but now it's over. "I had a relationship for nearly four years. A real love affair. It was amazing, because I'd been on my own for 10 years. Him holding me made me want to live, because I was loved and wanted. I didn't want to die. Then *boof*, it was over! But it's OK." She has dealt with plenty worse, she says. "I'm not in pain, I'm not broken-hearted. I'm getting over cancer and things are good."

Has she had relationships only with men or does she like women, too? "I've liked cats, mainly." That cute, crooked smile again. "I haven't had a sexual preference ever in my life," she says. "My upbringing was so open ... I was never brought up to be pigeonholed. You know like when you have to out yourself to your parents? With me, it was the other way around, because they would have been so happy if I'd have been a lesbian." Was bisexual not good enough for them? "No. I think the true word is 'demisexual'." She gives me a look that guards against pretension. "Yes, I *know*! But I don't think any of us back in 1979 would have known what demi anything was."



Tracey Emin, By the time you see me there will be nothing left, Xavier Hufkens, St-Georges, Brussels. Credit: Thomas Merle, courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens

Has there been enough love in your life? "No. I went to two fortune-tellers in America, one in Los Angeles 15 years ago, one in New York 10 years ago. Neither of them knew who I was. Both of them said my mum had been cursed. *Separately*. They said the curse was that her daughter will never find love." Do you think that has been true? "Yes, in a way. But you can't live without love. *You can't*. It's impossible."

I ask whether her relationship with her body has changed since surgery. "I hate it," she says. "I wish I was fit, 30, riding my bike around London, staying up all night, swimming a kilometre a day. I still swim in the sea and I love it. It's one of my favourite things."

Do you really hate your body? "I'm pleased that it's here." She says she is impressed by its resilience. "I knew I had a strong pain threshold, but I didn't know my body was so tough. I had septicaemia a year and a half ago and my body went into shutdown and I got through it. Then, in Thailand, I had an obstruction in my bowel caused by pressure of flying and diet. If I'd got on a plane to fly home to London, I probably would have died. Since then, I have had to be on a low-residue diet."

What does that comprise? "Basically 1970s children's food." She is tucking into a pain au chocolat as we talk. "No fruit, no





(From left) Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995, 1995; Why I Never Became a Dancer, 1995; My Bed, 1998. ©Tracey Emin. All rights reserved, DACS 2024





vegetables, no nuts, no seeds, no grains, no pulses, no beans. I can eat chicken, fish and eggs. A lot of white stuff. Bread. This. Anything with butter and sugar and avocado. Ready Brek."

She now has a stoma (an opening in her abdomen) and relies on a urostomy bag to collect her urine.

"It's a massive disability," she says. "There's lots of things you can't do any more. If I hadn't had the bag, I think I would have got over the cancer a hell of a lot quicker." Another pause. "But then if I hadn't had the bag, maybe I wouldn't have been here."

Emin asks if we can take a short break. "I've got to plug my thing in, otherwise I'll have to keep going to the loo every 10 minutes." She walks out. A moment later, I hear her panicked voice. 'Ooh, no. Oh dear. Oh *God*. Oh dear. I've had a *complete* disaster.'" Do you need help, I ask. "I better get a cloth." A minute later, she is back, and laughing. There is a little puddle by the door. "That's because it was too full."

She makes a call and Harry, who has worked with her for 15 years "and is in charge of everything", enters the room.

Harry: "What happened?"

Emin: "You've just trod in it."

Harry: "Ah. You?"

Emin: "Yes, me."

Harry: "Bag?"

Emin, grinning: "*Yes*."

Harry: "I'll send for someone."

She explains how it all works. First, there is the bag attached to her tummy - the one that just leaked. From a large tote bag sat beside her, she takes out a Victoria Beckham makeup bag, which contains her urostomy night bag, which plugs into the bag on the stoma. Does Beckham know that you use her bag for your wee? She laughs. "No, but I think she'd like it."

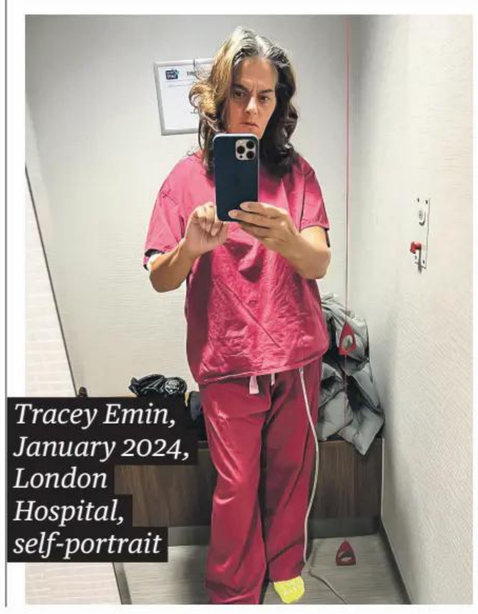
The thing is, she says, if she had not been open about her stoma, it would have been impossible to live how she wants to. "Lots of people don't want anyone to know they've got a bag. But I made my mind up from the beginning, I've got to get on with my life, so this is what I've got to do. Otherwise, we're going to be talking and every 15 minutes I'm going to be getting up and going to the loo. And you're going to think that that's odd."

Have other people with stomas told you they appreciate your openness? "Yes, tons of people. Also, when you've got a urostomy, you go like this to people ..." She pats her stoma, as if giving a Masonic sign, and smiles in solidarity. "Lots of people do it when they see me and it means they've got one, too. The more people who are out about it, the easier it is for us all."

Where were we, she asks? Without skipping a beat, she is back to love. "When I feel low, I think about my friends I've had for 35 years, such as David Dawson and Carl Freedman. Carl persuaded me to come back to Margate and we bought the old printing press in 2017 and split it - his became a gallery, mine became my studio. That is a testament to love and trust and security. I'm so lucky that I have people in my life who are solid with me."

Her cat Teacup appears in one of the paintings in the Brussels exhibition - on the bed beside Emin. Beds are a leitmotif in her work. In one of her new paintings, she lies sleeping as the grim reaper hovers over her with his scythe. Beds also have a practical purpose, she says. "Within painting you need a structure to get you going, so the bed's shape gives it a structure immediately."

Is the bed a more profound motif for women than men? "Why?" she asks. Erm, I say, realising how stupid the question is, but blundering on regardless. As a symbol of childbirth? "Anything else I'm not involved in? Hahaha!" Years ago, I imagine she might have ripped into anybody making such a comment, but not today. Did you ever want children? "If I'd met someone who loved me enough, who wanted me enough for ever and persuaded me that was the deal, then maybe. But I never did." Would you have needed a father? "Yes, because my mum was a single mum and I saw how she suffered. I never wanted that for myself."



Tracey Emin, January 2024, London Hospital, self-portrait

Emin is so outre in some ways, so conventional in others. In 2010, she voted for the Conservatives, did so again in 2015, and since then has come to be regarded as a Tory cheerleader for the arts. I ask how her Conservatism expresses itself in her art. For the first time, she verges on the defensive. "I have voted Tory twice in my life. Both times were for Cameron. Before that, I voted Labour all my life. Since then, I've voted for the Animal Welfare party. This time round, I'm going Labour."

As for the Tories in power, she has nothing but contempt for them. "Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak should feel absolutely ashamed of how they dealt with Covid, what they put the country through and how disrespectful they've been to working people." She sounds like an on-message Labour MP when she talks like this. "All those people who live below the poverty line who voted for Boris Johnson - are they insane?"

> **I never did coke and that's how I got my first mortgage. I've never wasted money**

She says that if she were growing up today, she would never have a chance to make it, because higher education would be inaccessible to her. As a student, she got a grant. "That's why I opened an art school in Margate." It's a great project - Emin provides 10 artists' residencies. How much does it cost you? "I don't know." Roughly? "OK, I do know, but I don't like talking about money."

In a recent interview in the Times, it was suggested that Emin "owned half of Margate". That may be an exaggeration, but she is certainly doing very nicely in the property market. "I'm providing homes at an affordable rent for creative people. The rent money goes into my foundation. I started sorting my affairs when I thought I was going to die. I'm going to leave virtually everything I've ever got to my charity when I die." In 2021, she bought a Georgian mansion in Fitzrovia from Griff Rhys Jones for £15m. She spends most of her time in Margate and visits London about once a month for hospital appointments, to see shows and enjoy her luxury home.

Emin puts her financial success down to one thing. "I never did coke and that's how I got my first mortgage. I've always saved. I've never wasted money, believe it or not." Does she regard her art school as a lefty commune or a can-do capitalist enterprise? "If I was to put it on a political spectrum, I'd say it was like those old-fashioned philanthropic things: 'She's done well. Now, it's time to give back.' That kind of thing."

So many people in the art world make grand pronouncements about their beliefs, she says, yet do nothing to help others.

"I would like all the armchair socialists to get up and do what they say they believe in." Names, please? "No names. But I know lots of people who have admirable views on life and they don't actually do anything."

We have been talking for almost two hours. Every so often, Harry has popped in to see if she is tired and each time she has said she is fine. But now she knows he is going to tell her off if she doesn't rest. As I get up to leave, she gets a second wind and starts to rant about the state of education, the NHS, the Post Office, the contaminated blood scandal ...

"The Post Office has been *destroyed*. We had one of the best postal systems in the *fucking* world. *Gone*. The first people to have a railway line and trains? *Useless*. Our health system, supposedly the best in the world, and it turns out how many people have got hepatitis?"

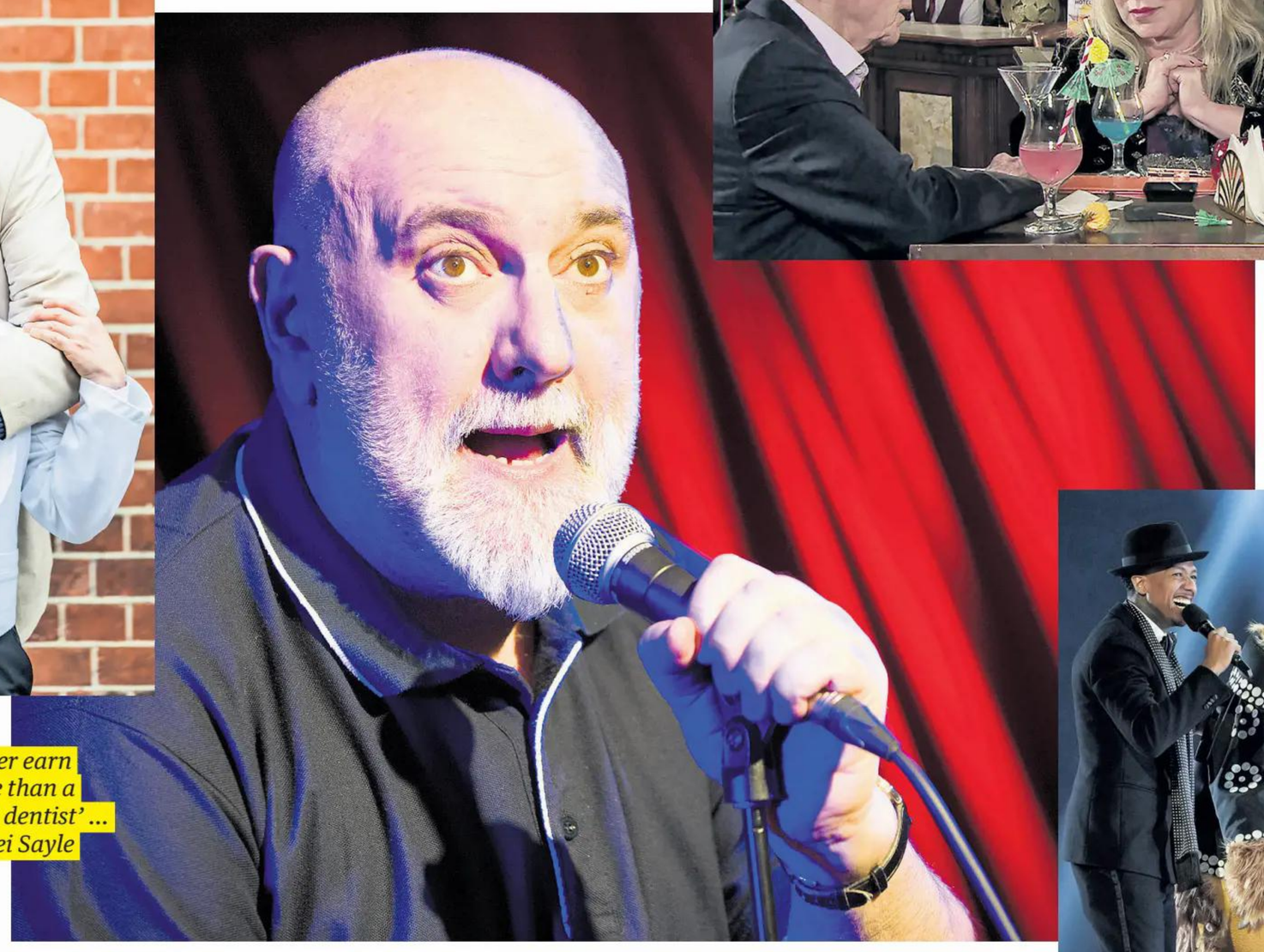
She seems so much younger than when she walked into the room. She is even beginning to look like the Tracey Emin of 30 years ago. I've only just noticed how tanned she is. "It's not fake, it's from the sun." But, she says, she has just made a discovery. "I did a DNA test. My dad was Turkish Cypriot, but his dad is from Sudan. From Nubia. Now, it turns out I'm 17% Nubian. That means my dad's parents were both Nubian." She sounds as chuffed about this as she does about still being alive. Harry enters for the fourth time and now she really does have to stop.

There is something ecstatic about the way she is devouring life. Again, she talks about her second chance. "I am living every day like my last. *Every* day. I love and believe in art so much. It's my passion. It's what I live for. Imagine you wake up and you can do what you love doing. It's so brilliant." Did you take it for granted before? "Yes. I abused it. I didn't understand what an amazing gift it was."

Tracey Emin, By the time you see me there will be nothing left, is on at the Xavier Hufkens, St-Georges, Brussels, 24 May-27 July



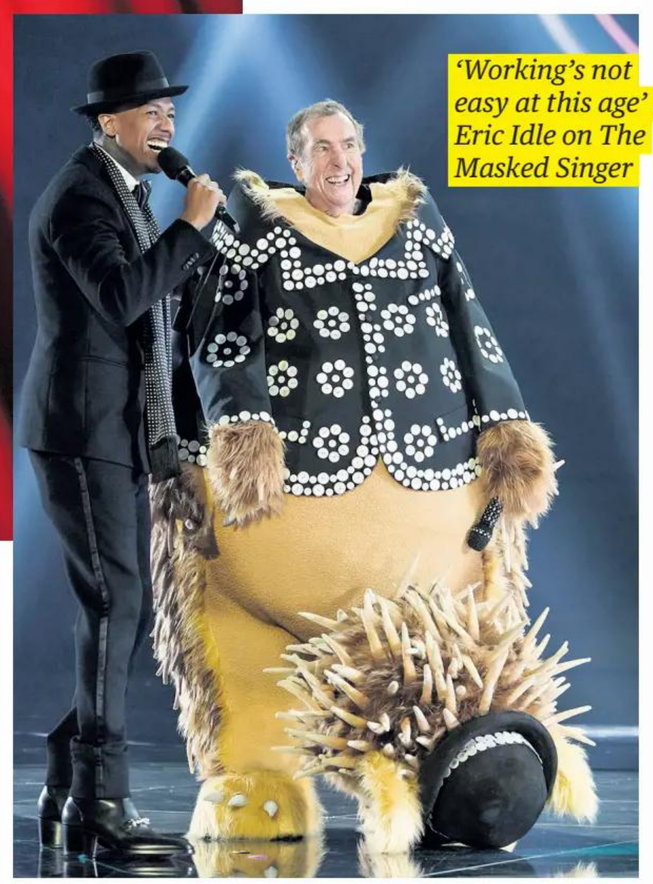
'Surprisingly poor' ... John Cleese promoting Fawlty Towers: The Play



'Never earn more than a good dentist' ... Alexei Sayle



'Always chasing the next job' ... Helen Lederer in Coronation Street



'Working's not easy at this age' ... Eric Idle on The Masked Singer

'This is a time bomb'

Why are so many people in the entertainment industry too skint to retire? **Rachael Healy** uncovers an alarming story of shrinking budgets, axed royalties, misguided mortgages and paltry pensions

"The budgets were fantastic," says Alexei Sayle, remembering making shows with the BBC in the 1980s and 90s. "We'd always go over budget and they'd just say, 'Oh well.' Since then, there's been a rerouting of funds away from the talent. It doesn't affect the superstars but it certainly affects the foot soldiers. It's a lot harder to make a living now."

At the age of 71, the comedian, writer and actor is still working. He feels "the drive" to create and perform, rather than financial pressure, but does notice major changes. "If you made your money in the 70s and 80s, you've got a better chance of being well off," he says. Terms then were "much fairer", with artists benefiting from residuals rather than just one-off payments.

Sayle is not the only performer working beyond the state pension age. The Monty Python stars Eric Idle and John Cleese have both claimed this year that, even after years of stage and screen success, they are skint. Idle, 81, posted on X that, although people assume he and his fellow Pythons are loaded, it's not true: "I have to work for my living. Not easy at this age." In an interview with Saga Magazine, Cleese, 84, described himself as "surprisingly poor" – perhaps revealing the motivation behind his new stage adaptation of Fawlty Towers.

But are they exceptions or is everyone in entertainment finding retirement out of reach? Equity, the actors' union, certainly seems to think so. "There's been a generational shift," says Paul Fleming, general secretary. "Our members are being forced to do more work, for longer."

As Idle highlighted, there is an assumption that people in entertainment must be rich. "The actual money you put in the bank from any given job sounds juicy," says Helen Lederer, whose career in comedy and TV began in the 1980s, taking in everything from The Young Ones and Bottom to Absolutely Fabulous. "But being freelance, it comes and then it doesn't. You are always chasing the next job, not just because of a creative urge but because it's necessary."

Lederer, 69, also has fond memories of the 80s. "That was when there was money," she says. "You'd have some shit idea, then you'd do a TV pilot about it no questions asked. The paradox is: there was lots of money, but one spent it because you didn't know it was going to stop."

Karen Swan, 68, is still working too. She has been performing since she was 15 as a jobbing actor and a folk singer-songwriter. When people spot her in something, she says, "They assume I'm rolling in it. And that's just not the case." She knows others in their 60s and 70s who feel they can't retire. "You go to a nice theatre, watch a film, see a well-produced Netflix series, and you assume the people are well paid," says Fleming. "The reality couldn't be further from the truth."

Entertainment has always offered a precarious existence, with most people working from contract to contract. Over the course of a successful career, they may miss out on the things that would bring security in retirement: pensions, savings, housing. "You've constantly got this anxiety: what's going to happen next?" Swan says. She has cleaned toilets and worked in department stores between creative work, struggling to accumulate savings.

There is one further problem, says Giles Cooper, chairman of the Royal Variety charity – namely, the fact that most people in entertainment aren't typically motivated by money. "Passion is more of a driving force," he says, "than looking after your long-term security." The charity gives hardship grants and runs Brinsworth House, a retirement home for those who have worked on stage, screen and behind the scenes, funding places for those who can't afford them. "Some have literally nothing," says Cooper. "They've spent what they have to keep themselves going between jobs."

PHOTOGRAPHS: GUY BELL/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; FOX IMAGE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES; ITV/DANIELLE BAGULEY/SHUTTERSTOCK; TRISTRAM KENTON

I had to work while recovering from a collapsed lung – and had a stroke on stage

There are other causes for concern among workers considering retirement right now. Some don't have a private pension and, while union pension schemes exist, Equity's was only established in 1997, quite late into the careers of some of its older members. This used to be less of an issue, says Fleming, because many artists "had built up a de facto industry pension" in the form of "very generous royalty provisions". Artists would be paid whenever their work was repeated on TV or sold to another network. "Our members don't stop being artists at the age of 65," he explains. "But royalties would allow them to do less work."

Various changes have chipped away at these ongoing payments. In the late 90s, those who do commercial work such as voiceovers and appearing in TV adverts were dealt a devastating blow when strike action failed to prevent a scalping of pay. It was, says Fleming, "the equivalent of our miners' strike". More recently, the explosion in streaming services has seen audiences for individual shows shrink, thereby hitting payments dictated by viewing figures. Then there is the streamers' business model. "Amazon, Disney and Apple," explains Fleming, "are producing high-quality work – but not to make money. The shows are loss leaders to encourage you to purchase Apple products or an Amazon delivery. It's never designed to recoup." Some pay agreements, however, depend on recoupment.

Modernised deals are needed across the board, says Fleming, but they may still come too late for those retiring now. And performers with money worries often speak of having to make artistic compromises. Swan "decided a long time ago I would do the stuff people see as selling out, just to pay the bills". This meant taking acting jobs in, say, murder mystery productions, which she says some people look down on.

"Integrity is a luxury sometimes," says Lederer. "There's nothing wrong with wanting to keep a roof over your head. Creating your own work, if you have that urge, is incredibly satisfying. Whether it makes you money is secondary." But with age and experience, artists can also make more informed decisions about what jobs it might be best to avoid. "You can recognise a red flag," says Lederer. "We ought to champion the perks of maturity – and that is one of them."

Sayle echoes this point. "No one ever talks about how making money can affect your artistic output," he says. "You can end up doing stuff just for the money. I've been careful never to be in that position because that means you make bad artistic choices." He has a rule of thumb for comedians: "You want to make about as much as a successful dentist. Any more and you start to lose that connection with your audience."

He is more philosophical about the ups and downs. "I don't want to big up exploitation," he says. "But those cycles, when you're in favour then you're out, are a necessary experience for the artist. I'm lucky that a comedian can have a long career."

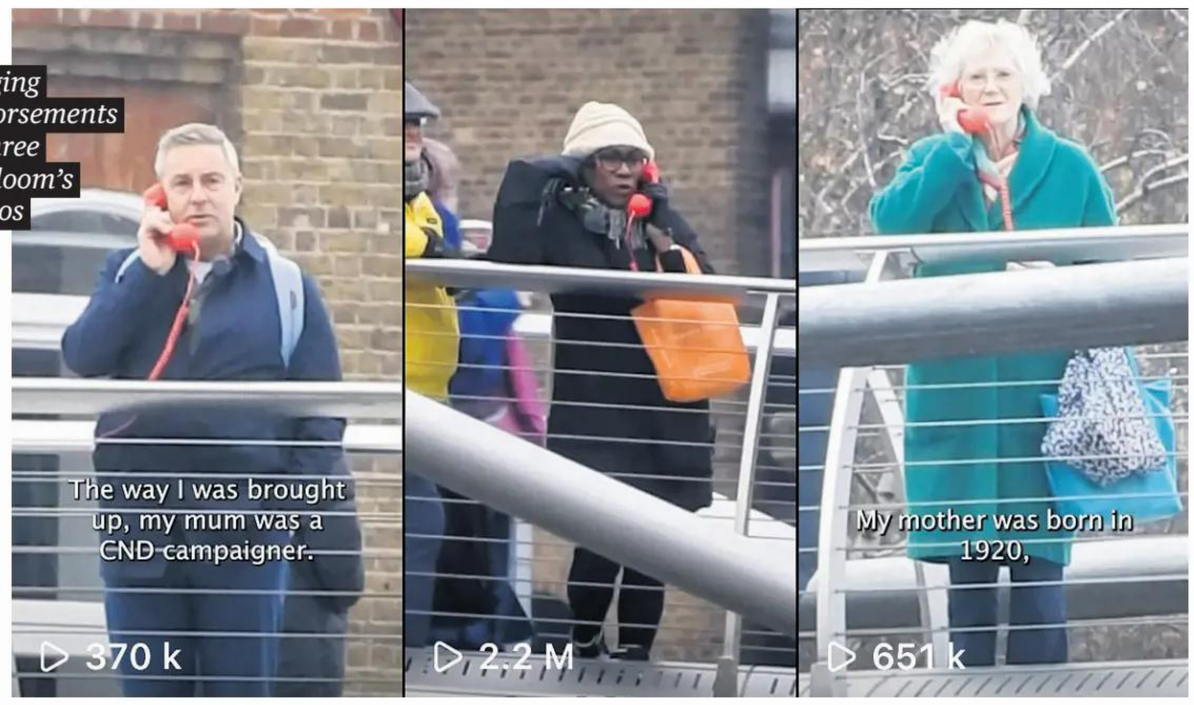
Swan's health means that the physical theatre she once did is impossible. Having to keep working, even through illness, had extreme consequences in 2017, when she took a theatre role while recovering from a collapsed lung. "I ended up having a stroke on stage," she says. "It's still really cut-throat where your health is concerned. The show must go on."

On top of that, many older creatives find their housing situation worrying. Some took out interest-only mortgages in the 90s and 00s, says Fleming, expecting one big job would pay the loan off. "I know successful actors, now approaching their 60s, who are thinking, 'I'm going to lose my home.' That's a ticking time bomb. Performer-pensioner poverty is going to get worse."

State intervention is needed, says Fleming: "The government has to look at what the basic state pension and housing security look like for older people." Swan agrees: "I've got a council flat I'm so grateful for. I know people who've lost their homes. If you're ill and you need help, you shouldn't have to be begging. As you get older, you need more support."

Last month Lederer published Not That I'm Bitter, a memoir reflecting on her career, and she continues to set herself new challenges such as establishing the Comedy Women in Print prize in 2018. "I don't think it's realistic to think one will be in favour throughout one's life," she says. "But why shouldn't one seek meaning until you drop?"

Sayle feels similarly moved. "There's a compulsion to carry on communicating your vision," says the star, who is making shows for Radio 4 and has branched out into YouTube and podcasting. They're definitely satisfying his artistic rather than his financial needs. "It's a difficult economic model," he says. "The first time I talked about doing podcasts, I was like, 'How much do you pay me?' And they said, 'No, you pay us!'"



Ringing endorsements ... three of Bloom's videos

Chat's entertainment

Joe Bloom put an old-school red telephone on a bridge and asked passersby to pick it up for a natter. The artist tells **Kyle MacNeill** about his Instagram sensation

Joe Bloom has always admired the art of the phone conversation. "You see it in movies: it's always this nostalgic, almost glamorous thing, holding a phone up to your ear and talking into this object," he says. (Ironically, we're talking over Zoom.) However, many of us have cut phone calls out of our lives, losing touch with their otherworldly magic. While we're content staring at screens and scrolling through content, speaking into the ether has become unnervingly unnatural. And even when we do take a call, it's usually through earphones on the move rather than by actually sitting down and putting a phone to our ear.

For Bloom, this telephobia is part of a wider trend relating to our increasingly poor connections with each other. "There are a lot of barriers now stopping us from talking in certain ways to each other," he says. As a young person, Bloom himself struggled with face-to-face interactions. "Growing up I found eye contact really difficult, and it made me struggle talking to someone."

> Interviewing strangers is such a beautiful art, but it's become tacky

Now, though, Bloom talks and listens for the sake of art. His Instagram series A View from a Bridge invites strangers walking over London's bridges to share their thoughts on life through an old-school red telephone, and pairs each recording with an introspective, carefully chosen piece of music. The project has been a hit; just three months since he posted the first video – which featured a man called Jason talking about the dangers of being overly patriotic – the page has amassed 232,000 followers.

In many ways, this social experiment seems to be in stark contrast to what Bloom is known for best: epic psychedelic oil paintings of magical realist scenes, which have been showcased at the likes of Guts Gallery and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London. But he is also a film-maker who has directed short dramas and documentaries. "I've always loved the projects that bridge a gap between film and art. I'm basically interested in storytelling," he says.

A View from a Bridge stems from his love of early internet content, which was more about optimism than optimisation. "I remember being inspired years ago by Humans of New York on Facebook," he says, talking fondly about the landmark portrait photography series. "It had style but also substance." But soon, he laments, our feeds were filled with ultra-processed content. "It went a bit nuts, and style and form were lost over just getting shit out there."

This overflow of content includes lots of sketchy vox-pop videos. "Interviewing strangers is such a beautiful art form but it's been made so tacky," says Bloom. "You get some knobhead on the street running up to someone with a microphone asking them about their trauma. It feels awful. The AI-generated subtitles don't even match up. It's contrived and rushed. They just don't care."

From the outset, Bloom was drawn to the bridge as a setting for his project. "It's an in-between place. You're crossing over something, and that does something symbolic to your brain. It's why there are so many phrases related to bridges," he says.

The final element was the series' signature red telephone, inspired by one his mum owned. On a February morning this year, Bloom placed it on Tower Bridge and (with the help of an assistant) invited passersby to pick it up and chat to him while he recorded from 500 metres away. After some experimentation with the style, he landed on the series' visual calling card: each video, shot lo-fi with a dated camera, begins with a closeup of the person talking before Bloom gradually zooms out. In a way, it puts our own perspectives into perspective. "This individual person and their view of the world ultimately zooms out. The person becomes another cog in the system," he explains.

The initial interactions were enlightening, but Bloom was anxious about sharing them. "I was terrified because the worst part of making art is having to share it," he says. After sending them to friends and family, he worked up the courage to start posting them. Within weeks, millions more were coming across A View from a Bridge, after one of the videos – featuring a woman called Sue talking about working in HR – went viral.

Bloom thinks this success is down to a simple fact: people love chatting. "I've learned that people really want to talk," he says. It's why he skews the interviews towards one-way conversations, often letting a silence hang in the air, to encourage people to speak their minds. "This formula has allowed for some incredible revelations," he says.

It's also down to the power of the phone itself, although Bloom has encountered a barrier he didn't expect: several young people who have wanted to get involved have been confused by the old-fashioned landline telephone. "It's pretty funny. They don't know what the hell this thing is!" he laughs.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOE BLOOM



Mark O'Sullivan and Cariad Lloyd in the sitcom

Review My Sexual Abuse: The Sitcom, Channel 4

An emotional exploration of the healing power of comedy

★★★★☆

Lucy Mangan



The standup comedian and writer Mark O'Sullivan is looking at a picture of himself as a boy, on holiday in Norfolk. "I love it," he says. "And it makes me really, really sad." The image is from before "it happened" – before his sexual abuse by a member of his extended family began, when O'Sullivan was 11 or 12.

O'Sullivan's father died when his son was 15 without ever knowing his secret. When O'Sullivan tried, a few years later, to tell his mother, she "shut down the conversation". When O'Sullivan discovered in his 30s that he was not his abuser's only victim, he went to the police; his visit initiated a court case in which O'Sullivan testified to his abuse by the man, who was convicted and imprisoned.

My Sexual Abuse: The Sitcom is a documentary about that terrible story and O'Sullivan transforming it into the single-episode sitcom, 18 dangerous minutes long, that follows the film.

The documentary manages to give time, space and weight to O'Sullivan's abuse. There is a particularly awful moment when he remembers how you "become a sexual object", depersonalised, virtually unseen as a human by the abuser, long before your mind or body is able to understand what is happening.

It also explores the still-unfolding aftermath. When O'Sullivan told his family he was going to the police, and why, it caused a schism. There were those who believed him and those who said – and still say – O'Sullivan was lying and refused to countenance that "Uncle Steve" (as he is called in the sitcom) did any of the things for which he is in prison.

Understandably, O'Sullivan struggles with this disbelief; it was perhaps the main driver of his desire to create the sitcom. How do you better prove you know your subject than by translating its essence for a new audience? How much more light can you let in than to drag it into a studio and play it out for unknown viewers in unknown numbers, laying yourself open to their opinions, criticisms and scepticism?

"I could have written a poem," he suggests to his writing partner, Miles Chapman (who didn't collaborate on this project, which was very much a solo venture). "Yeah," says Chapman. "Or just shut up about it," he adds, mock-wearily. It is a laugh-out-loud moment – including for O'Sullivan – that proves there is nothing so terrible that human beings cannot mine it for humour.

As the documentary plays out, we watch the sitcom take shape around further heartbreaking revelations from O'Sullivan and commentary from his wife. She has her own clear, loving perception of where the deep damage to her husband's mental and emotional life lies. We see that humour is not so much optional as vital; maybe it is hardwired into us. Even during the court case ("uniquely awful" though his cross-examination was), it struck O'Sullivan that the defence barrister's description of Steve – who had lavished presents and days out on the boy as part of his grooming – as "a bit of a soft touch" was a comical line.

The documentary incorporates enough of the making of the sitcom to give us insight into the creative decisions, such as O'Sullivan choosing to play himself as a child as well as an adult, rather than watch a child actor be "groomed". We see him decide to put Steve in a teddy bear suit, emblematic of the innocence and comfort on which children should be able to rely, its awful subversion making the programme all the more powerful. We see the emotional toll of the project – and the potential benefits he hopes to reap from undertaking it.

And what of the sitcom itself? It's good. At least as good as your average pilot and, given its origin and subject matter, therefore something of a triumph. Rufus Jones and Ellie Taylor are the oblivious mum and dad. Cariad Lloyd does double duty as Auntie Bex and his defence lawyer – in recognition of the sitcom-fact that she is responsible for bringing Steve into the family. Sam Underwood plays the cartoonish, fun-loving bear who accosts young O'Sullivan one night. It is formatted as a mainstream studio sitcom and the rictus artificiality of it all suits O'Sullivan's aims perfectly. You have to laugh, especially at the final line. And cry, afterwards.

Race Across the World: The Final 9pm, BBC One



Just 12 minutes separate the winners from the runners-up as the final four teams (including Isabel and Eugenie, *pictured*) embark upon the last leg of the no-fly journey, which will take them from Jakarta to the island of Lombok. With seven countries and nearly 9,000 miles behind them – they started in Sapporo on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido – it's an infuriatingly short amount of time for whoever doesn't make it. Stick around for the reunion show at 10.40pm, filmed six months later.
Hollie Richardson

The Repair Shop
8pm, BBC One
Leigh brings a tattered leather armchair into the workshop this week, telling the lovely if heart-rending story of how it became the first piece in the home he shared with his partner, Greg, who died from Aids 35 years ago. Meanwhile, Catherine brings in a bodhrán that needs some TLC. **HR**

The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan
9pm, BBC Two
The comedian is back exploring countries with "a bad reputation" – this time starting in Uganda, east Africa, which he still associates with Idi Amin's brutal dictatorship. His host, the Bugandan princess Alex, shows him a great time – until a tricky conversation about the country's recent (and popular) anti-gay law. **HR**

Painting Birds With Jim and Nancy Moir
9pm, Sky Arts
It's not all sunshine and sauntering for UK's painting power couple. In this episode, the Moirs brave blustery north Wales in search of the black grouse. It's a photogenic subject, straight off the label of a whisky bottle, so it's well worth the effort. Joining them is the chirpy comedian Joe Pasquale.
Hannah Verdier

The Red King
9pm, Alibi
It's finale time for the creepy, blackly comic island whodunnit. After some grisly business involving a severed hand, the mainland copper Grace has untangled the mystery of the missing teenager Cai. Now, though, the guilty party is facing mob justice stoked by the True Way cult. Can the frankly knackered Grace stand up to those out for blood?
Graeme Virtue

Inside No 9
10pm, BBC Two
As the ultimate series of the wonderful anthology continues, Steve Pemberton plays Jason, a middle-aged man who has dragged his barely interested family to an escape room. Obviously, all isn't as it seems in a moving meditation on persistence, mortality and the endurance of love. **Phil Harrison**

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.15** The Moment of Proof (T) (R) **10.45** Expert Witness (T) (R) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **The Repair Shop** (T) Members of the public bring in an armchair, a bangle, a model carousel and a drum.

9.0 **Race Across the World: The Final** (T) As they embark on the final leg of their journey and race from Jakarta to the final checkpoint in Lombok, the first two teams are separated by just 12 minutes.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Race Across the World: The Reunion** (T) Last in the series.
11.40 FILM **The Prestige** (Christopher Nolan, 2006) (T) Two Victorian magicians become bitter rivals. Mystery thriller, starring Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale.
1.45 **Weather** (T) **1.50** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Money for Nothing** (T) (R) **7.15** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: MasterChef (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Mastermind (T) (R) **2.15** Great Coastal Railway Journeys (T) (R) **2.45** Five Bedrooms (T) (R) **3.30** The Farmers' Country Showdown (T) (R) **4.15** Cornwall: This Fishing Life (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) **7.0** Hairy Bikers: Route 66 (T) (R)

8.0 **Springwatch** (T) Chris and Michaela commentate on the drama from the live nests.

9.0 **The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan** (T) The comedian visits Uganda, where he is hosted by a princess who attempts to expand his knowledge of the country beyond the brutal dictatorship of Idi Amin.

10.0 **Inside No 9** (T)
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **Unspun World With John Simpson** (T) News review.
11.30 **Hidden Treasures of the National Trust** (T) (R)
12.30 **Sign Zone** Rob and Rylan's Grand Tour (T) (R) **1.30** The Great British Sewing Bee (T) (R) **2.30** Touring Toolshed (T) (R) **3.0** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.0** Emmerdale (T) **7.30** Coronation Street (T)

8.0 **Britain's Got Talent** (T) Ant and Dec host as more acts compete in the semi-finals in front of judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and Bruno Tonioli.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Peston** (T)
11.40 **Absolutely India: Mancs in Mumbai** (T) (R)
12.05 **Shop on TV 3.0** Tonight: How Broke Is Your Council? (T) (R) **3.25** My Mum, Your Dad (T) (R) **4.15** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.30** For the Love of Dogs With Alison Hammond (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.30 **3rd Rock from the Sun** (T) (R) **7.45** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.40** Frasier (T) (R) **11.10** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.05** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** Come Dine With Me: The Professionals (T) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Location, Location, Location** (T) Kirstie and Phil scour the south coast between Southampton and Bognor.

9.0 **The Gathering** (T) Drugs, alcohol and simmering emotions explode into multiple showdowns and a violent assault at the beach rave, with Kelly rushed into hospital. Last in the series.

10.0 **Britain's Most Expensive Houses** (T) (R)
11.05 **The Piano** (T) (R)
12.10 **24 Hours in A&E** (T) (R) **1.05** Imposter: The Man Who Came Back from the Dead (T) (R) **2.0** Kill Zone (T) (R) **3.05** FILM Sequin in a Blue Room (2021) (T) **4.30** Grand Designs Australia (T) (R) **5.30** Kirstie's House of Craft (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Rear-View Mirror (John Murlowski, 2023) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** Poundland: Can You Get It Cheaper? (T)

8.0 **The Motorway** (T) A four-car crash in Manchester's rush hour puts the patrollers under pressure.

9.0 **Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts** (T) Sister Harriet is assisted by sisters Benita, Jane and Jo for the hottest day of the year so far, with both walk-in and ambulance patients queuing up rapidly.

10.0 **Trauma Room One** (T) (R)
11.05 **999: Emergency Call Out** (R)
12.05 **Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** The World's Biggest Murder Trial: Nuremberg (T) (R) **4.15** Great Artists (T) (R) **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.05** House Doctor (T) (R) **5.35** Milkshake! (T)

BBC Four

7.0 **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) Michael Portillo discovers the origins of the London Underground map. **7.30** War Walks (T) (R) The Battle of Naseby.

8.0 **Full Circle With Michael Palin** (T) (R) The presenter reaches China.

8.50 **Michael Palin: The Art of Travel** (T) (R) The story of the publicity campaigns for the Great Western Railway.

9.0 **Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies** (T) (R) The double agents who made D-day such a success.

10.0 **Bernard Hill Remembers Boys from the Black Stuff** (T) (R) The late actor remembers Alan Bleasdale's classic Liverpool-set drama.
10.10 **Boys from the Blackstuff** (T) (R) All five episodes of the 1982 drama, with Michael Angelis and Bernard Hill.
3.20 **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Phoenix Rise **7.30** Phoenix Rise **8.0** Shark Tank **8.40** The Catch Up **8.45** Zen Motoring **9.0** FILM Spider-Man: Far from Home (2019) **11.0** Back to Life **11.25** Back to Life **11.50** I Kissed a Girl **12.40** I Kissed a Girl **1.30** Charlotte in Sunderland **2.0** Charlotte in Sunderland **2.30** Back to Life **2.55** Back to Life **3.25** Laugh Lessons **3.30** Charlotte in Sunderland

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Secrets of the Supercars **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **10.0** Top Gear **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Storage Hunters UK **1.30** Storage Hunters UK **2.0** Gadget Man **2.30** Gadget Man **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Richard Osman's House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Mad Dogs **11.10** World's Most Dangerous Roads **12.10** Mock the Week **12.50** Would I Lie to You? **1.30** QI XL **2.15** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **2.40** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.05** Secrets of the Supercars **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Modern Family **8.0** Teen First Dates **9.0** Celebrity Gogglebox **10.0** Gogglebox **11.05** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.45** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.10** Modern Family **2.35** Modern Family **3.0** Celebrity Gogglebox **3.55** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **4.45** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Film4

11.0am FILM Mandy (1952) **12.55** FILM 40 Guns to Apache Pass (1967) **2.50** FILM The Guns of Fort Petticoat (1957) **4.30** FILM The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1974) **6.40** FILM Lion (2016) **9.0** FILM Fresh (2022) **11.15** FILM Red Sparrow (2018) **2.0** FILM Venus (2006)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.25** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Veronica Mars **11.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **12.0** Secret Crush **1.0** Dress to Impress **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Britain's Got Talent **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Family Fortunes **8.0** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Hell's Kitchen **10.0** Plebs **10.30** Plebs **11.0** Family Guy **12.0** American Dad! **1.0** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Bob's Burgers **1.55** Shopping With Keith Lemon **2.20** Shopping With Keith Lemon **2.50** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

6.0am NCIS: Los Angeles **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **12.0** The Flash **1.0** SEAL Team **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **9.0** Hold the Front Page **10.0** Resident Alien **11.0** Ted **12.0** Brassic **1.0** The Walking Dead **3.0** S.W.A.T **4.0** Banshee **5.0** Hawaii Five-0

Sky Arts

6.0am John Wilson Orchestra Presents Cole Porter in Hollywood **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Michael Douglas **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The Fantastic Mr Murray **3.0** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs **4.0** Discovering: Roy Scheider **5.0** The Joy of Painting **5.30** The Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2022 **9.0** Painting Birds With Jim and Nancy Moir **10.0** The Eighties **11.0** Greatest Albums Live **12.30** Isle of Wight Festival Greatest Hits **1.0** Video Killed the Radio Star **1.30** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien **2.30** Hey, Boo: Harper Lee and to Kill a Mockingbird **4.0** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** Auction

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **7.55** True Blood **10.05** Billions **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Ray Donovan **3.30** True Blood **5.40** Billions **7.50** House of the Dragon **9.0** The Sympathizer **10.10** The King **112.10** The Pacific **1.15** The Deuce **2.20** Game of Thrones **3.30** In Treatment **4.0** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets


The Prestige, BBC One

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales play Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op 16, with pianist Zee Zee. Plus, the Hathor Consort perform Matthias Weckmann's Wenn der Herr die Gefangenen zu Zion erlösen wird. **3.0** Choral Evensong. From St David's Cathedral. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Vivaldi (R) **5.0** In Tune. Pianist Kirill Gerstein joins Sean Rafferty and plays live. **7.0** Classical Mixtape (R) **7.30** In Concert. Giancarlo Guerrero conducts the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in Caroline Shaw's The Observatory, Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, M83 (with soloist Sergio Tiempo) and Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, BB123. **9.45** The Essay: A Different Way to Listen. With Chisato Minamimura, a deaf performance artist. (3/5) **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** More Or Less (2/7) **9.30** To Catch a Scorpion. The BBC team watch as smugglers arrange a crossing in the dead of night. (3/8) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** File on 4 (R) **11.45** D-Day: The Last Voices. The story of D-day, using rediscovered testimonies from all sides. (3/5) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Thief at the British Museum (3/9) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** The Interrogation. Drama, by Roy Williams. Officers Matthews and Armitage pride themselves on their confounding interrogation technique. However, nothing has prepared them for Evie. (3/5) (R) **3.0** The Law Show (2/4) **3.30** The Artificial Human. Aleks Krotoski and Kevin Fong find out how AI will affect the world of care. (1/6) **4.0** The Media Show **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Robin Ince's Reality Tunnel. The comedian talks about love, books and his love of books. (R) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** AntiSocial (R) **8.45** Uncharted With Hannah Fry. The presenter tells a tale about the mysterious realm of artificial intelligence. (9/10) (R) **9.0** Being Roman With Mary Beard (R) **9.30** All in the Mind (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight. With James Coomarasamy. **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Long Island. By Colm Tóibín. (3/10) **11.0** Athena's Cancel Culture. Comedian Athena Kugblenu explores the world of offence in modern times. (R) **11.15** Tom Mayhew Is Benefit Scum (R) **11.30** Lights Out (R) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** D-Day: The Last Voices (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Father Brown: The Secret Garden **6.45** Beggars Banquet (3/5) **7.0** Never Too Late (7/7) **7.30** Hancock's Half Hour (3/16) **8.0** Hazelbeach (3/6) **8.30** The Nature of Spring (3/5) **8.45** Curious Under the Stars (3/5) **9.0** Tudur Owen: United Nations of Anglesey (2/2) **9.30** A British History in Weather (3/10) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Please Leave a Message After the Tone **11.0** Father Brown: The Secret Garden **11.45** Beggars Banquet (3/5) **12.0** Never Too Late (7/7) **12.30** Hancock's Half Hour (3/16) **1.0** Hazelbeach (3/6) **1.30** The Nature of Spring (3/5) **1.45** Curious Under the Stars (3/5) **2.0** Dilemma (2/6) **2.30** Hidden Treasures: The Slaves of Solitude **4.0** Please Leave a Message After the Tone **5.0** Father Brown: The Secret Garden **5.45** Beggars Banquet (3/5) **6.0** Never Too Late (7/7) **6.30** Hancock's Half Hour (3/16) **7.0** Hazelbeach (3/6) **7.30** The Nature of Spring (3/5) **7.45** Curious Under the Stars (3/5) **8.0** Dilemma (2/6) **8.30** Hidden Treasures: The Slaves of Solitude **10.0** Comedy Club: Tudur Owen - United Nations of Anglesey (2/2) **10.30** I Think I've Got a Problem (2/4) **11.0** Chain Reaction (2/6) **11.30** Big Booth Too (2/6) **12.0** Please Leave a Message After the Tone **1.0** Father Brown: The Secret Garden **1.45** Beggars Banquet (3/5) **2.0** Never Too Late (7/7) **2.30** Hancock's Half Hour (3/16) **3.0** Hazelbeach (3/6) **3.30** The Nature of Spring (3/5) **3.45** Curious Under the Stars (3/5) **4.0** Dilemma (2/6) **4.30** Hidden Treasures: The Slaves of Solitude

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **GERMANY**

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

D	G	P	P	R	A	W	N	C		
Y	W	S	E	M	C	D	A	E		
L	H	S	M	R	I	V	O	D		
O	I	A	A	U	I	R	E	C		
B	T	B	L	A	S	Y	H	A		
S	U	A	R	I	V	S	N	S		
T	O	E	I	O	B	U	E	E		
E	R	S	H	G	T	U	N	L		
R	T	C	E	L	O	S	T	T		
P	N	H	E	R	R	I	N	G		
A	E	N	O	M	L	A	S	D		

Solution no 16,867

■	I	N	S	U	C	C	E	S	S	I	O	N
S	■	O	■	T	■	A	■	E	■	D	■	O
H	E	N	N	A	■	S	I	X	T	E	E	N
O	■	P	■	H	■	U	■	I	■	A	■	E
S	A	L	E	■	G	A	U	N	T	L	E	T
T	■	U	■	S	■	L	■	E	■	■	■	H
A	S	S	E	R	T	■	U	S	A	B	L	E
K	■	■	■	I	■	M	■	S	■	A	■	W
O	V	E	R	L	O	O	K	■	A	N	T	I
V	■	D	■	A	■	D	■	U	■	Q	■	S
I	N	G	E	N	U	E	■	G	A	U	Z	E
C	■	E	■	K	■	N	■	L	■	E	■	R
H	A	S	T	A	L	A	V	I	S	T	A	■

Sudoku no 6,495

7	8	2	6	3	9	5	4	1
6	5	4	1	2	8	7	9	3
3	1	9	4	7	5	2	8	6
4	7	5	3	9	6	8	1	2
8	9	6	5	1	2	3	7	4
2	3	1	8	4	7	6	5	9
9	6	7	2	5	1	4	3	8
5	4	8	9	6	3	1	2	7
1	2	3	7	8	4	9	6	5

Word wheel

PEACETIME

Suguru

3	1	2	4	5	1
5	4	3	1	2	4
1	2	5	4	5	1
4	3	1	3	2	3
2	5	2	4	5	1
3	1	3	1	2	4

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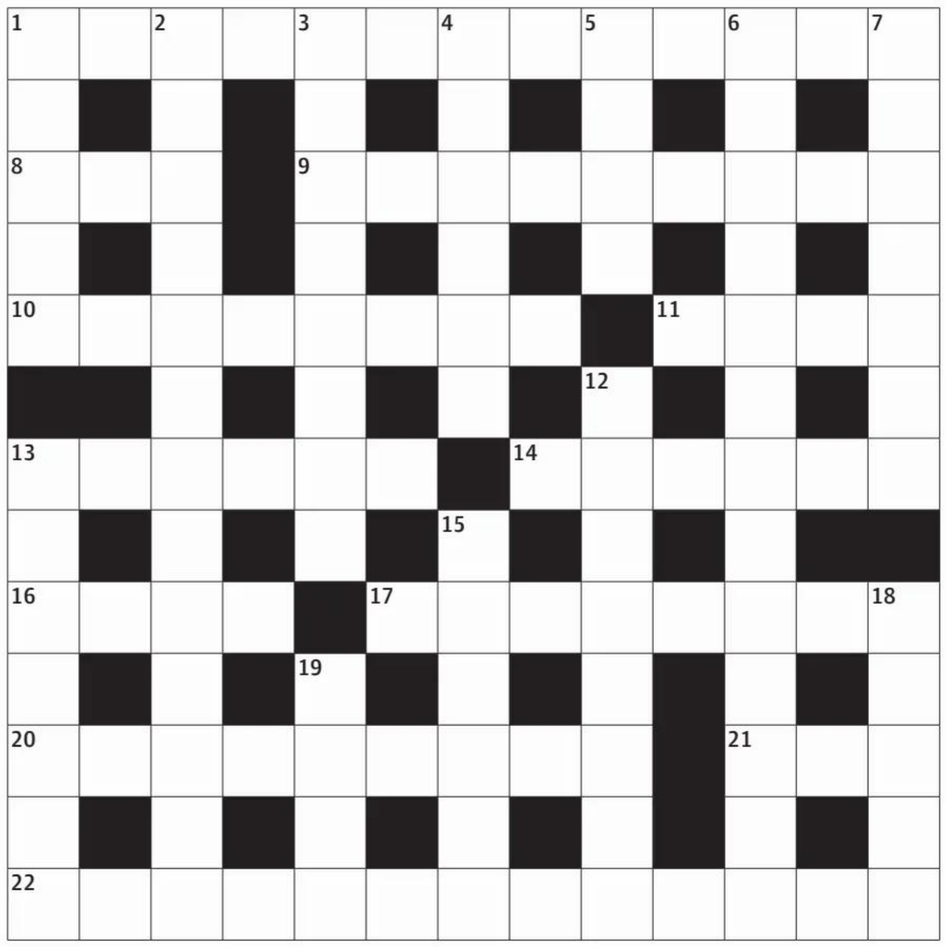
Quick crossword no 16,868

Across

1 1913 DH Lawrence novel (4,3,6)
8 Great Expectations hero (3)
9 Last leader of the USSR (9)
10 Underwear and nightwear (8)
11 Biblical victim of fratricide (4)
13 Highest point (6)
14 Humid - passionate (6)
16 Timid (4)
17 Place for ablutions (8)
20 Captain Cook's vessel - Inspector Morse's name (9)
21 Maker of mischief (3)
22 Brainwashed (13)

Down

1 Part of a calyx (5)
2 The witticism is purely fortuitous (2,3,8)
3 Increases (8)
4 British naturalist (6)
5 Egg-shaped (4)
6 Show-off (13)
7 Sausage (7)
12 Kind of Protestant (8)
13 African river flowing into the Indian Ocean (7)
15 Toil (6)
18 Two-wheeler (5)
19 Often perfumed powder (4)



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Sudoku no 6,496

Medium. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

			2	4				
9		3		8		1		
					5		7	
				7		3		
		6			3		2	8
	4	1						5
			9	2			8	
4			7					
	2						6	

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

				5	
	4		3		
			4		

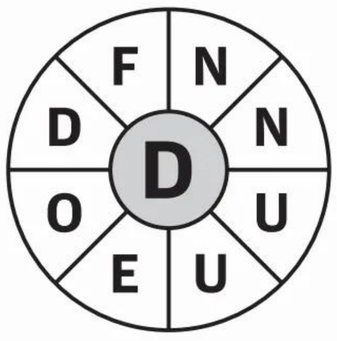
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words connected with fun in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

C	C	D	J	O	L	L	Y	K
S	H	D	E	L	I	G	H	T
G	E	E	O	G	Y	A	L	P
I	E	S	C	D	A	A	I	T
G	R	U	S	Y	U	M	R	O
G	U	M	I	G	R	O	E	A
L	T	A	H	A	P	R	H	S
E	A	T	S	S	O	T	E	E
C	E	L	L	I	R	H	T	M
R	R	D	I	I	J	O	K	E
S	T	E	M	Y	P	P	A	H

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-28. Good-23. Average-17.



Trivia corner

Which country has won the most Olympic medals at equestrian events?
a. France
b. Germany
c. Great Britain
d. Sweden
Answer top right

