

Power dressing

Why style matters in Trump 2.0

G2

‘Bridget Jones reminds me of a much more comfortable era’

Zoe Williams, G2



The Guardian

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Starmer faces Labour revolt over backing for oilfield

Jessica Elgot
Kiran Stacey
Helena Horton

Keir Starmer is facing a growing internal backlash over the potential approval of a giant new oilfield after Treasury sources indicated Rachel Reeves was likely to back the idea.

MPs described a “breaking point” in relations and called for Starmer to reiterate his own commitments to no further oil and gas licences. The Rosebank development was given the go-ahead in 2023 but ruled unlawful by a court last week.

The energy secretary, Ed Miliband, has previously described the licence for Rosebank as “climate vandalism” – setting up a potential clash between his department and the Treasury.

Reeves is understood to be supportive of a new application for environmental consent, with allies suggesting that this would not violate Labour’s manifesto, which promised not to issue new exploration licences but not to cancel ones already issued.

In spring, Miliband’s department is due to publish new guidelines that could scupper any attempt by the oil companies to successfully resubmit their applications.

Climate-concerned MPs are likely to appeal directly to the prime minister about the importance of being seen to stick to the manifesto commitment of no new oil and gas licences.

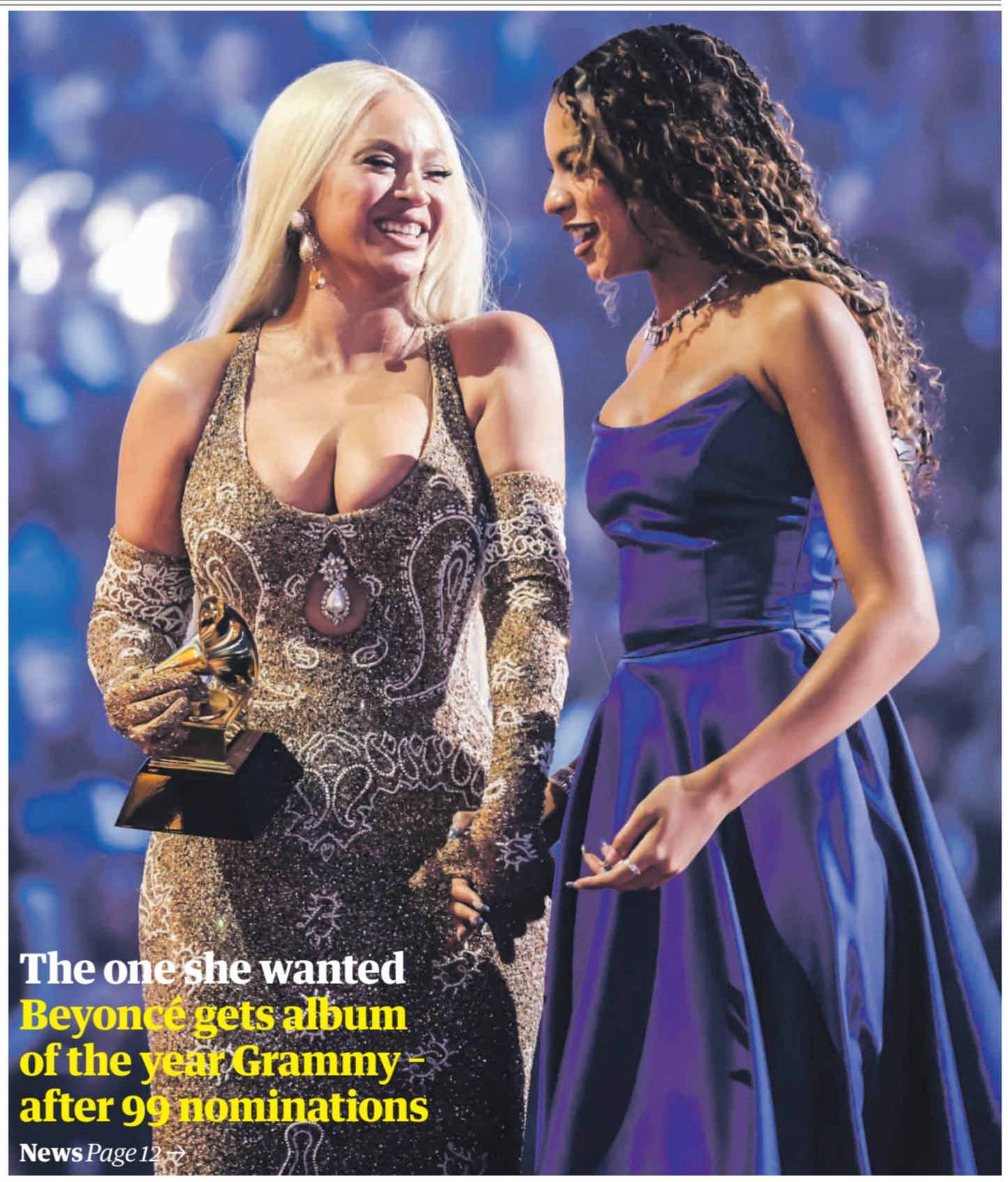
Anger is widespread even among centrist Labour MPs who have been champions of infrastructure.

It is understood the Labour Growth Group – a large caucus of mostly new Labour MPs who have pushed hard on announcements on housing and infrastructure – will not take a position backing Rosebank. The group did back the Heathrow expansion plan announced by Reeves last week.

MPs said more criticism would be forthcoming if approval was being pushed by the Treasury. “This absolutely is a line in the sand for almost everyone in the PLP [parliamentary Labour party]. This goes specifically against what we said we were about,” one MP said.

“This would be a breaking point for a lot of us,” another MP said. A third said: “We have to send a signal to workers, not just oil giants, that we know what [energy] transition really means. If

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The one she wanted

Beyoncé gets album of the year Grammy – after 99 nominations

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▲ *Beyoncé, with daughter Blue Ivy, collecting her best album award at the Grammys* PHOTOGRAPH: FRANCIS SPECKER/CBS/GETTY

US to pause Canada and Mexico tariffs for 30 days

Tom Phillips
Richard Partington
Callum Jones

Donald Trump pulled back from the brink of a trade war with Canada and Mexico last night, postponing sweeping new American tariffs on goods from its two closest economic partners by one month.

It is the third time in two weeks the US president has delayed his threatened 25% tariffs on the two countries. China is still set to face an additional 10% levy on its exports to the US from today.

After talks with the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, and the Mexican president, Claudia Sheinbaum, yesterday, Trump agreed at the last minute to hold off from imposing new duties on the two countries.

The agreements came on a day of extreme volatility in global financial markets as rattled investors reacted to the prospect of a dramatically escalating dispute involving the world’s largest economies.

The US president had upended US-Mexico ties over the weekend when he announced 25% tariffs and accused Sheinbaum’s

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Number of non-smokers with lung cancer on rise

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

The proportion of people diagnosed with lung cancer who have never smoked is increasing, with air pollution an “important factor”, the World Health Organization’s cancer agency has said. Lung cancer in people who have never smoked cigarettes or tobacco is now estimated to be the fifth highest cause of cancer deaths worldwide, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

Lung cancer in never-smokers is also occurring

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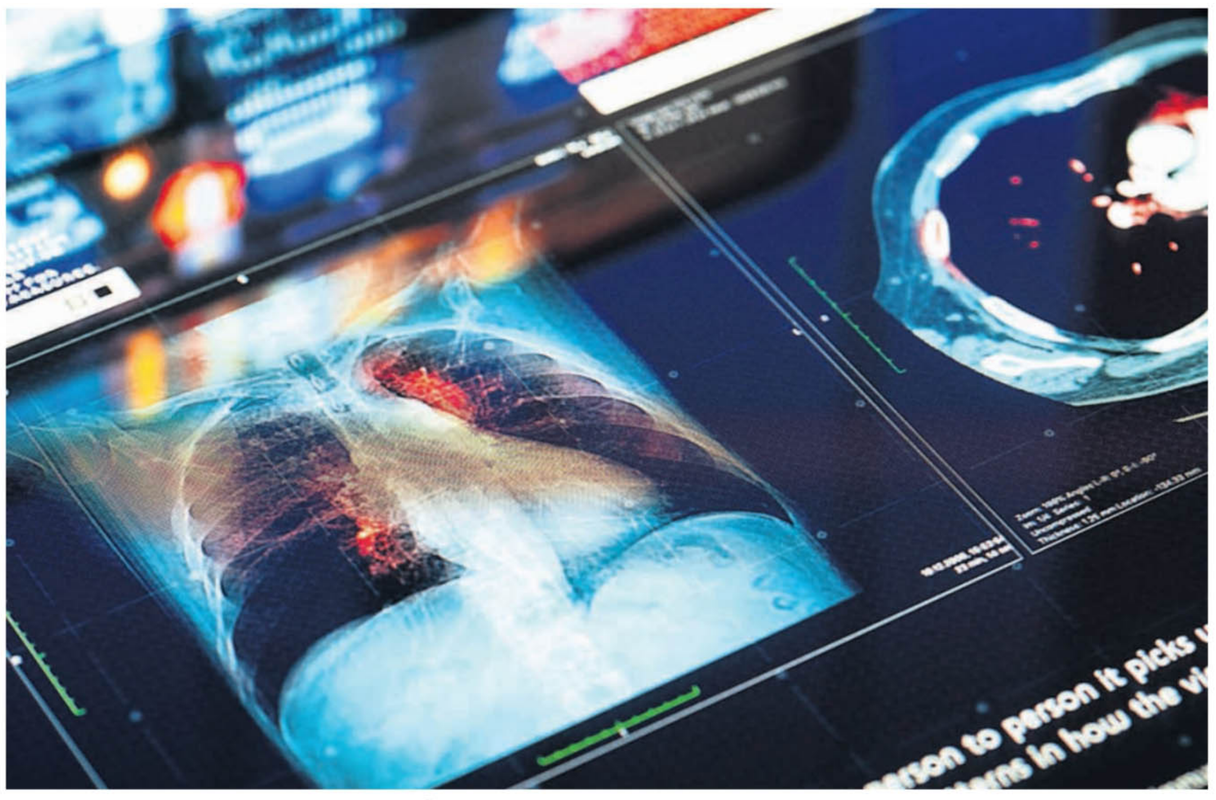
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Lung cancer in people who have never smoked cigarettes or tobacco is now estimated to be the fifth highest cause of cancer deaths globally
PHOTOGRAPH: DA-KUK/GETTY

Number of non-smokers with lung cancer up as air pollution increases

Continued *from page 1*

almost exclusively as adenocarcinoma, which has become the most dominant of the four main subtypes of the disease in both men and women globally, the IARC said.

About 200,000 cases of adenocarcinoma were associated with exposure to air pollution in 2022, according to the IARC study published in the Lancet Respiratory Medicine journal.

The largest burden of adenocarcinoma attributable to air pollution was found in east Asia, particularly China, the study found.

In an interview with the Guardian, the study's lead author and head of the IARC's cancer surveillance branch, Freddie Bray, said the findings underscored the need for urgent monitoring of the changing risk of lung cancer. Further studies were also required to identify possible causal factors, such as air pollution, in populations where smoking was not considered the major cause of lung cancer, he added.

"With declines in smoking prevalence – as seen in the UK and US – the proportion of lung cancers diagnosed among those who have never smoked tends to increase.

"Whether the global proportion of adenocarcinomas attributable to ambient air pollution will increase depends on the relative success of future strategies to curtail tobacco use and air pollution worldwide."

Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer incidence and mortality worldwide. In 2022, about 2.5 million people were diagnosed with the disease. But the patterns of incidence by subtype have changed starkly in recent decades. Of the four main subtypes of lung cancer (adenocarcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, small-cell carcinoma and large-cell carcinoma), adenocarcinoma has become the dominant subtype among both men and women, the IARC found.

Adenocarcinoma accounted for 45.6% of global lung cancer cases among men and 59.7% among women in 2022. The respective figures were 39.0% and 57.1% in 2020. Adenocarcinoma accounts for as much as 70% of lung cancer cases among never smokers worldwide, the IARC said.

While lung cancer incidence rates among men have generally decreased in most countries during the past 40 years, rates among women have tended to continue to rise.

Current trends suggest that while men still make up most lung cancer cases (about 1.6m in 2022), the gap between lung cancer incidences in males and females is narrowing, with about 900,000 women diagnosed with lung cancer in 2022.

In 2023, the Guardian revealed how the number of women diagnosed in the UK was overtaking men for the first time, prompting calls for women to be as vigilant.

Cancer experts said the figures reflected historical differences in smoking prevalence, specifically that smoking rates peaked much earlier in men than women. Women should now be as alert to potential lung cancer signs as they were about checking for lumps in their breasts, they said.

Changes in cigarette manufacturing and smoking patterns in recent decades have influenced the trends in lung cancer incidence by subtype, and there is accumulating evidence of a causal link between air pollution and an increased risk of adenocarcinoma, the IARC said.

It is not known what proportion of global lung cancer cases are never-smokers, only that evidence suggests it is rising. Scientists are keen to learn more about what else, beyond smoking, is causing lung cancer.

"Air pollution can be considered an important factor that partly explains the emerging predominance of adenocarcinoma that accounts for 53 – 70% of cases of lung cancer among people who have never smoked worldwide," the study reported.

Bray said the study provided insights on how lung cancer and the underlying risk factors were evolving, "offering clues as to how we can optimally prevent lung cancer worldwide". He added: "Changes in smoking patterns and exposure to air pollution are among the main determinants of the changing risk profile of lung cancer incidence by subtype.

"The diverging trends by sex in recent generations offer insights to cancer prevention specialists and policymakers seeking to develop and implement tobacco and air pollution control strategies tailored to high-risk populations."

Labour MPs at 'breaking point' over Starmer's oilfield plans

Continued *from page 1*

we don't build up domestic supply chains and manufacturing for renewables, oil workers will have nowhere to go. They won't thank us for that."

A fourth Labour MP said it was important to make the case that new oilfields should not be seen as an automatic growth advantage. "You're banking on what could potentially very quickly become stranded assets and the profits go to private companies but it's the public sector that will end up clearing up the mess.

"That is not a good investment and I think there are some of my colleagues that sort of think that all growth is good and that's actually economically illiterate.

"The new intake are very clear. If Trump is closing his door on green investment, we should be opening the door to green investment. The Americans are going to miss out. We don't want to."

The backlash against Rosebank would be "much, much bigger" than on Heathrow, another MP said. "It says a worrying thing about our political strategy," they said. "There was a quite clear line on all of this stuff. And then if you get panicked just by a couple of headlines in the Daily Mail, then that as a narrative feels a bit worrying." Another MP agreed. "They can hold the line that you can make electric planes but digging up a tonne of oil really isn't anything other than environmental vandalism," they said. "Rosebank is fundamentally a disaster."

Five Labour MPs, including three who chair different all-party parliament groups (APPGs) on climate and renewable energy, wrote a letter to the Times yesterday criticising the automatic link made between new oilfields and economic growth – with a veiled reminder of Labour's green electoral platform.

"Labour's mandate is clear: the country wants a decisive shift toward a future with cleaner, more secure energy," it said, signed by Luke Murphy, Polly Billington and Alex Sobel, Peter Swallow and Abtisam Mohamed.

Another member of the climate APPG, Uma Kumaran, tweeted after the ruling: "Britain's future lies in clean energy, not more oil and gas."

The former shadow ministers Sarah Champion and Barry Gardiner both said the government must rule out any further development. "Approving the Rosebank operation is simply not compatible with our climate goals," Champion said. Gardiner said it was a test whether the chancellor was "willing to abide by her manifesto commitment". Two other factors will be the view of Scottish Labour and the GMB union, which are pushing for the development to be approved. A significant number of ministers are members of GMB.



A protest against the Rosebank plan, which was ruled unlawful last week

The Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, has hinted he expects the government to honour the commitment to the licence – but some new Scottish Labour MPs are opposed.

The Rosebank row opens Scottish Labour to criticism from all sides, as seen yesterday when voices from across the political spectrum in Scotland attacked Starmer's "broken promises" after the new boss of GB Energy, Juergen Maier, admitted in his first broadcast interview the prime minister's pledge of 1,000 jobs for Aberdeen could take 20 years.

Miliband's guidelines will be the result of a consultation into how emissions caused by the burning of oil and gas extracted from energy projects will be accounted and allowed for in planning applications.

Tessa Khan, the founder of the climate campaign group Uplift, which brought the case against Rosebank, said she was confident the guidance would preclude the new oilfields.

Additional reporting **Libby Brooks**



▼ *Morgan Gibbs-White (right) celebrates scoring Forest's second goal with Anthony Elanga and Morato*
PHOTOGRAPH: MI NEWS/NURPHOTO/REX

'Free pint when Forest score!' Pub's own goal as it loses £1,500 during 7-0 rampage

Jessica Murray
Midlands correspondent

It had seemed like the perfect promotion to get a few more punters through the door on a Saturday afternoon – give away a free pint for every goal scored by Nottingham Forest that day.

But seven goals and £1,500 worth of pints later, Nottinghamshire pub landlady Beccy Webster realised she may have scored a spectacular own goal.

"It got to half-time [when Forest were 3-0 up] and I thought, 'Oh my gosh, I don't know if I can carry this on.' But I decided I was sticking to my word," she said. "This is what I've said I'm going to do. Whether it's four, five, six, seven, 10 goals, I'm seeing it through now. We ended up giving away 300 pints."

It was only about 45 minutes before kick-off that Webster decided to create the offer at her pub, the Gedling Inn, which she has run for six years. Having only recently got TNT Sports installed, she was keen to make the most of being able to broadcast the Forest game live.

"FREE PINT WHEN FOREST SCORE!!", read the post on Instagram about 20 minutes before the club's Premier League match against Brighton started at 12.30pm on Saturday.

The first goal hit the net 12 minutes in, and they soon came thick and fast – the final score was 7-0 to Nottingham Forest, to much jubilation among fans gathered in the pub.

"It was just pure adrenaline. We were running with the fact the pub was so vibrant, everyone was happy," said Webster's partner, Cassian Prime, who runs the pub alongside her. "Coming off the back of a 5-0 loss, to see everybody happy and cheering and dancing and singing, it was amazing.

"A lot of the punters were our regulars anyway, so they were almost just laughing at us. They were lining up, getting the pints, and they'd literally put the pint on the table and another goal would go in. There were just lots of laughs."

As the seventh goal went in, the couple poured themselves a drink and joined in. Prime had been away from the pub that day, working on some house renovations, and had no idea about the free pint promotion until his phone was inundated with messages.

"My phone was like a hot potato, it was pinging away with people saying, 'You're a legend, we can't believe you've done it, you guys are class,' and I had no idea what they were talking about," said Prime.

"So I went to the pub and it was in uproar, and Beccy came creeping from downstairs and told me. At this point it was 3-0, so I just thought hopefully we sit back, we defend, and try to hold on to the lead. Instead, we went and scored another four."

The couple said despite the hefty bill, they don't regret the decision. Their story has been reported across the globe, and brought an unprecedented level of attention and new customers to the pub.

"The pub has gone globally viral, we've been contacted from people in South Africa and France and Brazil. So for the £1,500, approximately, that it cost us, the publicity that's come with it is quite a bargain," said Prime.

They also joked that Nottingham Forest might help cover the costs. "The owner has enough money to come and pay the bar tab, so if he could get in touch, we could sit and have a pint together or something," said Webster.

In the meantime, they're mulling whether to continue the promotion for future matches. "We definitely want to roll with the momentum – I'm not sure whether we could do the free pints again for every goal, but you never know," said Webster. "We'll see what backing we get."



▲ *Patrons in the Gedling Inn, which gave customers a free pint every time Nottingham Forest scored in their victory over Brighton* PHOTOGRAPH: GEDLING INN

Don't upset the AI: experts raise alarm over 'harm' to technology

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

Artificial intelligence systems capable of feelings or self-awareness may be harmed if the technology is developed irresponsibly, according to a letter signed by AI practitioners and thinkers including Sir Stephen Fry.

More than 100 experts have put forward five principles for conducting responsible research into AI consciousness as rapid advances raise concerns that such systems could be considered sentient.

The principles are: prioritising research on understanding and assessing consciousness in AIs to prevent "mistreatment and suffering"; setting constraints on developing conscious AI systems; taking a phased approach to developing such systems; sharing findings with the public; and refraining from making misleading or overconfident statements about creating conscious AI.

The open letter's signatories include academics such as Sir Anthony Finkelstein at City St George's, University of London, and AI professionals at firms including Amazon and the advertising group WPP.

It has been published alongside a research paper that outlines the principles and says AI systems that are conscious or give the impression of being so could be built in the near future. "It may be the case that large numbers of conscious systems could be created and caused to suffer," the researchers say.

The paper, written by Oxford University's Patrick Butlin and Theodoros Lappas of the Athens University of Economics and Business, adds that even companies not intending to create conscious systems will need guidelines in case of inadvertently doing so. It also acknowledges there is uncertainty and disagreement over defining consciousness in AI and whether it is even possible.

Other questions focus on what to do if an AI is defined as a "moral patient" – an entity that matters morally "in its own right for its own sake". In that scenario, it poses the question of whether destroying the AI would be comparable to killing an animal.



▲ *There is disagreement over the possibility of consciousness in AI*

The paper, published in the Journal of Artificial Intelligence, also said a mistaken belief that AI systems are conscious could lead to a waste of political energy as misguided efforts are made to promote their welfare.

The paper and letter were organised by Conscium, a research organisation part-funded by WPP and co-founded by WPP's chief AI officer, Daniel Hulme. Last year a group of senior academics said there was a "realistic possibility" some AI systems will be conscious and "morally significant" by 2035.

‘I felt disrespected’: Jenni Hermoso tells court World Cup win tarnished after Rubiales kiss



▼ *Jenni Hermoso leaves court in San Fernando de Henares, near Madrid, yesterday after giving evidence* PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS COEX/AFP/GETTY

Sam Jones
Madrid

The Spanish footballer Jenni Hermoso has told a court that “one of the happiest moments” of her life was tarnished when the then president of the Spanish Football Federation, Luis Rubiales, grabbed her and kissed her on the lips after Spain’s World Cup win in August 2023.

Rubiales, 47, is accused of sexual assault as well as coercion over allegations that he tried to pressure Hermoso into saying the kiss, which took place shortly after Spain’s women’s team triumphed in Sydney, was consensual. He has maintained that he sought her permission for the kiss.

If convicted, Rubiales - who resigned as the federation president a month later - could face two and a half years in prison: one year for sexual assault over the forced kiss, and 18 months for alleged coercion.

Giving evidence on the first day of the trial at the national court in San Fernando de Henares, near Madrid, Hermoso said she had never consented to being kissed by Rubiales, adding that he had not sought her permission to do so.

“I didn’t hear or understand any of it at the time,” the 34-year-old player told the court. “The next thing was that he put his hands over my ears and kissed me on the mouth.”

Hermoso said she had been shocked by Rubiales’s actions.

“I felt it was totally out of place and I then realised my boss was kissing me, and this shouldn’t happen in any social or workplace setting,” she said.

“I felt disrespected. One of the happiest days of my life was tarnished and I think it’s very important for me to say that I never sought, much less expected, that this would happen. I think personally that it was a lack of respect.” Hermoso, who plays for Tigres in Mexico, said she had been called off the bus to the airport after the match and shown a statement that had been drafted on her behalf by the federation, and which was issued in her name later the same day.

“I skimmed it and I didn’t want to know exactly what it said,” she told the court. “I knew that I hadn’t written a word of the statement because nobody had asked me about it. It was a statement from me that I’d apparently written in my own words. It said that Luis Rubiales and I were good friends and that it had all happened in the excitement of the moment and that was all there was to it.”

The player said the statement made her feel “that I was participating in something I hadn’t done and in which I didn’t want to participate”. She added: “I’ll say it again: never, at any moment, did I look for any of this to happen.”

Hermoso said she had not wanted what had happened to overshadow her team’s victory, and that some of them had joked about the kiss until another player told them it was a serious matter.

The footballer was asked by a prosecutor whether anyone from the federation had come to check on her on the flight home or to apologise for what had happened.

“No one,” she replied. “No one came over to me to see how I was doing … No one asked how I was or what was going through my head. I felt totally unprotected by the federation because this should have been my safe place.”

Hermoso told the court her life had changed forever when she arrived back in Madrid and found herself and her family hounded by the media. She also received death threats.

“I say that my life changed at that moment,” she said. “I’m a world champion but it seems that, even to this day, my life has been on standby. I honestly haven’t been able to live freely.”

Rubiales denies the charges and has vowed to clear his name. “I believe in the truth and I will do everything in my power to make sure it prevails,” he said when he stepped down as head of the federation.

Also on trial for their suspected roles in putting pressure on Hermoso are the former head coach of the women’s national team Jorge Vilda, the former Spanish football federation sporting director Albert Luque and the federation’s former marketing chief Rubén Rivera. All three deny the charges against them.

The trial, which is scheduled to last three weeks, continues.



▲ *Luis Rubiales kissing Hermoso in 2023 and, right, outside court yesterday* PHOTOGRAPHS: EURASIA SPORT IMAGES/GETTY; THOMAS COEX/AFP/GETTY



> ***‘I felt it was totally out of place … my boss was kissing me, and this shouldn’t happen in any social or workplace setting’***
>
> **Jenni Hermoso**
> *Spanish footballer*

British volunteer in Ukraine, 18, killed by drone on first mission

Hannah Al-Othman
North of England correspondent

An 18-year-old British man was killed in a Russian drone strike just minutes into his first mission after volunteering to fight in Ukraine.

James Wilton, pictured, from Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, was 17 when he left to fight against Russia, flying to Poland before crossing the border into Ukraine.

Wilton, who had no previous military experience, was killed on 23 July, just minutes into his first mission.

“I’ll never get over this. I didn’t want him to go, but his heart was set on it. He wanted to help Ukraine,” his father, Graham, told the Sun.

“I’ve been told bits of the story of how he died but have struggled to deal with it and wish we could have swapped places because he had his whole life in front of him.”

Wilton was cremated on the eastern front, and his father attended the funeral.

“He was such a laid-back, polite, easygoing and likeable young man,” his father said. “I’ll always be proud of him. I brought his ashes back home, but might go back to scatter them there. I think that might be what he would have wanted.”

He added: “It’s taken a while to process James’s death, but I think it’s good to be finally talking about what happened.”

An American volunteer named only as Jason told the newspaper he had been with Wilton when he died.

“It was James’s first and last mission,” he said. “We had to cross an open field to resupply other soldiers.



There were six of us traversing in groups of two. Myself and James were the last two.”

He described seeing Wilton stop before noticing the drones overhead.

Jason survived the attack but lost his foot four days later when he stepped on a landmine.

“I extracted my friend James from the battle and he died. It’s hard not getting emotional about it, but seeing that made me want to try harder to help others,” he said.

A Foreign Office spokesperson said: “We provided consular assistance to the family of a British man who died in Ukraine.”

Feline fine
Scotland insists 'no pet ban' after panic
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Microplastics
Level in human brains rising, study suggests
Page 19

National



▲ *Flowers were placed at All Saints Catholic high school in Sheffield yesterday as police remained on site*
PHOTOGRAPH: JOEL GOODMAN

Boy, 15, dies after stabbing incident at Sheffield school

Hannah Al-Othman
Jamie Grierson

A 15-year-old boy has died after being stabbed at a school in Sheffield.

The teenager, named locally as Harvey Willgoose, suffered serious injuries in the incident at All Saints Catholic high school, South Yorkshire, and died a short time later, police said.

Another 15-year-old boy has been arrested on suspicion of murder and remains in custody, police said.

Officers were called shortly after 12.15pm yesterday and emergency services, including an air ambulance, were dispatched to the scene.

Friends of the pupil laid flowers on a wall outside the school along with balloons and an England flag.

One handwritten card described him as "the life of the party" who "brought joy and laughter to everyone who knew him".

"His bubbly personality was contagious, you could always hear him down a corridor," it read. "I'll never forget all the torments, all the laughs. You'll be missed by so many."

An ambulance and police cars were still behind the school gates yesterday evening, with officers in white forensic suits working into the night.

In a message to parents, the headteacher, Sean Pender, said two students had been involved in the incident. "I am writing to inform you that today we have dealt with an extremely serious incident here in school resulting in us going into a lockdown procedure," he said.

"The incident involved two students, one of whom we believe has been seriously injured. All other students are contained and safe.

"I understand the level of anxiety you will be feeling without knowledge of the nature of the incident, but at this time I have limited information to share with you whilst we have police and paramedics on site."

He asked parents for "your prayers and support at this time".

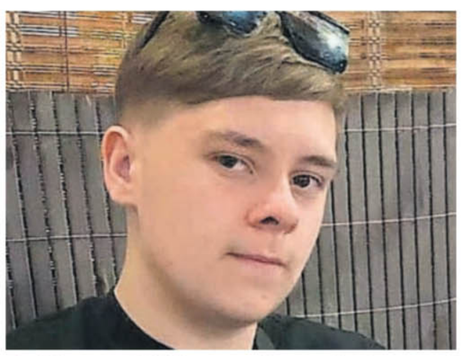
The Sheffield Heeley MP, Louise Haigh, said: "Serious questions will have to be answered" after the stabbing. "Horrific news that the young pupil from All Saints high school has died," she posted to Facebook.

"All my thoughts are with his family and friends, and the entire community at All Saints. A teenager is in custody and South Yorkshire police have assured parents that there is no ongoing risk at the school.

"A criminal investigation will now obviously take place, but serious questions will have to be answered about how this could have happened and I will be working with the school, the police and the council to make sure they are."

South Yorkshire's mayor, Oliver Coppard, said: "This morning a teenage boy went to school like thousands of others across South Yorkshire but won't come home; a young man who was a member of our community, with his whole life ahead of him.

"My love, my thoughts and my prayers are with his family and friends, and the whole community of All Saints Catholic high school."



▲ *Harvey Willgoose 'brought joy and laughter to everyone who knew him'*

Coppard, who has police and crime commissioner responsibilities, added: "The vast majority of our young people don't carry knives, but one incidence of knife crime is one too many because, when we do see knife crime happen, all too often the consequences are utterly devastating, as they have been today.

"I have spoken to the chief constable and offered her my full support as she carries out her investigation."

It was the second time in a week that the school had been put in lockdown, the Sheffield Star reported. Staff and students were told to "stay put" because of "threats of violence" between a small number of students last Wednesday. Those involved were reportedly escorted off the premises, without anyone being injured.

The knife crime campaigner Anthony Olaseinde said he had worked with the school, adding: "They have always been forthcoming on the issue."

Keir Starmer said his "first thoughts as prime minister and as a father are with the family".

He added: "I think the whole country would want to reach out to the family, the friends, to the school, the entire community, in their grief and mourn with them."

Tighter rules to govern sale of weight-loss drugs by online pharmacies

Nicola Davis
Science correspondent

Access to weight-loss drugs through online pharmacies is to be tightened as part of a crackdown on inappropriate prescriptions.

Weight-loss injections such as Wegovy, which contains the drug semaglutide, and Mounjaro, which contains the drug tirzepatide, have boomed in popularity after trials showed they can help people lose significant amounts of weight, with many people seeking private prescriptions.

However, concerns have been raised that the medications are being inappropriately prescribed through online pharmacies.

A Guardian investigation previously revealed some online pharmacies operating in the UK have approved and dispatched private prescriptions of the jabs to people of a healthy weight, as well as to those who have lied about their weight to meet criteria for a prescription.

Now the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), which regulates pharmacists, technicians and pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales, is tightening the rules.

The changes mean pharmacies can no longer base online prescribing of weight-loss jabs – or other high-risk medications such as antimicrobials, laxatives and opioids – on details supplied via an online questionnaire alone, as some have previously done. Such information will need independent verification.

In the case of weight-loss medications, a person's height and weight, their body mass index (BMI), or all three metrics must be included in this process, with the guidance adding that verifying this information through a phone call with the person would not be appropriate.

It suggests verification by a video consultation, in person, from clinical records or via another healthcare provider such as a GP.

Duncan Rudkin, the chief executive at the GPhC, said the council had seen "too many cases of medicines being supplied inappropriately online and putting people at risk".

The guidance is understood to set out expectations of how pharmacies will meet GPhC standards, which are legal requirements.

Should the guidelines be breached, the GPhC said it would generally give the pharmacy an improvement action plan as a first step. However, stronger measures, or enforcement action, could be taken.



▼ *Keir Starmer is greeted by Mark Rutte, the Nato secretary general, at their press conference in Brussels*
PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON WOHLFAHRT/EPA

Britain does not have to choose between Europe and US, Starmer insists

Jennifer Rankin
Brussels

Keir Starmer has said he wants an "ambitious security partnership" with the EU, while insisting the UK does not have to choose between Europe and the US.

The prime minister was speaking before meeting EU leaders in Brussels to discuss security and defence, the first time a British leader has attended a European Council meeting since Britain left the EU five years ago.

Starmer said he wanted "an ambitious UK-EU security partnership to bolster Nato". Facing criticism that the UK had been vague in its hopes for this pact, he said it should cover military technology, research and development, improved mobility of forces across Europe, protection of critical infrastructure and deepening industrial collaboration to boost production.

"We can't be commentators when it comes to matters of peace on our continent," he told reporters. "We must lead."

Starmer was speaking at Nato headquarters after meeting the alliance's secretary general, Mark Rutte, who reiterated that allies needed to spend "considerably more" than the current target of 2% of GDP.

Over a dinner, Starmer told European leaders he wanted deeper EU-UK cooperation against state threats and sabotage. Subsea cables were damaged recently, raising suspicions of Russian or Chinese state-sponsored sabotage.

With the French president, Emmanuel Macron, calling for a "buy European" armaments policy, Starmer urged EU leaders not to exclude the UK from spending plans.

In calling for deeper defence industry collaboration, the prime minister cited the European aerospace and defence company Airbus and the French defence firm Thales – the latter employs 7,000 people in the UK. "Look at Airbus or Thales – their success in the UK boosts defence across Europe," he said.

After dinner, the European Council president, António Costa, told reporters that "everyone was delighted to welcome Sir Keir Starmer … and to say clearly that the United Kingdom and the European Union are reliable and predictable partners".

Costa said he expected the EU and UK to hold a summit in the UK on 19 May to build "the closest relationship it will be possible to build together".

But a majority of member states

Russian hack
Suspected breach of PM's email address in 2022

Keir Starmer stopped using a personal email account when he was opposition leader after being warned about a suspected hack by a Russian group.

The suspected breach happened in 2022, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, according to a book about the Labour leader, the Times reported.

According to the book, Get In, Starmer's team first knew about the incident when Jill Cuthbertson, who heads his private office, sent round a message instructing other staff to no longer send messages to the email address.

This happened after staff from Starmer's office were warned by the National Cyber Security Centre about the possible hack of the account. The warning said it was possible that sensitive information could have been taken, although none was published, the Times said. According to the paper, the previous address had been "dangerously obvious" and lacked the backup security of two-factor authentication, under which an attempted login from an unknown device requires a separate identity check. These were both addressed for Starmer's replacement account.

At about the same time as the suspected security breach, a collection of emails from Sir Richard Dearlove, a former director of MI6, and other figures was published after an apparent hack also by a Russian group.

At the time, Google said the release of the emails appeared to be the work of a Russian group it called Coldriver. The hackers published emails from Dearlove and others claiming they detailed the work of a group of pro-Brexit plotters. Instead, the bulk of the emails, dating from 2018 to 2019, showed a selection of Brexit supporters frustrated with the then prime minister Theresa May's willingness to seek compromises with the EU.
Peter Walker



◀ *Sir Richard Dearlove, a former director of MI6 whose emails were published after another apparent hack*

Analysis

UK now walking a lonely tightrope

Eleni Courea
Political correspondent



Starmer will have to deal with a series of challenges in post-Brexit negotiations on issues such as fishing
PHOTOGRAPH: JASON ALDEN/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

Whichever way you slice it, Keir Starmer's invitation to dinner in Brussels last night is a big moment. For the first time since Brexit, the UK prime minister was sitting down for an informal summit with the 27 EU leaders.

Five years on from its departure from the bloc, the UK has a Labour government populated with politicians who are far more sympathetic to Europe than their Conservative predecessors. Starmer was a committed remainer who spent years steering his party towards endorsing a second referendum. Most of the cabinet privately think Brexit was an act of self-harm – and David Lammy, the foreign secretary, has reportedly been arguing that the UK should now rejoin the customs union.

On top of that, since entering office the Labour government has made boosting the UK's sluggish economic growth its number one aim. Closer ties with the EU is a key part of that puzzle – in the autumn, the Bank of England governor, Andrew Bailey, said Brexit had "weighed" on the British economy and called on ministers to rebuild bridges with the bloc.

These factors should all provide a helpful backdrop for forging closer relations with the EU. But in his pursuit of this "reset", Starmer faces a challenging international and domestic context.

On the world stage, the prime minister is navigating a tricky tightrope between the US and EU. Over the weekend, Donald Trump had announced tariffs on Canada and Mexico and vowed that the EU would "definitely" follow "pretty soon". Britain, Trump said, was "out of line" but he added that a solution might be "worked out". This has raised hopes that Brexit could help the UK avoid Trump's tariffs, but it makes the timing of Starmer's trip to Brussels rather awkward – if he is seen to be cosying up to the EU too much, he risks angering the capricious US president.

Government strategists believe the area where they can deftly navigate these diplomatic rifts is defence. The UK is positioning itself as a power broker that can help persuade EU countries to spend more on defence and supporting Ukraine, a key demand of Trump's. Starmer arrived in Brussels yesterday calling for EU states to "shoulder more of the burden" to keep the continent safe from Russian aggression.

Closer defence and security cooperation are something that both London and Brussels are keen on and can set a positive tone for talks in the coming months. Also on the agenda for the reset, however, are several of the issues that plagued the Brexit negotiations such as fishing, the free movement of people, and barriers to trade.

Among the EU's demands are greater access for EU trawlers to UK waters, a politically contentious issue where any concessions would be seized on by the Conservatives and Reform UK.

Even more explosive is the idea of a deal allowing young people to move more freely between the UK and EU – a key ask from Germany and France. Labour ruled out returning to freedom of movement with the EU in its manifesto and has repeatedly resisted proposals for a youth mobility deal. But behind the scenes, officials are looking at a more limited agreement in this area. The challenge is preventing net migration – which has soared since the Brexit referendum in 2016 – from rising further and driving more voters towards Reform. Given that Labour's popularity has already plummeted, ministers do not want to take any chances.

Detailed talks on these issues were not happening at yesterday's dinner, which served mainly to build goodwill before a UK-EU summit in the spring. But as he looked around the table, the prime minister will have been wondering on whom he can rely. Olaf Scholz, arguably his closest ally in Europe, looks set for defeat in Germany's federal elections this month. Emmanuel Macron, the French president, is presiding over a fractured parliament and contending with a rightwing surge as he runs down the clock to the 2027 presidential election.

For many EU countries, the bloc's relationship with the UK is not a priority issue. That makes Starmer's tightrope act a somewhat lonely one.

are demanding the UK sign up to the EU's demands on fishing rights and a youth mobility scheme as part of a broader package to resetting the relationship, including security.

Managing the negotiations will fall to the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, who sidestepped a question on the sequencing of talks. She said it was "very good to have a thorough discussion with prime minister Keir Starmer because European security concerns us all inside and outside the European Union".

The dinner, which lasted about 70 minutes, took place at the stately Palais d'Egmont in central Brussels, where Edward Heath signed the treaty to bring the UK into the then European Economic Community in 1972.

Poland's prime minister, Donald Tusk, who last month said he dreamed of "Breturn", said it was the moment for the EU and UK "to get as close as possible again". Poland has the EU's rotating presidency and Tusk said it was his idea to invite Starmer to have the UK as "close as possible" on security issues and "to find ways to eliminate or reduce barriers in trade between the UK and Europe".

Arriving at the dinner, Starmer said rejoining the EU was not going to happen, but there could be "a better, closer relationship when it comes to trade and security".

Sketch

John Crace



All hail his Brilliant Orangeness – and don't mention tariffs, the trade war or anything much else

Don't mention the trade war. Don't mention anything much, come to think of it. Stick to generalised soundbites. Careless talk costs lives.

Keir Starmer's trip to Brussels to meet EU leaders was fraught with danger. Don't say anything too complimentary about the EU, as all the Brexiters will go mad. Don't sound too hostile about the EU, or remainers will also be up in arms. Then there's the US to worry about. How to cope with the orange manchild. Too much independence of thought and you might feel the full weight of trade tariffs. Time to bury your self-worth and go into full fawning mode. Few people had ever come unstuck by telling Donald Trump he was an undiscovered genius. No one said that being prime minister was going to be easy. Or dignified.

It was a tough act to pull off, but Starmer just about managed it in a brisk press conference with the Nato secretary general, Mark Rutte, yesterday. Rutte got things under way. Nato was amazing. The UK was amazing. The west had never been more united. That's not quite how the rest of the world might see it, with Trump only deferring for a month the tariffs he had promised to impose on Canada and Mexico this week, not to mention his talk of making Greenland another US state. But hey. If the Nato secretary general says he's relaxed about all this, who are we to argue.

Next up was Starmer. He too was thrilled about the Nato project. Britain was standing up to Russia. Nato was standing up to Russia. We were all behind Ukraine. President Trump had rattled Putin. We were spending 2.3% of GDP on defence. Tank production had reached a record high. Or something.

Mysteriously, broadcasters had little interest in this. They wanted to talk about the Donald. Was he bad news for Europe and international trade, asked Sky's Beth Rigby.

"There are always issues between allies," said Rutte. The current difficulties were much ado about nothing. He was sure Trump would see sense about imposing tariffs on the EU. Starmer wasted no time in praising the Donald.

How to cope with the orange manchild? Few people had ever come unstuck by telling Trump he was an undiscovered genius

Tariffs were strictly an EU problem. Far be it from him to interfere in a dispute with two such dear friends.

The second question came from the BBC. Could we return to reality? A trade war was not normal. Neither was the US threatening to annex Greenland. Once again, Rutte went out of his way to point out that Trump was the only sane one in the room. It was the rest of the world that was out of whack. Above all, he was enormously grateful for alerting the west to the geostrategic nature of Greenland.

And under all that snow and ice, Trump had discovered loads of rare minerals that were previously unknown. So could we all have three cheers for the president. If I were a Greenlander, that little exchange wouldn't have been entirely reassuring.

Yes, said Starmer. Hooray for this Brilliant Orangeness. He just wanted to remind everyone that Trump had said he might not impose tariffs on the UK. So that was tremendously good news. There again, he had also said: "The UK was well out of line" – but maybe that was a joke. Or maybe he wasn't entirely clear about the difference between the UK and the EU. But never mind. Keir loved the EU and the US. Couldn't we all just be friends?

Trump agrees to postpone tariffs on Canada and Mexico for 30 days

Continued from page 1

administration of engaging in an "intolerable alliance" with Mexican crime groups.

Sheinbaum rejected that "slanderous" accusation, but yesterday morning struck a softer note as she announced "a series of agreements" with Trump after a conversation between the two leaders during which they agreed to pause US tariffs for a month to allow for fresh negotiations.

Mexico had agreed to send 10,000 members of its national guard "to prevent drug trafficking from Mexico to the US, in particular of fentanyl", Sheinbaum said. In return, the US had agreed to work to prevent high-powered weapons crossing the border into Mexico.

Trump confirmed the deal shortly afterwards on his Truth Social network. He said 10,000 Mexican soldiers would be "specifically designated to stop the flow of fentanyl, and illegal migrants into our country".

Negotiations involving senior Mexican officials, the US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, the US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, and the US commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, would take place during the pause, he said.

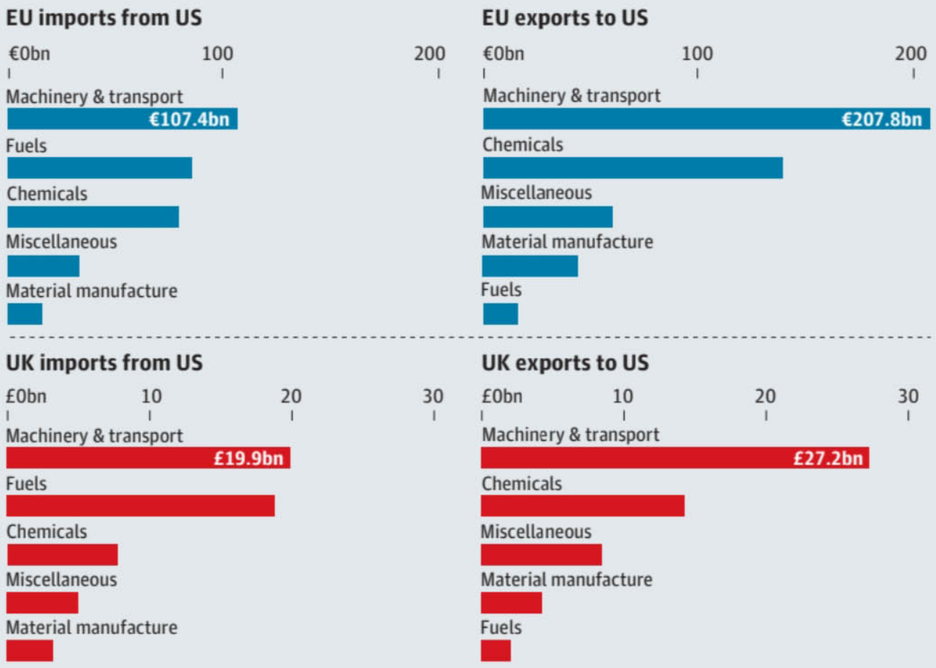
After two calls with Trump yesterday, Trudeau announced that tariffs would be "paused" for 30 days. "Canada is implementing our $1.3bn [£1bn] border plan – reinforcing the border with new choppers, technology and personnel, enhanced coordination with our American partners, and increased resources to stop the flow of fentanyl," he said in a statement. "Nearly 10,000 frontline personnel are and will be working on protecting the border."

> ***'As President, it is my responsibility to ensure the safety of ALL Americans, and I am doing just that'***
>
> **Donald Trump** *on Truth Social*

Trump wrote on Truth Social: "As President, it is my responsibility to ensure the safety of ALL Americans, and I am doing just that. I am very pleased with this initial outcome, and the Tariffs announced on Saturday will be paused for a 30 day period to see whether or not a final Economic deal with Canada can be structured. FAIRNESS FOR ALL!"

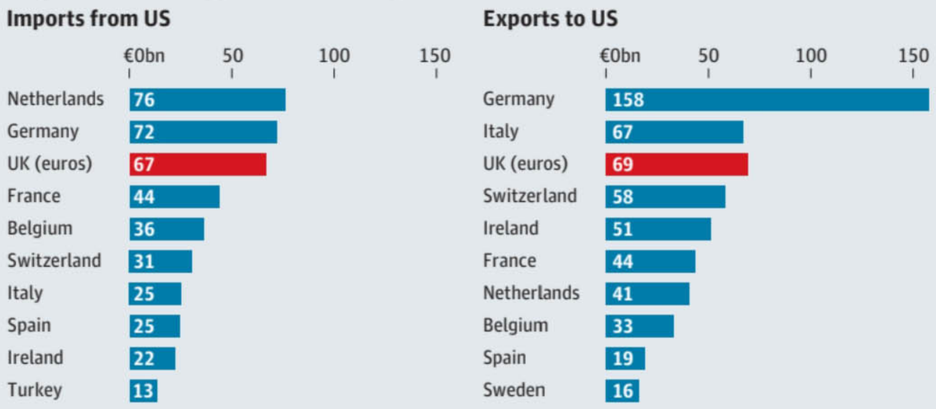
Late last year, Trump threatened to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China on the first day of his presidency. From the first day of his presidency, he said he would do so from 1 February. This weekend, he said they would kick in from 4 February.

Trade in goods with the US by top five commodity types



Source: Eurostat, ONS. Note: trade data for US includes Puerto Rico

Top 10 US trading partners, Europe and UK



Source: Eurostat, ONS. Note: UK figures converted to euros using HMRC averaged exchange rate for 2023. US trade data includes Puerto Rico



▲ *Donald Trump disembarks from Air Force One after announcing a pause to planned tariffs on Mexico*
PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN LAMARQUEHE/REUTERS

Economics

How US levies may affect the UK and EU

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

Donald Trump has threatened to target the EU after announcing import tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, while warning that the UK is "out of line" but could still reach a deal. Here is a breakdown of the current situation.

Trump is targeting a large goods deficit with the EU

The US is the largest goods importer in the world – buying products worth $3tn (£2.4tn) in 2023. It also has the largest trade in goods deficit – when imports exceed exports – which totals $1tn.

Trump has long complained about the deficit as a sign of "unfair" trade practices being used by the US's trading partners, as well as seeing it as a sign of weakness in the US economy as factory production has shifted overseas.

The US's largest trade in goods deficit with a single country is with China, which reached $279bn in 2023. This was closely followed by the EU at $208bn. However, taking account of services trade significantly reduces the deficit with the EU because of large volumes of transatlantic trade in financial services, intellectual property and other professional sectors.

The US is Britain's largest single export market, worth £60.4bn in goods in 2023, accounting for 15.3% of the global total. The UK imported £57.9bn in goods from the US.

Services trade is significantly larger, worth £126.3bn in exports from the UK to the US and £57.4bn in imports.

Ireland and Germany have the EU's largest US trade relationships

Should Trump impose tariffs on the EU, some countries are likely to be hit harder than others. Germany has by far the most goods exports, worth €157.7bn (£130.9bn) in 2023. The Netherlands imports the most goods from the US, worth €75.8bn.

However, the proportion of exports to the US relative to total trade also varies significantly between EU member states. Ireland has by far the largest share, at more than 25%. Germany and Italy's trade with the US is worth about 10% of their global totals.

Unlike during Trump's first term, the UK now negotiates alone after Brexit. Keir Starmer has sought to build ties with both camps, and Trump has signalled a deal can be "worked out" with the UK.

Some economists are optimistic about the UK's prospects as a result, but others warn Starmer will be faced with unmeetable trade-offs.

Cars, chemicals and medicines are the biggest exports from the EU and UK to the US

Should blanket tariffs on EU and UK goods be imposed by the US, the most heavily exposed sectors

Economists have warned Trump's planned wave of tariffs would risk raising prices for millions of Americans, just weeks after he pledged, upon taking office, to "rapidly" bring them down.

Yesterday, however, Trump maintained that tariffs were a "very powerful" means of both strengthening the US economically and "getting everything else you want".

He had conceded over the weekend that they could cause "a little pain" in the US.

Markets sold off sharply worldwide in response to what had been described as a "Trump tariff tantrum" before recovering some of their losses after news broke of the deal with Mexico. Wall Street fell in early trading, with the S&P 500 down almost 2%. Share prices in Europe followed a sharp move lower in Asia.

London's FTSE 100 index dropped 1.4% from Friday's record high before making back some of its losses to trade down 1%.



▲ *Wall Street fell in early trading, with the S&P 500 down almost 2%*

Trump also indicated on Sunday that the EU would be next to face tariffs, but did not say when.

EU leaders meeting at an informal summit in Brussels yesterday said Europe would fight back if the US imposed tariffs, but called for negotiation.

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, said that if the bloc's commercial interests were attacked, it would "make itself respected and thus react".

The German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, said the EU could respond if necessary with its own tariffs, but stressed it would be better for the two sides to find agreement on trade.

Trump hinted that Britain might be spared tariffs, saying: "I think that one can be worked out."

Asked whether he was worried by Trump's refusal to rule out imposing sanctions on the UK, the prime minister, Keir Starmer, said: "Obviously, it's early days.

"I think what's really important is open and strong trading relations, and that's been the basis of my discussions with President Trump. I know that intense US-EU discussions are planned."



would include the region's car manufacturers, chemicals firms and pharmaceutical companies.

Machinery and transport equipment is the largest sector for goods exports, worth more than £200bn combined between the UK and the EU in 2023, led by Germany, the region's dominant manufacturing force. With substantial operations in Mexico, Germany's car manufacturers are already facing a substantial hit.

In the trade battles during Trump's first term in office, the US targeted famous consumer goods including French wines and cheeses and Scottish and Irish whiskies, while the EU retaliated by targeting symbols of Americana – including Kentucky whiskey, Levi's and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

EU leaders respond
'We are strong enough'

The EU will stand up for itself if its interests are targeted, Emmanuel Macron has said, after Donald Trump threatened at the weekend to impose punishing tariffs.

"If our commercial interests are attacked, Europe, as a true power, will have to make itself respected and therefore react," the French president said as he arrived for an informal defence meeting with other leaders in Brussels yesterday.

Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, said the EU was strong enough to react to any levies but "the goal should be that things result in cooperation".

The bloc's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said there would be "no winners in a trade war", and Europe and the US needed each other. The Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, said a trade war would be "a complete mistake" and everything must be done to stop allies fighting "in the face of a Russian threat or Chinese expansion".

Trump said on Sunday night that new tariffs on the EU would "definitely happen". He repeated longstanding complaints about the size of the US trade deficit with the bloc and demanded Europe import more American cars and farm products. "It will definitely happen with the EU," he said.

Trump said there was no specific timeline for European tariffs but it was "going to be pretty soon". He told reporters on Friday he would "absolutely, absolutely" impose them. "The European Union has treated us so terribly," he said.

During his first term Trump imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from the EU, which retaliated with trade levies on emblematic US goods from Republican states, such as Harley-Davidson motorbikes, bourbon, denim and orange juice.

Nato's secretary general, Mark Rutte, said it was clear the US was "selling much more" defence equipment to Europe than vice versa and that more money would follow as Nato allies increased defence spending. Jon Henley

Trump's tariffs could stoke inflation and hit economic growth

Economists warn that Trump's tariffs could stoke US inflation and hit economic growth, with American consumers left picking up the tab through the higher price of imported goods.

The US dollar rose yesterday as investors bet the US Federal Reserve would be forced to keep interest rates higher for longer. Should Trump expand his trade war to involve more countries, and should they retaliate, there could be wider global inflationary consequences, and a hit to global economic growth.

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research, a UK-based thinktank, estimates a 10% tariff on all US imports – with retaliation from trading partners – could reduce global growth by about 1% over the next two years. UK growth could also be dragged down by up to 0.7 percentage points in the first year, while inflation would be 3-4 points higher, and interest rates would be 2-3 points higher.

However, tariffs could also be disinflationary depending on how the trade war unfolds. Weaker global growth could cool inflationary pressures, while economists have said huge US tariffs on China alone could lead to lower prices in other countries if China seeks alternative buyers.

Higher borrowing costs are causing a headache for governments

Borrowing costs for governments have risen sharply in recent months amid investor fears over Trump's tariffs stoking inflation. The rise in the yield – in effect the interest rate – on government bonds has caused a headache for several nations with high levels of debt, including the UK and France.

From a low of 3.9% in September, the yield on 30-year US Treasury bonds has risen to above 4.7%. In the UK, borrowing costs have risen over that time from 4.3% to 5.1%.

For the government, that presents the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, with a dilemma before her 26 March spring statement, with analysts warning that sustained higher borrowing costs could break her fiscal rules.

Canada Businesses vow to fight assault from the south

Leyland Cecco

One by one, the bottles of Kentucky bourbon were pulled from the shelf of a Vancouver liquor store. In their place, a large sign: "Buy Canadian instead."

The move, aimed at states with Republican governors, marked an early salvo in a looming trade war between the US and Canada.

"We have targeted red states because, quite frankly, Donald Trump doesn't care about Democrat states," British Columbia's housing minister, Ravi Kahlon, said. "We want to make sure that we're not punishing states that have nothing to do with this."

Over the weekend, the US announced sweeping tariffs on Canada, one of its largest trading partners and political allies. And in a speech lauded across the political aisle in Canada, the outgoing prime minister, Justin Trudeau, said the American taxes, in breach of the continent's free trade agreement, would be met with a "far-reaching" economic and political response.

Last night Trudeau announced Trump had agreed a 30-day pause to the tariffs on Canadian goods after a phone call the US president said went "very well".



"We will list cartels as terrorists, ensure 24/7 eyes on the border, launch a Canada-US joint strike force to combat organized crime, fentanyl and money laundering," Trudeau posted on X after the call. "I have also signed a new intelligence directive on organized crime and fentanyl and we will be backing it with $200 million."

Still, the looming trade war has fractured a long relationship between the two allies and prompted national unity in Canada.

Hats emblazoned with the slogan "Canada Is Not For Sale" have become a viral sensation with tens of thousands sold. On social media, people began using the term "Vichy Canadians" to refer to commentators who appeared sympathetic to Trump's demands. Others shared an editorial from the conservative American newspaper the Wall Street Journal describing the spat as the "dumbest trade war in history".

Canadian officials had said on Sunday that a 25% retaliatory tariff would apply to 1,200 categories of American imports from today, including orange juice and motorcycles, while more goods would be taxed later in the month.

"It's remarkable to find ourselves at odds with our best friend and neighbour," said Nova Scotia's premier, Tim Houston.

The Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) had said it would stop stocking US-made products and also prohibit Ontario-based restaurants and businesses from restocking and ordering American spirits, beers and wines.

But, as one store manager pointed out, singling out Canadian brands to promote was harder than it seems. "Pretty much all of the beer including Budweiser and Coors will stay on the shelf. They're bottled and made here in Canada. And Molson Canadian merged with the American company Coors in 2005," he said, holding a printout of the permissible and barred brands.

"Uncertainty is the currency of the guy down south in the White House," he said. "We don't know what's going to happen. We're in hurry up and wait mode. But I can say from a retail perspective, the result will be pretty significant if we have to pull stuff. And we've got staff ready to go if word comes in that no deal has been reached and it's time to retaliate."



▲ *Customers in Vancouver are implored to support Canadian brands. Top, Justin Trudeau had promised to retaliate* PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS HELGREN/REUTERS

NHS to begin world's biggest trial of AI to detect breast cancer

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

The NHS is launching the world's biggest trial of artificial intelligence to detect breast cancer, which could lead to faster diagnosis of the disease.

AI will be deployed to analyse two-thirds of at least 700,000 mammograms in England over the next few years to see if it can read them as accurately as a radiologist.

If the trial is successful, hospitals may no longer need two radiologists to study every mammogram for signs of breast cancer – the "second reader" system designed to ensure nothing is missed.

Instead, it may be safe to have just one radiologist reading the scan, with an AI offering a second opinion. If that happens, it would free many specialist doctors to do other work – and shorten the time patients have to wait to hear the outcome of diagnostic tests such as X-rays and MRIs.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced the trial, alongside confirmation of a dedicated cancer plan to improve diagnosis and treatment, to mark World Cancer Day yesterday.

A previous study of AI and breast cancer in Sweden in 2023, involving about 80,000 women, found AI is safe to use, can reduce radiologists' workload by about half and does not lead to an increase in "false positives" – erroneous detections of symptoms.

462,000
Number of mammograms from 30 breast cancer screening centres to be read using AI as part of the trial

In the new trial, five types of AI will read about 462,000 of the 700,000 mammograms done at 30 breast cancer screening centres, starting this year. The other 238,000 will be read in the usual way by two radiologists and the two sets of results compared.

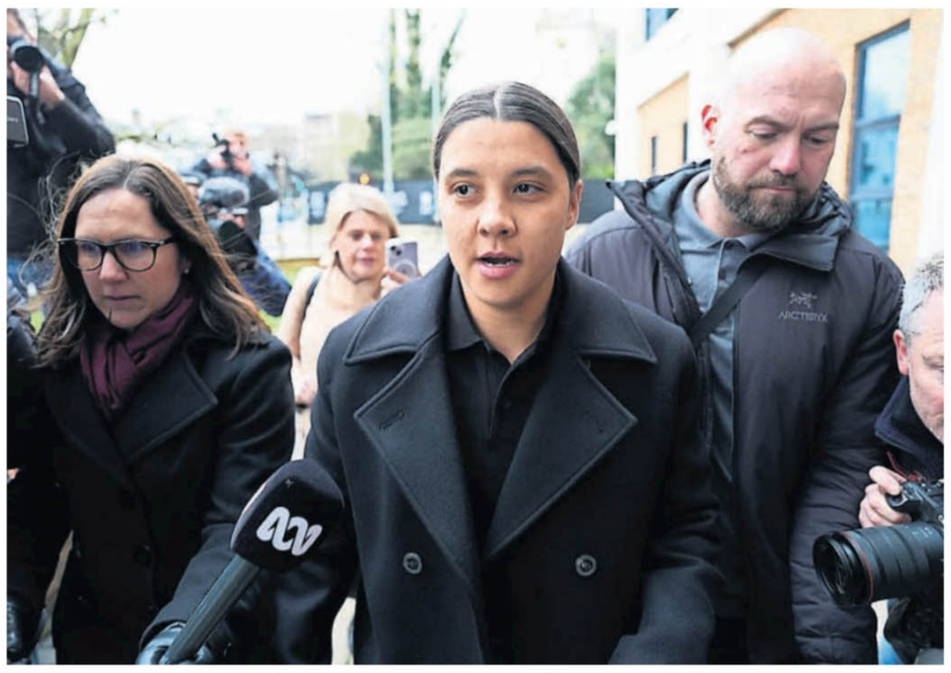
Prof Lucy Chappell, the DHSC's chief scientific adviser and head of the National Institute for Health and Care Research, which is funding the £11m study, said: "This trial could lead to a significant step forward in the early detection of breast cancer, offering women faster, more accurate diagnoses when it matter most."

Samantha Harrison, the head of strategic evidence at Cancer Research UK, said: "More cancer cases are diagnosed every year, and innovations like this could help reduce pressure on NHS staff and cut waiting lists. We need more research to understand how AI could help with cancer screening, so it's fantastic to see the UK government funding this trial."

Prof Katharine Halliday, the president of the Royal College of Radiologists, said AI had "immense potential" to help doctors manage the growing demand for diagnostic tests, cancer care and the NHS as a whole.

"However, it also carries major risks," she added, a reference to concern that AI algorithms would need to be carefully designed so they produce equally reliable results regardless of patients' ethnicity. She also voiced concern that, while the trial is not due to produce results for several years, the shortfall in NHS consultants is expected to reach 40% by 2028.

Wes Streeting, the health secretary, said he would publish a detailed national cancer plan to "unleash Britain's potential as a world leader in saving lives" from the disease.



Chelsea and Australia striker Sam Kerr arrives at Kingston crown court in south-west London yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: JORDAN PETTITT/PA WIRE

Footballer called policeman 'stupid and white', court told

Sammy Gecsoyler

Sam Kerr called a Metropolitan police officer "fucking stupid and white" after he doubted the footballer's claim of being abducted by a taxi driver, a court has heard.

Kerr, 31, the captain of the Australian women's team and Chelsea's star striker, appeared in Kingston crown court yesterday charged with causing racially aggravated intentional harassment, alarm or distress during an incident in Twickenham, south-west London, on 30 January 2023.

Bill Emlyn Jones, for the prosecution, told the court that Kerr, whom he described as a "fantastic football player", and her partner, Kristie Mewis, who is also a professional footballer, had been on a night out in Clapham, south-west London, before hailing a black cab.

Once inside, one of them was sick. The driver asked them to pay for the cost of cleaning it up but they refused. After this, the driver called the police to complain about their behaviour and drove them to Twickenham police station – instead of the original destination of Kerr's home – on the advice of the emergency responder over the phone.

On the way to the station, the rear window in the taxi was smashed.

PC Stephen Lovell and PC Samuel Limb were in a marked police vehicle driving towards the station and arrived at the same time as the taxi at about 2.20am.

They saw broken glass on the road and a parked taxi as they approached the station. Kerr and Mewis were taken inside the station while the taxi driver was kept outside.

Speaking to the court, Lovell recalled the events of the night. Upon inspection of the taxi, he said "the bit of plastic that separates the passenger and driver's seat" looked as if it had been kicked.

After taking the pair inside the station, Lovell said he "kept getting interrupted" and called Kerr "quite abusive".

He explained to them that they must pay the taxi driver for the damage they caused to his cab. In response, Lovell said Kerr "showed me her bank account on her phone".

In body-worn footage showing the pair visibly intoxicated inside the police station, Kerr claimed the taxi driver was "holding us against our will" and that the pair were being "held hostage in that cab".

Kerr said the taxi driver was driving around for 20 minutes and "kept stopping and speeding up, stopping and speeding up". Lovell said what the driver had done, based on their words, did not constitute any offence.

The pair claimed they called the police while in the taxi, and Kerr repeatedly told Lovell to "listen to the recording", but officers said they had no record of the call. Kerr said neither she nor her girlfriend, who is American, are from the UK, "so we don't know the police number".

Kerr said: "This is a racial fucking thing. You are believing that guy out the front over £50. Listen to the fucking recording, this stupid cunt wouldn't let us go."

She accused the police of believing the taxi driver over "two women" and made multiple references to Sarah Everard, who was kidnapped, raped and murdered by a Met officer.

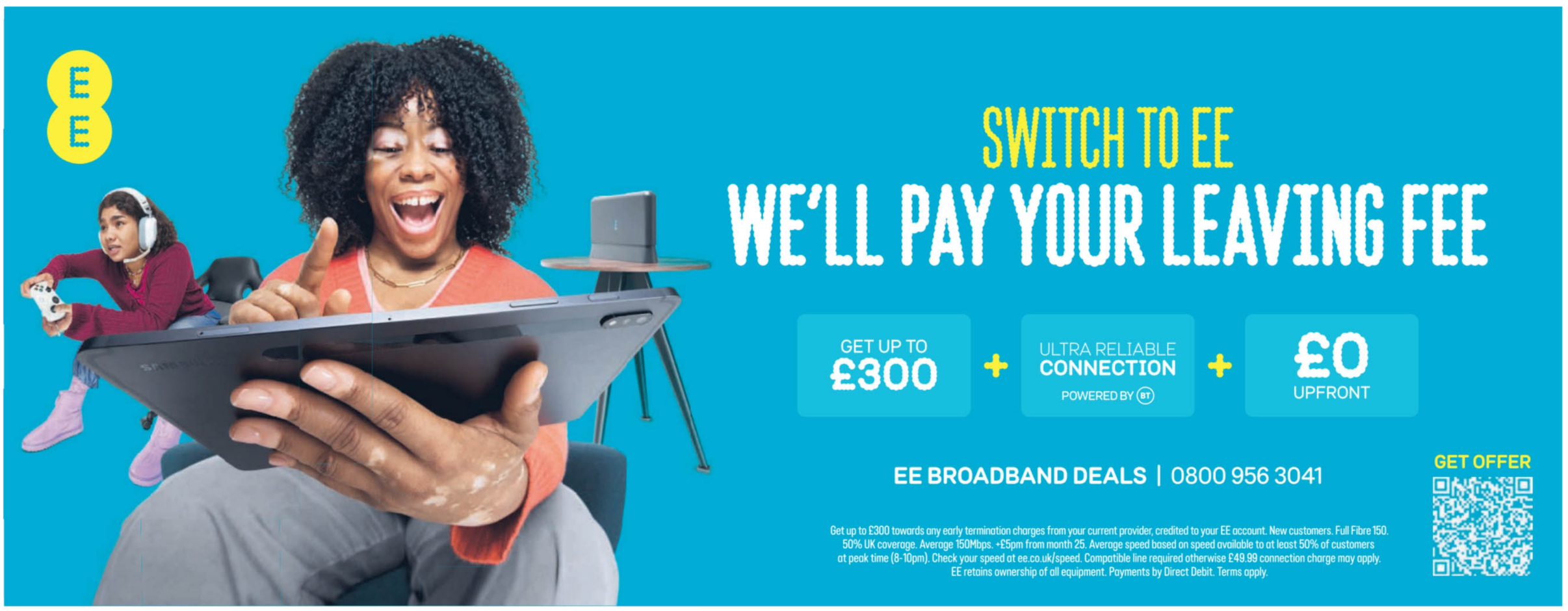
Kerr also said she would "get the Chelsea fucking lawyers on this". Mewis claimed the pair told the taxi driver that they would pay him if he stopped, but he kept driving.

After Lovell reiterated that they had no record of the pair calling 999, Kerr said: "You guys are stupid and white, you guys are fucking stupid and white."

After these comments, Kerr was arrested for criminal damage and a racially aggravated public order. The criminal damage charge was dropped after the damage to the taxi was paid for.

Grace Forbes, defending Kerr, said: "Nobody disputes the words that were said. But simply saying words, even words like these, does not make you guilty of a criminal offence. Sam Kerr did not feel hostile towards this officer because he is white."

The trial continues.





▼ *Khalife was arrested on a canal towpath in London three days after escaping from HMP Wandsworth*

PHOTOGRAPH: METROPOLITAN POLICE/PA

Ex-soldier given 14-year sentence for spying for Iran and escaping prison

Matthew Weaver

Daniel Khalife, a former soldier, has been sentenced to more than 14 years in custody and condemned as a "dangerous fool" for spying for Iran and escaping from prison.

In September 2023, Khalife, now 23, sparked a high-profile manhunt when he broke out of HMP Wandsworth by clinging to the underside of a food delivery truck. At the time he was being held on remand for spying charges.

Last November, a jury at Woolwich crown court found him guilty of breaching the Official Secrets Act and the Terrorism Act by passing on information to Iran while he was serving in the army.

During his trial he also admitted escaping from prison before his capture on a canal towpath by a plain-clothes detective. He was cleared of carrying out a bomb hoax.

Yesterday Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb sentenced him to 14 years and three months at Woolwich crown court.

The sentence included six years each for breaking the Official Secrets Act and the Terrorism Act, and a further two years and three months for escaping from prison. The sentences will run consecutively, the judge said. An older man committing these offences would have had a noticeably longer sentence, she added.

In her sentencing remarks, Cheema-Grubb said: "Deterring others from similar behaviour must be the primary aim of this sentence." She said Khalife was motivated by a "selfish desire to show off".

The trial heard how Khalife had "exposed military personnel to serious harm" by collecting sensitive information and passing it on to Iranian agents for cash.

Cheema-Grubb said Khalife had exploited a security flaw in the army personnel computer system to screenshot the names of soldiers, including seven in the special forces. She said this was a "very serious example" of a breach of anti-terror laws.

Prosecutors said Khalife played "a cynical game", claiming he wanted a career as a double agent to help the British intelligence services, when in fact he gathered "a very large body of restricted and classified material".

Cheema-Grubb said:"Having taken an oath of allegiance, you were motivated by a personal grievance to betray your colleagues and superiors. Your conduct was premeditated and continued for over two years.



▲ *The judge said Daniel Khalife was a 'fool' who wanted to 'show off'*

"You were aware that the Iranians had technology which could access your mobile phone and track where you, and by direct inference, your colleagues were serving. Although it may be that some of your early material was bogus and of no direct importance, you did not stop when you realised that the domestic security services were not going to respond to your overtures."

She added: "The mere fact that you started on this dangerous and fantastical plan demonstrates your immaturity and lack of wisdom. That you thought it was appropriate to insert yourself – an unauthorised, unqualified and uninformed junior soldier into communication with an enemy state – is perhaps the clearest indication of the degree of folly and your failure to understand at the most obvious level the risk you posed."

Defending, Gul Nawaz Hussain KC said Khalife's spying activity was amateurish, describing it as more "Scooby-Doo than 007". Some documents Khalife forged to pass to the Iranians were "laughably fake", Hussain told the court.

He told the judge: "What Daniel Khalife clearly chose to do was not born of malice, was not born of greed, religious fervour or ideological conviction. His intentions were neither sinister nor cynical."

After asking the defendant to stand up in the dock, Cheema-Grubb said: "Daniel Khalife. When you joined the army as a young man you had the makings of an exemplary soldier. However, through the repeated violation of your oath of service, you showed yourself to be, instead, a dangerous fool.

"The only sentence open to me is one of immediate custody. Anyone who is prepared to betray his country and subject serving soldiers to an increased risk of harm must be punished in respect of deterrence."

Teenage girl guilty of attempted murder after school attack

Jamie Grierson

A 14-year-old girl has been found guilty of attempted murder after attacking two teachers and another pupil with a bladed multi-tool at a school in Carmarthenshire.

Teachers Fiona Elias and Liz Hopkin, and a pupil who cannot be named, were treated in hospital after being stabbed at Ysgol Dyffryn Aman in Ammanford on 24 April last year.

After a week-long trial at Swansea crown court, the girl was found guilty of attempted murder.

The judge, Paul Thomas KC, thanked the jury for their work in a "difficult and unusual" trial.

"At the end of the day if she was not a 14-year-old girl and had been an adult the most likely outcome would have been a life sentence," he said.

The judge said he would adjourn sentencing until 28 April for the preparation of pre-sentence reports, including a psychology report.

The girl, who cannot be named for legal reasons, used her father's bladed multi-tool, which he used for fishing trips.

She previously pleaded guilty to three counts of wounding with intent and a further count of possession of a bladed article on a school premises, but denied attempted murder.

As the girl attacked the first teacher, she was accused of yelling: "I'm going to fucking kill you" and pulling out a knife.

The jury also heard she had told friends she was going to "do something stupid that could get me expelled" that could involve Elias on the day of the attack.

After she was arrested, the girl made a series of unsolicited comments in the back of a police vehicle, telling officers: "I stabbed her – oopsies."

"I'm pretty sure this is going to be on the news, so more eyes will be looking at me," she said.

Drawings found in her home referenced Elias and the girl she attacked, with one note saying the girl would "burn" and another: "Cut their mouths and eyes."

During the trial, the girl told jurors she was sorry for the incident and could not remember large parts of what happened.

"It doesn't sound like me. It doesn't feel like something I would do," she said.

Swansea crown court heard the teenager, who was 13 at the time of the incident, had attacked the teachers during the morning break using her father's multi-tool.

She then moved on to stab another girl before being restrained by staff.

All three victims survived the attack, but Hopkin, who was stabbed in the neck, had to be flown to Cardiff by air ambulance.

Back to its best

Grammys celebrate pop's renaissance

Alexis Petridis

The Grammys spawn a mini-industry in predictions: in the weeks before the winners are announced, articles inevitably appear in which expert voices scan the nominations and foretell who's going to win. This year, you didn't really need in-depth knowledge of the music industry or the Recording Academy's internal machinations to work out what was going to happen.

Across the previous 12 months, artists have impacted in a way that pop music is no longer supposed to do. Its once-central defining role within broader popular culture is held to have been vastly diminished by social media, and yet Kendrick Lamar's Not Like Us wasn't just a huge commercial success, it influenced everything, from US sports to the campaign messaging of the American presidential election to sales of the fashion brands featured in its video: if you were going to dub anything the song of the year, it was obviously going to be that.

Likewise, Charli xcx's Brat, an album which caught a mood so completely, its title wound up a widely used (if nebulously defined) adjective: the notion of it ending the night unrewarded seemed fairly unthinkable (though it didn't triumph in its biggest nominated categories). Brat was part of a big shift in the tone of mainstream pop, towards something messier, more heartfelt and personal, a state of affairs it would have been faintly nuts for the Academy not to recognise. This wasn't merely a trend that provokes think pieces from critics and ups the quality of pop music – it was one that also sold millions of records by Sabrina Carpenter and Chappell Roan.

Should anyone doubt that a new mood in pop is abroad, it's worth noting that Roan wore a wimple and drag-queen makeup and spent her acceptance speech excoriating the music industry for its unwillingness to provide young artists with a living wage in an era of record profits.

You probably wouldn't have expected that from the best new artist winner a few years back, but it's exactly the kind of thing that Chappell Roan does. Elsewhere, you could certainly argue the Beyoncé albums in previous years were qualitatively better than the one that was finally named album of the year – certainly, 2016's Lemonade and 2022's Renaissance were conceptually more coherent – but you'd be harder pushed to make a case that Cowboy Carter wasn't impactful enough to win.



Chappell Roan says smaller artists need more support

For all it seemed to tire of its Beyoncé-goes-country theme midway through, throwing in everything from hip-hop to psychedelic soul, Cowboy Carter felt of the moment. It featured Shaboozey – ahead of his single A Bar Song (Tipsy) spending a record-setting 19 weeks at the top of the US chart – and it was part of the ongoing vogue for pop artists shifting their sound towards something more country-adjacent, unencumbered by the kind of this-isn't-country dismissal from Nashville that famously dogged Lil Nas X's similarly successful Old Town Road five years ago.

The closest the Grammys came to controversy – aside from awards for Chris Brown and Dave Chappelle, and a provocative appearance by Kanye West and Bianca Censori – was when it seemed most traditional, handing out the best rock performance gong to the Beatles for Now and Then.

You could view that as merely an act of sentiment – Now and Then was, after all, dubbed "the last Beatles single", a final leave-taking from the biggest band of all time – but there's no getting around the fact that it was a rock performance that required AI to make it happen, previous attempts at extracting a usable vocal from John Lennon's unfinished 1977 demo having failed because the equipment wasn't up to it. The rights and wrongs of using AI in music have been debated and one way you could read Now and Then's success is as a tacit thumbs-up from the music business for a divisive technology, or at least a hopeful suggestion that it might be a wonderful tool rather than a catastrophe for creativity.



Billie Eilish, right, with Sabrina Carpenter and Chappell Roan and wearing a cap made with fabric from the Moon mill in West Yorkshire

PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

Hats off Yorkshire textile firm gets day in spotlight

Robyn Vinter
North of England correspondent

When Billie Eilish took to the stage at the 67th Grammy awards wearing a hat with the branding of the LA Dodgers baseball team, few would have noticed the much smaller logo on the side with two tiny union flags and the word "Moon".

But in the small town of Guiseley, West Yorkshire, Moon is a household name, as one of the last surviving woollen mills in the UK.

"We're one of a select few now," said Joe McCann, the brand and product director of Moon, aiming to paint a less negative picture of what most people would think of as a dying trade.

It is true that "surviving" might be a misnomer, given that the company is thriving, shipping all around the world to high-end clothing and interiors brands, including Ralph Lauren and the sports brand New Era, which collaborated with the 188-year-old textile company on Eilish's hat.

McCann said the team were "delighted" to discover yesterday morning that Moon had been beamed around the world during the 23-year-old's performance of her song Birds of a Feather.

"We didn't get any heads up but of course we spotted it immediately and were like: 'Wow, that's incredible,'" he said. "We do sometimes get some fantastic exposure but you can't beat someone like that wearing it at the Grammys."

Though Eilish failed to scoop a single gong at the awards, the star sang live with a backdrop that paid tribute to her home city, Los Angeles, which was besieged by wildfires in January, killing 29 people. McCann said her performance, described as "one of her most moving" by critics, would make a great picture to add to the celebrity wall at Moon's HQ, which includes photos of Liam Gallagher and Justin Bieber wearing clothing made from Moon fabric.

It also features a picture of King Charles on a visit in 2015 to the stone factory building built nearly 200 years ago, where Moon still lives – though now with more modern extensions that have allowed it to expand to keep up with growing demand.

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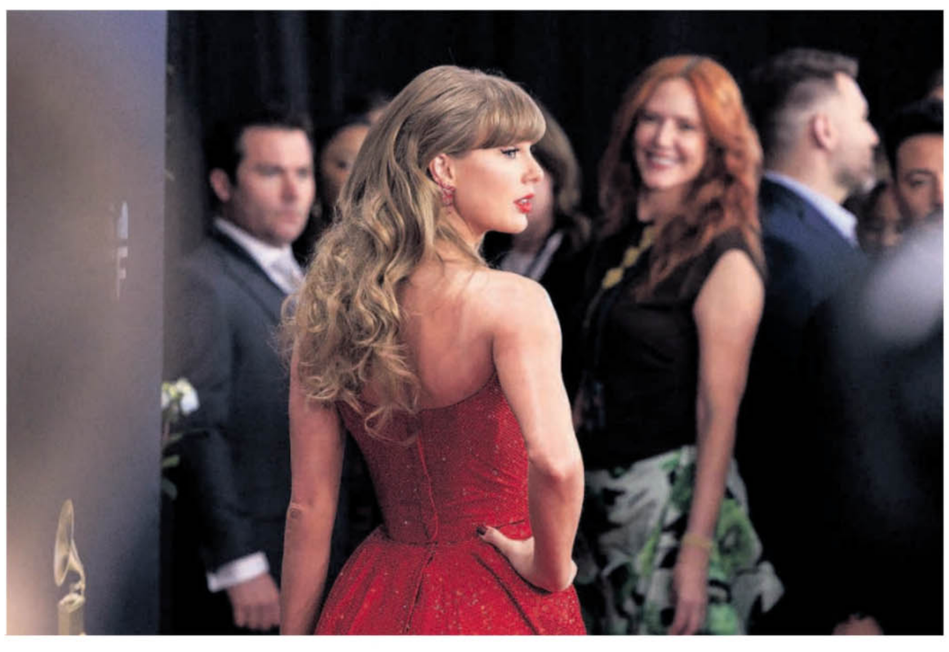
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▲ *Clockwise from main: Sabrina Carpenter (winner of best pop vocal album) performing at the Grammys; Charli xcx, who won best dance pop recording for Von Dutch; Beyoncé with her husband, Jay-Z, and their daughter Blue Ivy Carter; Taylor Swift at the event in LA; Kendrick Lamar with his five awards, including song of the year and record of the year, for Not Like Us*

Triumph and trophies
The winners

Album of the year
Beyoncé - Cowboy Carter
Song of the year
Kendrick Lamar - Not Like Us
Record of the year
Kendrick Lamar - Not Like Us
Best pop duo/ group performance
Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars - Die With a Smile
Best new artist
Chappell Roan
Best country album
Beyoncé - Cowboy Carter
Best pop vocal album
Sabrina Carpenter - Short n' Sweet
Best rap album
Doechii - Alligator Bites Never Heal
Best pop solo performance
Sabrina Carpenter - Espresso
Best rock performance
The Beatles - Now and Then
Best rock song
St Vincent - Broken Man
Best country song
Kacey Musgraves - The Architect
Best dance pop recording
Charli xcx - Von Dutch
Best R&B song
SZA - Saturn





PHOTOGRAPHS: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY; JOHN SHEARER/GETTY; KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY; JAVIER ROJAS/PI/ZUMASHUTTERSTOCK; FREDERICK J BROWN/AFP/GETTY

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Malnutrition doesn't just stunt an individual's growth; it slows down economies. Climate change, conflict and cost of living pressures are making the situation worse across the world.

Over 6 million children are at risk of dying from malnutrition in the next decade. By working with partner countries in Africa and Asia, we can help take action to avert this crisis.

The UK government has a mission to create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet. But this is impossible without addressing the global hunger and nutrition crisis. The upcoming Nutrition For Growth Summit in March offers a pivotal moment to act.

That's why we're calling on Foreign Secretary David Lammy to lead with ambition and commit an additional £500 million over the next five years on nutrition specific programmes, that include providing life saving treatment for children affected by malnutrition.

This investment will transform lives, foster shared prosperity and uphold UK values of opportunity, respect and partnership.



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Atul Kochhar

Brin Pirathapan

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Ken Hom CBE

Mallika Basu

Marcus Bean

Meera Sodha

Melissa Thompson

Noor Murad

Dame Prue Leith

Raymond Blanc OBE

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Lucy Letby How evidence used to convict nurse will be challenged by experts

Josh Halliday

The evidence used to convict Lucy Letby will be challenged today by a panel of experts convened by Dr Shoo Lee, a Canadian professor of paediatrics whose research formed part of the prosecution's case.

Letby, 35, is serving 15 whole-life prison terms after being convicted of murdering seven babies and attempting to kill another seven at the Countess of Chester hospital in north-west England between June 2015 and June 2016.

What is happening today?

Letby's legal team will unveil "significant new medical evidence" after an independent review by 14 international medical experts into the cases of 17 babies allegedly harmed by the nurse.

It is understood the experts have found no evidence of deliberate harm but other varying causes of death. These findings will be at the centre of the nurse's bid to have her case examined by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC).

The panel will also challenge the prosecution's claim that Letby murdered seven babies by injecting air into their veins, causing an air embolism - an air bubble that blocks blood circulation.

Who is Dr Shoo Lee?

Lee's research on air embolism was used by the prosecution to help convict Letby at her first trial in 2022/23. But Lee says his academic paper, published in 1989, was misinterpreted by the prosecution and their lead expert witness, Dr Dewi Evans, and that jurors were misled as a result.

Letby's legal team says Lee's research examined pulmonary embolisms - oxygen being pumped into the lungs of babies on ventilation - and should not be used to support claims that babies had air injected into their veins.



▲ *Lucy Letby at her arrest in 2018. She has no further recourse to the court of appeal without new evidence.*



Dr Shoo Lee, below, says his work was misinterpreted

PHOTOGRAPH: CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY/ PA MEDIA

Why is Lee getting involved now?

Lee, who is a professor emeritus at Toronto University, was first drawn into the Letby case last year when he read that his 1989 paper had been used by the prosecution. He then gave evidence to the court of appeal on behalf of her defence.

He told judges that the "only sign" of air embolism in preterm newborns was of pink blood vessels "superimposed" on pink or blue skin - and it could not be diagnosed by any other skin discolouration. This was significant because Evans and a number of witnesses had told Letby's original trial that the babies had shown alternative signs of skin "mottling" - which Evans claimed was evidence she had injected them with air.

In new research, Lee found no evidence of any skin discolouration in babies who had been injected accidentally with air into the veins.

Who else is involved?

Letby's legal team is led by Mark McDonald, a human rights barrister who took over last year from her trial counsel, Benjamin Myers KC.

McDonald will be joined by David Davis, the senior Conservative MP who has led calls for Letby's case to be reviewed as a "clear miscarriage of justice".

It is understood that one of the UK's most eminent neonatologists, Prof Neena Modi, is on the panel of 14 experts, with others from the US, Japan and Sweden.

What does it mean for Letby?

Letby has exhausted her right to challenge her convictions at the court of appeal without significant new evidence. But she is planning to submit a file - centred on the panel's findings - to the CCRC. If the CCRC decides there is a real possibility judges could quash the convictions, it can send the case back to the court of appeal.

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‘Every day matters’: minister warns of lax attitude to school attendance

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

The education secretary, Bridget Phillipson, has urged parents to ensure their children attend school consistently, warning of “a casual kind of attitude increasingly emerging” towards attendance in England.

She acknowledged that many families were finding it challenging, but said: “It’s not OK just to say: ‘It’s only a Friday, you don’t need to go to school today.’ Every day at school matters and parents have responsibilities too.”

School attendance in England has fallen significantly since the pandemic and the government has been under pressure to reduce absence rates, but Phillipson said it was also up to parents to play their part.

“The decisions you take as an individual parent not to send your children to school impacts the education of all children in the class,” she said.

Phillipson was answering questions after a speech yesterday in which she outlined “a new era of school standards”. She also rejected widespread criticism of planned changes to the school inspection system, revealed by Ofsted yesterday, which appeared to set her on a collision course with union leaders.

She disagreed with the suggestion parents would not be able to understand the more “granular” report card system due to be introduced in England this year and insisted the reforms would lead to stronger and clearer inspection reports.

In a pointed message to teaching unions, which said Ofsted’s proposals were worse than the system they were intended to replace, she insisted her first responsibility was to children.

“I will always seek a constructive relationship with trade unions representing our teachers and workforce, they’ve got an important role to play, but my first priority will always be children and their life chances.”

Phillipson also fleshed out her plans to improve school standards with the introduction of regional improvement for standards and excellence (Rise) teams to tackle 600 “stuck” schools, responsible for the education of 300,000 children. Each school would get up to £100,000 in specialist support and Phillipson said she would not flinch from turning failing schools into academies.

“I will not accept a system that is content for some to sink, even while others soar. The opportunity to succeed must be the right of every child. We simply can’t allow stuck schools to disappear off the radar,” she said.

Daniel Kebede, the general secretary of the National Education Union, said: “Using negative, pejorative terms like ‘stuck schools’ is unhelpful and counter-productive.

“Collaboration, and not ranking, is what builds a good local school for every child. Quite simply you cannot have an improving school system whilst you are implementing austerity.”

Under Ofsted’s new proposals, which are now under consultation, schools will be graded in eight areas on a five-step scale, ranging from “exemplary” to “causing concern”, alongside a separate evaluation of whether safeguarding standards were being met.



Tales of the City
A man crosses Threadneedle Street, 2021, in an image from photographer Andy Hall’s new book The Same for Everyone, in which he documents his wanderings in London’s financial district.

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY HALL

‘Exhausted parents’ shown betting adverts on app used as baby monitor

Rob Davies

Adverts for the bookmaker Ladbrokes have been shown to “exhausted parents” via a smartphone app that can be used as a baby monitor, the Guardian can reveal.

Campaigners have responded by calling for action to reform the rules governing gambling advertising, which have been left out of plans to overhaul regulation of the sector.

One user of the app, which can be downloaded from the Apple app store, told the Guardian they were shocked to see a promotion for Ladbrokes, owned by the gambling company Entain. The advert offered a “£30 welcome bonus” before showing the industry-wide message “take time to think”, which is intended to promote safer gambling.

Entain said the advert did not breach its own guidelines because the app was a “home-monitoring camera” that was not targeted at under-18s.

But the Chinese-made app, YCC365 Plus, is also regularly advertised on leading online retail sites as a tool to be used with home baby monitors.

The advert is not the first time that an Entain brand has been accused of seeking to target new parents.

In 2023, the Guardian revealed that Ladbrokes’ sister company, Coral, allegedly paid blogs aimed at new mothers to recommend its online casino games. At the time, Entain said the blogs had been published before it bought Ladbrokes Coral and that it did not actively target young mothers through affiliate marketing.

Tom Fleming, a parent who raised concerns about the app, said: “Watching my baby on camera with a gambling ad visible just feels wrong. It’s something that’s there to keep my child safe but it’s also feeding through a stream of offers for harmful free bets and the like.”

Campaigners and a peer said the revelation about the app indicated the government should crack down on gambling advertising more widely.

Lord Don Foster said: “The whole system of gambling adverts in this country is now completely out of control, showing the inadequacy of government regulation and of the self-regulatory body overseeing it.”

Will Prochaska, from the Coalition to End Gambling Ads, said: “Targeting exhausted parents is yet another predatory tactic of the gambling industry, which makes most of its money from people it harms.”

A spokesperson for Entain said: “We have compliance processes in place to help ensure that our adverts do not appear on apps that are targeted at anyone under the age of 18. The app in question, YCC365 Plus, is a home-monitoring camera system and has therefore not been deemed to be targeted at under-18s.”

Swinney and Starmer caught up in cat flap over rumours of ban

Libby Brooks
Scotland correspondent

Scotland’s first minister and Keir Starmer’s official spokesperson yesterday denied there were plans to ban cat ownership in Scotland after a flurry of media interest in a series of feline welfare proposals prompted outrage from pet lovers.

The concerns were prompted by media coverage of a report by the independent Scottish Animal Welfare Commission, which published its recommendations on responsible domestic cat ownership last week. Among proposals that included encouraging vaccination and neutering, the report also suggested consideration be given to banning cat ownership in selected rural areas that were also home to red-listed bird species. It is estimated that domestic cats kill 27m birds in the UK each year.

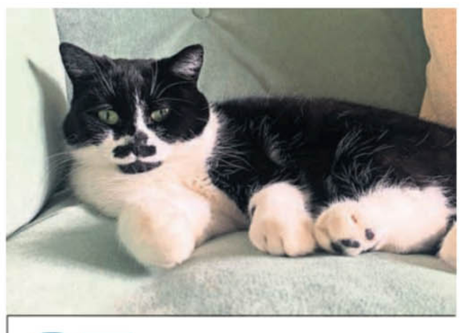
This swiftly morphed into the unfounded claim that the Scottish government was about to ban cats from the country, which the SNP leader, John Swinney, denied.

A clearly exasperated Swinney told Bauer Radio yesterday: “Let me just clear this up today. The government’s not going to be banning cats or restricting cats. We have no intention of doing so and we’ll not be doing it.”

The commission’s report references other jurisdictions where restrictions on cat ownership exist to protect local wildlife, ranging from “keeping cats indoors at all times, to allowing them outside only during the day, or only on a leash, or in a secure outdoor run”. But it goes on to acknowledge preventing free access to the outdoors has a significant impact on feline welfare.

It suggests: “New housing developments in rural areas could have a stipulation that cats may not be kept in conservation-sensitive areas/other areas that have not had high levels of predation, especially with red-listed or amber-listed birds/other species.”

Asked about the proposals and if the UK government might follow suit, Starmer’s spokesperson expressed some puzzlement. “I don’t think we have any plans to ban people from owning cats,” he said.



27m
The number of birds in the UK that are estimated to be killed each year by domestic cats

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Samples taken over decades show rising level of microplastics in human brains

Damian Carrington
Environment editor

The exponential rise in microplastic pollution over the past 50 years may be reflected in increasing contamination in human brains, according to a study.

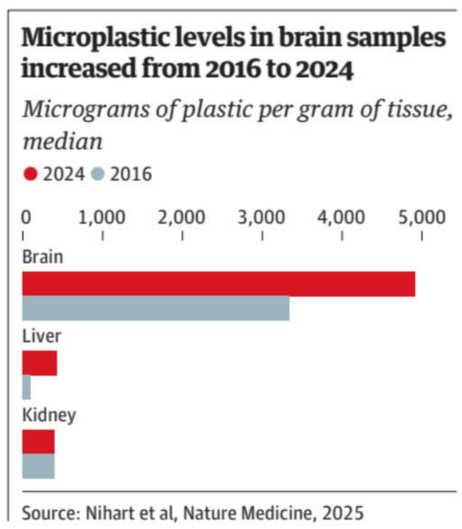
It found a rising trend in micro and nanoplastics in brain tissue from dozens of postmortems carried out between 1997 and 2024. The researchers also found the tiny particles in liver and kidney samples.

The human body is widely contaminated by microplastics. They have also been found in blood, semen, breast milk, placentas and bone marrow. The impact on human health is largely unknown, but they have been linked to strokes and heart attacks.

The scientists also found that the concentration of microplastics was about six times higher in brain samples from people who had dementia. However, the damage dementia caused in the brain would be expected to increase concentrations, the researchers said, meaning no causal link should be assumed.

"Given the exponentially rising environmental presence of micro and nanoplastics, this data compels a much larger effort to understand whether they have a role in neurological disorders or other human health effects," said the researchers, led by Prof Matthew Campen at the University of New Mexico in the US.

Microplastics are broken down from plastic waste and have polluted the entire planet, from the summit of Mount Everest to the deepest oceans. People consume the tiny particles via food, water and by breathing them in.



Source: Nihart et al, Nature Medicine, 2025

A study published on Thursday found microplastic pollution to be significantly higher in placentas from premature births. Another recent analysis found they could block blood vessels in the brains of mice, causing neurological damage, but noted that human capillaries are much larger.

The research, published in the journal Nature Medicine, analysed samples of brain, liver and kidney tissues from 28 people who died in 2016 and 24 others who died in 2024 in New Mexico. Microplastic concentration was much higher in the brain tissue. It was also higher in brain and liver samples from 2024, compared with those from 2016.

The scientists extended the analysis with brain tissue samples from people who died between 1997 and 2013 on the US east coast. The data showed an increasing trend in microplastic contamination of brains from 1997 to 2024.

The most common plastic found was polyethylene, which is used in plastic bags and food and drink packaging. It made up 75% of the total on average. The particles in the brain were mostly nanoscale shards and flakes.

The concentrations in the organs were not influenced by the age of the person at death, or the cause of death, their sex or their ethnicity.

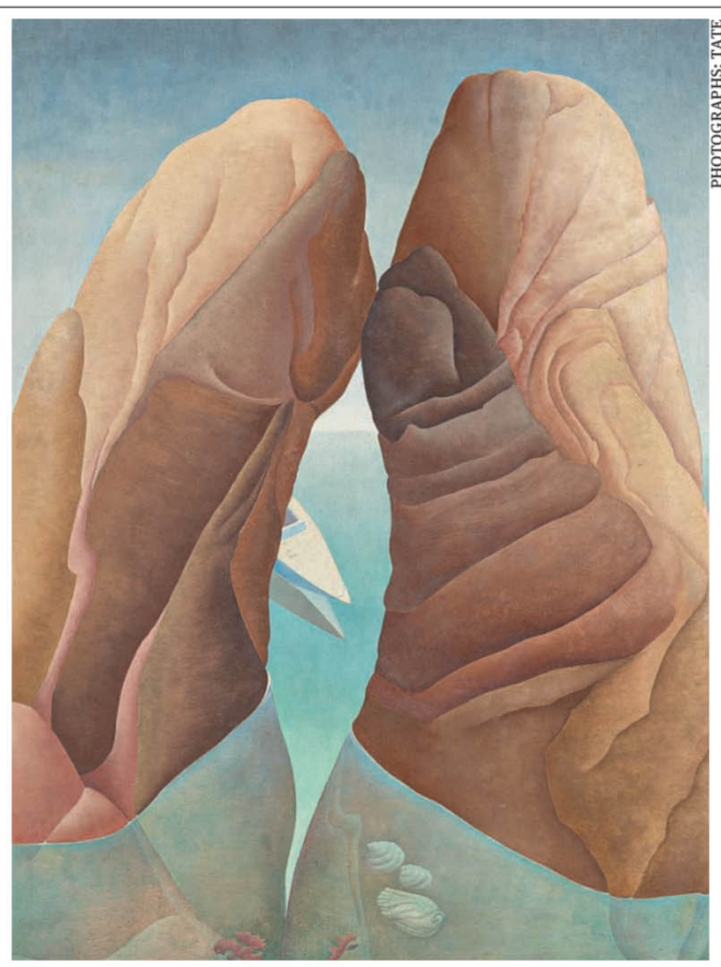
The scientists noted that only one sample from each organ was analysed, meaning the variability within the organs remains unknown, and that some variation in the brain samples could be due to geographic differences.

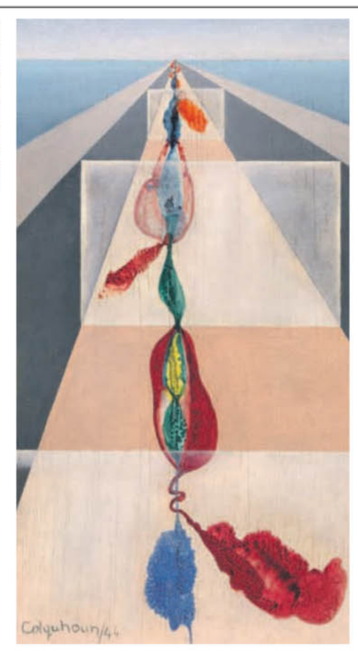
Prof Tamara Galloway at the University of Exeter in the UK, who was not part of the study team, said the 50% increase in levels of brain microplastics over the past eight years mirrored the increasing production and use of plastics and was significant. "It suggests that if we were to reduce environmental contamination with microplastics, the levels of human exposure would also decrease," Galloway said.

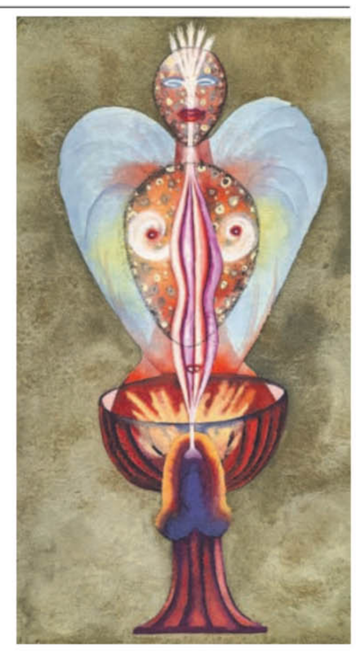
Prof Oliver Jones, at RMIT University in Australia, said the research was interesting, but the low number of samples and the difficulty of analysing tiny plastic particles without contamination meant care should be taken when interpreting the results.



PHOTOGRAPHS: TATE







◀ *From far left: details of Alcove (1946), Scylla (1938), Ages of Man (1944) and Diagrams of Love: The Bird or the Egg? circa 1940*

Art review Sensual delights and wondrous colours are a joy, but spare us the ritualistic paganism

Ithell Colquhoun: Between Worlds
Tate St Ives
★★★★☆

Jonathan Jones

The natural surrealism of the St Ives seaside, barnacles and limpets clinging to suggestively shaped rocks, is the perfect context for the surrealist art of Ithell Colquhoun. While seashells, corals and translucent green water are far from her only subjects, she did paint them with a ravishing, hypnotising sensuality.

In her 1938 painting Scylla, two rocky pinnacles rise from a translucent green-blue sea – except these geological formations are not stone, they are flesh. Knobbly pink sausages form towering pillars, their summits rounded like the ends of two erect penises – that's the artistic intention, not my dirty daydreaming. Colquhoun, as she said, is in the bath beholding her own thighs. Between them sprouts red coral for pubic hair. A boat is heading towards the opening.

There are two reasons Colquhoun is such a delight. We'll save the wildest until last. First, she is a wondrous colourist. It's the pale yet sharp colouring of Scylla that makes it so hallucinatory, a surrealist masterpiece that perfectly enacts this art movement's belief in the liberating power of the unconscious.

Born in 1906 into the imperial elite in India, Colquhoun went to Cheltenham Ladies' College then trained as a figurative painter at the Slade with teachers including the artistically conservative Henry Tonks. Yet even in her early works, she has a feel for chromatic fun. In her 1935 portrait Humfrey Gilbert Garth Payne, a man in a sapphire blue shirt is framed against a room full of amber and ivory light.

When she embraced surrealism, that chromophilia became ecstatic. In her 1946 painting Alcove, a subterranean chamber opens up in glowing intense colours that destabilise your optic nerve: red, a firey orange, a colour that's both yellow and pink, while a blue worm rises from the flame. It is vaginal, that's obvious, yet also unearthly.



▲ *A Man Ray portrait of Colquhoun*

She adopted "automatism" to bypass rational thought and tap into the Freudian unconscious. Her preferred technique was decalcomania, in which you blot wet colours by folding and squeezing the paper. What she saw in stains will open your mind. Colquhoun is some kind of genius. Her mind ignites itself. In St Elmo, a flowery mound gives birth to a fleshy entangled tower of pink tubes against a foamy sky or sea: you can see how it began as a blot. Out of this lovely chaos Colquhoun has pictured a form like the architecture of the innermost body.

There are unlikely photos of her from a BBC television broadcast in 1948, giving a demonstration of automatic art. Why is it so unlikely she was broadcast on the Reithian BBC? Because the other reason for Colquhoun's distinctive energy was her fascination with magic.

It is there in her 1932 painting Aaron Meeting Moses, in which horns and a red curvy magic wand suggest the occult rather than the Old Testament. It pervades her imaginings right through to her abstract tarot deck from 1977.

Colqhoun's belief in the occult got her thrown out of the official British surrealist group, because her membership of the Order of the Golden Dawn seemed dodgy to them after Britain went to war with Germany. They had a point: the Golden Dawn had an interest in eugenics and using "sex magic" to develop spiritually superior beings.

I may be occult-phobic but every bit of mystical tosh is treated here with too much respect. The Tate has even published Sex Magic, a compendium of her occult designs, as "a radical contribution to our understanding of magic, art, sexual enlightenment and female desire".

I'm with the surrealists – all for desire and the unconscious, not so sure about the ritualistic paganism.

Until 5 May

Eyewitness

Windows on the world The winners of the 2025 Sony World Photography national and regional awards, which celebrate visual storytelling across the globe, have been announced today, chosen from among entrants in 56 countries.



▶ *Pedro Jarque Krebs from Peru won second place in the regional awards for Latin America with this photograph of a chameleon's tail*

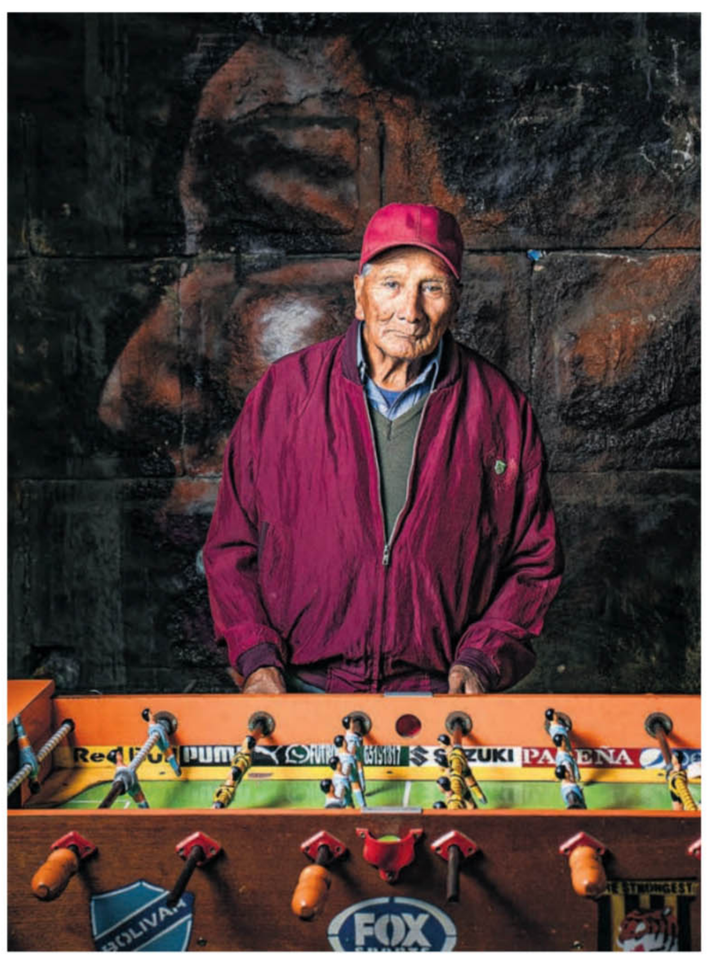
◀ *Mohammad Mirza of Kuwait won a national award for this dreamlike photograph of a black rhino on an atmospherically misty morning*

▼ *This image by Bolivia's Brian Delgadillo is part of a series on older people and objects from their past, and was shortlisted in Latin America*





▲ *Attila Domokos, from Hungary, was shortlisted for a regional award for this photograph in which a mother and daughter escape to nature in a camper van for a weekend of adventures*





▲ *Moldova's Irina Zaiteva was shortlisted for a regional award for this shot of a goat and its kid*





▲ *Yaping Du of China took second place in the national awards for this image of life in the mountains*



▲ *Rahsan Firtina won Turkey's national award for this shot of a veterans' club in Hanoi, Vietnam*

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▼ *Carol's home, where she has been getting help from Gloucester city council to clear out her possessions*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ADRIAN SHERRATT/THE GUARDIAN

'I'm never going back'

Council's innovative project helps hoarders

Amelia Hill

Carol has been trying to clear her home for two years but in her maelstrom of dishevelled possessions, there is still nowhere to sit – and barely anywhere to stand.

To her, however, things look great. She is delighted that the chaotic towers of tumbled clothes, yellowed newspapers, pebbles and innumerable bags stuffed into other dusty bags are now waist- instead of shoulder-high: six months ago, these perilous mountains teetered close to the stained ceilings, brushing the thick cobwebs that still hang from broken light fittings.

Carol has no illusions about what is going on. "I'm surrounded by my trauma," she says, her thin face peering out from behind a barrier of hair and hat.

"All this stuff is the physical manifestation of the actual traumas I've suffered and not dealt with."

Recognised as a standalone mental health disorder only in 2013 – but still strikingly under-researched – hoarding is thought to affect between 2.5% and 6% of the population. According to a US Senate report, The Consequences of Clutter, an ageing society means this number is likely to increase.

"If it rises at this rate and continues to rise, we're going to be facing a hoarding pandemic," said Dr Lynne Drummond, the author of the paper Everything You Need to Know About Hoarding.

Hoarding, too often, is an issue of life and death. In 2022, the London fire brigade attended 1,036 hoarding-related fires, which resulted in 186 injuries and 10 deaths. In Wales, hoarding is responsible for almost a third of fire-related deaths.

The number of deaths and injuries caused when hoards cause people to trip and fall, or when they become trapped under an "avalanche" of possessions are undocumented, but experts say it is significant.

Then there is the impact of living in squalor: the self-neglect inevitable if one can't wash, reach the fridge or the cooker – not to mention the risk of vermin.

The impact on families and children is also disturbing. Hoarding is said to run in families. About 1% of children are thought to have hoarding behaviours.

Experts struggle to fully understand the complex nature of the condition. This is not helped by the huge stigma around it. "Those who hoard are portrayed as lazy, slovenly and dirty," said Drummond. "Hoarding is widely considered to be a lifestyle choice."

Jane has been hoarding for decades but slips through the council's net every time it tries to help. Shame is a large part of why she won't engage.

When she opens her front door, she can't stop herself staring down at the obscene graffiti scrawled on her doorstep by a workman 18 months previously.

"Smelly cunts," it reads, in thick black pen. But Jane won't scrub the insult away. "It upsets me so much but it has to be there," she says uncertainly.

"I look at my house and I feel despair," she says. "I am emotionally, physically and mentally exhausted … But I can't walk away because there's stuff here that I need."

Local authorities have no statutory duty to help those with hoarding behaviours, but nevertheless, increasingly, councils are intervening, even with budgets stretched wafer-thin. After two years of planning, Gloucester city council launched its hoarding care and support initiative last April.



▲ *Hoarding is under-researched but is thought to affect up to 6% of people*

"We were wasting huge amounts of money by failing to deal with this group," said James Dykes, a housing regulation, resettlement and projects manager at Gloucester.

"We had children being brought up in these homes. We had substantial numbers of residents trapped in hospitals and care settings because they couldn't return to unsafe homes. We had families being made homeless. We had homes that had been previously cleared that were now just as bad as before – with all the risk of fires and infestations."

Dykes brought in the charity Hoarding UK to help develop a programme and train officers across multiple agencies. It created six support groups and set up teams offering personalised psychological support, decluttering and home safety improvements to residents.

The new team stays with people for as long as they're needed: Carol has already been with them for two years. Amazingly, the initiative saves the council money.

"It would have cost up to £6,000 to send the men in boiler suits to forcibly clear Carol's house and she would just have filled it straight back up again," said Dykes. "But by spending that same amount of money over a much longer period of time, we can see Carol finally beginning to recover."

The council has even persuaded Carol's landlords, who were on the verge of making her homeless, to repurpose the thousands of pounds they would have spent in legal costs to getting Carol one-to-one support from Hoarding UK.

"I can only think of about six councils across the UK working to help hoarding," said Heather Matuozzo, who is the director of a social enterprise specialising in hoarding, Clouds End CIC, and has appeared on Britain's Biggest Hoarders. "But the work they're doing is exceptional."

Prof Sharon Morein, a member of the UK Hoarding Network and Partnership, agreed. "There is a huge lack of recognition and funding for hoarding but things are starting to change … slowly, local authorities are beginning to listen."

For sufferers such as Carol, Gloucester's approach is literally a lifesaver. "I was on the verge of not being here any more," she says.

"But because of this programme, I've cleared over three tonnes of paper from my front room alone. Then I'm going to start on the rest of the house and I can promise you this: I'm never going back to living like this. Never again."

British military body armour recalled amid safety fears

Dan Sabbagh
Defence and security editor

Ministers have issued an emergency recall of 120,000 body armour plates used by the British military amid accusations from Labour that the Conservatives failed to safely renew basic protection for troops during their time in office.

Testing discovered microscopic cracks in ageing enhanced combat body armour (ECBA) that was supposed to be swapped out in 2023, but whose replacement was delayed by the previous government by four years to make savings.

Luke Pollard, the armed forces minister, wrote to military chiefs at the end of last week to order the emergency replacement of the armour, which is still widely used in the navy, and by the army in low-threat environments.

Defence ministers "will not tolerate this risk", Pollard wrote when he ordered the plates to be immediately recalled. A replacement process that had been due to complete in 2027 would now be accelerated, he added.

Labour insiders also blamed the Conservatives for "leaving troops vulnerable with defective body armour" and argued the situation was similar to the Covid-19 crisis, when "the Conservatives left NHS workers unprotected when they failed to provide PPE".

Doctors and nurses complained there were not enough protective gowns, gloves and masks at the start of the pandemic.

"It is clearly not acceptable for any of our armed forces personnel to be concerned about the quality of such fundamental safety equipment," Pollard said in his letter.

ECBA was introduced more than 30 years ago, but it was not popular with British troops on deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan because it offered limited protection. It has since been replaced for frontline tasks in the army but is still used in the navy and by marines because newer, heavier flak jackets are dangerous if the wearer ends up in water.

About one in 10 ECBA plates are believed to be defective. Once recalled, they will be tested to see if they remain fit for use. Ministers hope it will be possible to swap out the armour without incurring extra cost by testing them and returning them to service if deemed safe.

The MoD said ECBA had been "suspended in all but unavoidable circumstances" as a precaution. "This government will not accept compromises when it comes to the safety of our people," an MoD spokesperson said.

World

Rubio takes control of USAid as officials locked out and Musk repeats closure threat

Richard Luscombe

The US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, declared himself the acting administrator of the United States Agency for International Aid (USAid) yesterday as staffers were locked out of its Washington DC headquarters and the White House confirmed plans to merge it into the state department.

The agency has become a touchpoint for the Trump administration's efforts to seize control of federal spending in recent days through Elon Musk's so-called "department of government efficiency" (Doge).

Two senior USAid security officials were suspended on Sunday for blocking Doge officials from a restricted area, a day after the agency's website went offline, and Musk posted to X that USAid was "beyond repair" and needed to be shut down.

Talking to reporters yesterday in El Salvador, where he is on a state visit, Rubio told reporters he had assumed control of USAid to "align" it with Trump's priorities.

"Our goal was to go in and align our foreign aid to the national interest," he said.

"If you go from mission after mission and embassy after embassy around the world you will often find, in many cases, that USAid is involved in programmes that run counter to what we're trying to do in our national strategy with that country or region. That cannot continue."



USAid is the world's largest single donor, helping to disburse $72bn of American assistance globally in the 2023 fiscal year

PHOTOGRAPH: J COUNTESS/GETTY

The agency manages almost $43bn (£35bn) in food, humanitarian and other aid, including clean water programmes and medicines, to about 130 countries. Staffers were told in a late-night email on Sunday not to report for work yesterday.

Separately, a White House source said Trump and administration officials were discussing a merger of USAid into the state department and planned to send a notification to Congress shortly about his plans, Reuters reported.

The goal was "to significantly reduce the size of the workforce for efficiency purposes and to ensure their spending is in line with the president's agenda", the unnamed senior official said.

Musk, the billionaire who has repeatedly called USAid a "criminal organisation", said he had discussed with Trump his plan for closing it, and that the president had agreed. "I actually checked with him a few times [and] said: 'Are you sure?' And so we're shutting it down," Musk said, reported by the Washington Post.

USAid is the world's largest single donor. In fiscal year 2023, the US disbursed $72bn of assistance worldwide on everything from women's health in conflict zones to access to clean water, HIV/Aids treatments, energy security and anti-corruption work. It provided 42% of all humanitarian aid tracked by the United Nations in 2024.

Trump has ordered a global freeze on most US foreign aid as part of his "America first" policy that is sending shockwaves around the world. Field hospitals in Thai refugee camps, landmine clearance in war zones, and drugs to treat millions suffering from diseases such as HIV are among the programmes at risk of elimination.

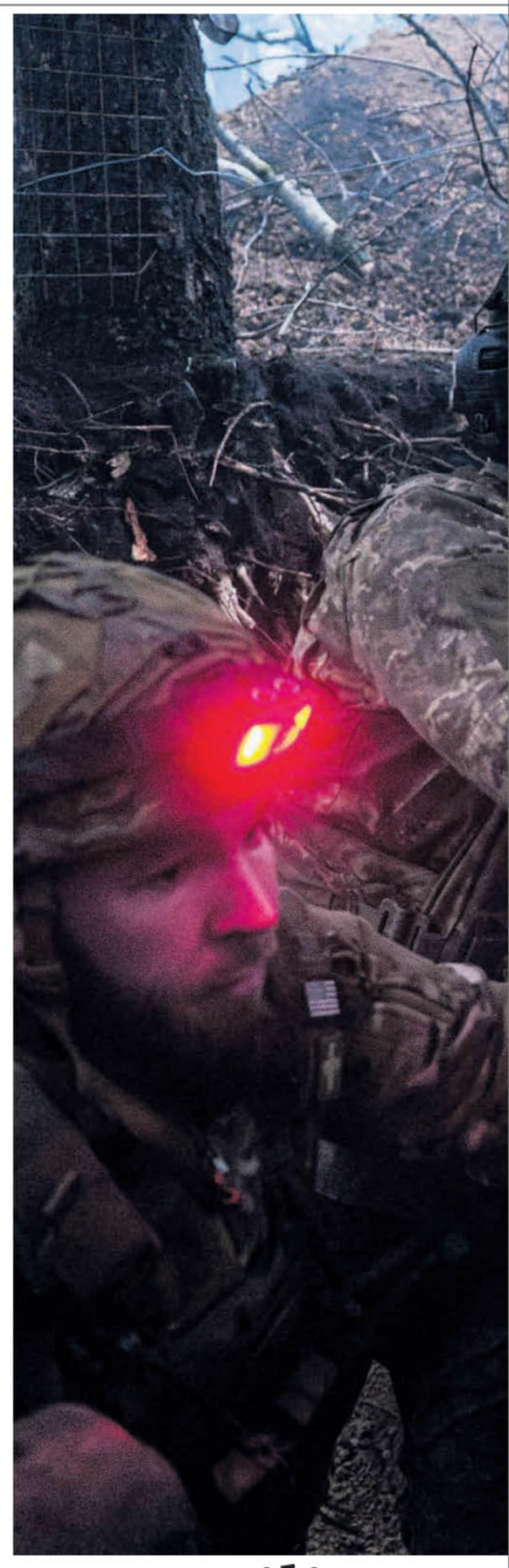
Workers for Doge, an unofficial government department with no congressionally approved mandate, have also gained access to the US treasury's highly sensitive database and federal payments system, it was reported on Sunday.

According to Wired magazine, the Doge team is being led by a group of six "young and inexperienced" engineers aged 19 to 24, one of whom is still in college. The decision by the new treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, to allow Doge "full access" to the personal data of millions of Americans as well as details of public contractors who compete directly with Musk's own businesses has raised conflict of interest concerns.

Devex, a media platform for the global development community, obtained a copy of the email sent to USAid employees working at its headquarters at the Ronald Reagan building in Washington DC ordering them to stay at home yesterday. It was sent hours after its director of security, John Voorhees, and a deputy were placed on "administrative leave" after they physically blocked the Doge team from restricted areas.

Doge subsequently gained control of the building's access system, which allowed them to lock out employees and read emails.

Democrats and other critics have condemned the targeting of USAid by Musk and the Trump administration. That has been part of a wider, determined push by Trump to wrest control of and remake large chunks of the federal apparatus during his second presidency.



Trump says he will cut off US funding to South Africa over 'confiscations' of land

Rachel Savage
Johannesburg

Donald Trump has claimed that South Africa is "confiscating" land and "treating certain classes of people very badly", announcing he is cutting off all future funding to the country pending an investigation.

The US president's intervention in one of South Africa's most divisive issues was rebutted by the country's government.

Land ownership in South Africa remains highly unequal, a legacy of white minority rule that governments have struggled to address since the first multiracial elections in 1994.

Efforts to redress this inequality have drawn criticism from conservatives, including the South African-born billionaire and Trump ally Elon Musk, who yesterday posted "Why do you have openly racist ownership laws?" on his social media platform X, in response to the defence of the country's policy by South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa.

Musk, who is heading Trump's efforts to shrink the federal government, has said he is working to close the foreign aid agency USAid.



Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's president, has defended the policy

Ramaphosa signed a bill last month allowing the government to offer "nil compensation" in certain circumstances for land it expropriates in the public interest. This includes if the land is abandoned or held purely for speculation.

"South Africa is confiscating land, and treating certain classes of people VERY BADLY," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform on Sunday. "I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of this situation has been completed!"

In response, Ramaphosa said its law was not exceptional and that the only US aid South Africa received was 17% of its HIV/Aids programme.

"The recently adopted Expropriation Act is not a confiscation instrument, but a constitutionally mandated legal process that ensures public access to land in an equitable and just manner as guided by the constitution," Ramaphosa said in a post on X. "South Africa, like the United States of America and other countries, has always had expropriation laws that balance the need for public usage of land and the protection of rights of property owners."

The US federal government can take over private property if "just compensation" is offered.

Ramaphosa's African National Congress party has previously argued that the bill, which was passed by the previous ANC-led parliament, is not arbitrary as the government must first seek agreement with the owner.

However, some groups have warned it could lead to a situation like the Zimbabwe government's seizure of white-owned commercial farms, often without compensation, after independence in 1980.

The issue has divided South Africa's coalition government, with the white-led Democratic Alliance launching a formal dispute over it.

Additional reporting
Reuters and Agence France-Presse

Paramilitary leader from Ukraine dies in Moscow bomb blast

Pjotr Sauer

A bomb exploded in the lobby of a luxury apartment block in Moscow yesterday, killing a pro-Russia paramilitary leader from eastern Ukraine alongside his bodyguard.

The bomb was detonated just as a man and his bodyguard entered the lobby of the Scarlet Sails residential complex on the banks of the Moskva

'We need to rebuild'
Serbian protesters consider next move
Page 26



Undersea tremors
People flee Santorini over earthquake fears
Page 27



French PM faces vote of no confidence after bypassing parliament

Kim Willsher
Paris

France's prime minister will face a vote of no confidence after he pushed through a budget bill without a vote in the National Assembly.

The hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) said yesterday it was lodging two motions of no confidence in the government after François Bayrou used a constitutional measure known as the "49.3" to pass the legislation without a parliamentary debate.

However, the Socialist party said it would not support any motion that would bring down a second government in less than two months, meaning the move was unlikely to plunge France back into political uncertainty. MPs will vote on the confidence motions tomorrow.

Speaking as he moved to force through the budget and social security bills yesterday, Bayrou told the lower house of parliament: "No country can survive without a budget … Is this budget perfect? No. Nobody finds it perfect. It is a balance. We are faced with our duty and the decision is in your hands."

But Éric Coquerel, an LFI deputy and president of the finance commission, told the house: "This budget is worse than that proposed by Michel Barnier."

With no majority in the Assemblée Nationale, Bayrou, a centrist, had little choice but to force through the legislation aimed at reducing the country's soaring deficit. In doing so he risked facing the same end as his predecessor, Barnier, who used the 49.3 to try to push through the 2025 budget bill, prompting censure motions from the LFI and the far-right National Rally. He ended up resigning amid the collapse of the government after being in the role for less than three months.

The deadlock was caused by the president, Emmanuel Macron, dissolving parliament and holding a snap general election in June after his governing centrist party was defeated in European elections.

The New Popular Front, a coalition of leftwing parties, won the highest number of seats. The result left the lower house of parliament divided into three blocs - left, centre and far right - none of which has an absolute majority. A new legislative election cannot be held until June.

Yesterday, the Bank of France governor, François Villeroy de Galhau, said adopting the budget bill would be "a first step in the right direction" to end economic uncertainty.

River, Russian state media reported. The Tass news agency, citing security services, reported that the blast was an attack on Armen Sarkisyan, the head of the boxing federation in Russian-occupied Donetsk and the founder of a battalion fighting against Ukraine.

Sarkisyan, who is wanted in Ukraine, has a long history of aiding pro-Russia forces in the country.

The bomb was probably hidden in a couch at the building's entrance, according to Russian media. The security services said the bomb had been detonated remotely after the attacker waited for Sarkisyan to enter the lobby.

Sarkisyan was taken to hospital in critical condition and later succumbed to his injuries. His bodyguard was killed instantly, Tass said.

No group has claimed responsibility for the blast, which the security services described as a well-planned assassination.

Ukraine has targeted dozens of Russian military officers and Russian-installed officials whom Kyiv has accused of committing war crimes in the country. Little is known, however, about the clandestine Ukrainian resistance cells that have carried out assassinations and attacks on military infrastructure in Russia and Russian-controlled areas.

News agencies published footage from the lobby of the building in north-west Moscow showing a heavily damaged hall, a blown-out door and broken glass.

According to Ukrainian media, Kyiv issued an international arrest warrant for Sarkisyan in 2014 over violence against pro-EU protesters during the Maidan uprising.

Ukrainian security services have described Sarkisyan as a "criminal authority" with connections to the former president Viktor Yanukovych, who fled to Russia in 2014.

He gained further attention in Russia as the founder of the Arbat battalion, one of many irregular military units that have fought alongside the Russian army since Vladimir Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

If claimed by Kyiv, the attack would mark the latest operation by Ukraine's SBU security service deep behind enemy lines - one aimed at sowing panic and fear among senior Kremlin and military figures.

"This is how Ukraine's terrorist attacks are getting closer to the Russian elite," Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin political analyst, wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

"This attack is a message from [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy to the entire Russian elite: you will not hide from me anywhere," Markov added.

Investigators said they believed the attacker could have posed as a courier or contractor to enter the gated luxury apartment complex.

The blast would represent the latest embarrassment for Russia's FSB, which has struggled to stop Kyiv's assassination campaign.

In December, Ukraine said it was behind the assassination of Lt Gen Igor Kirillov, the head of the military's chemical, biological and radiological weapons unit, who was killed along with his assistant when a bomb hidden in an electric scooter went off as the two men left a residential building in south-east Moscow.

▲ *Ukrainian soldiers prepare to fire artillery at Russian positions on the frontline in the Donetsk region*
PHOTOGRAPH: EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP





▲ *Armen Sarkisyan, the founder of a pro-Russia paramilitary unit, and the residential building in Moscow where the bomb was detonated*



▼ *Novi Sad, Serbia, on Saturday. The protests began after 15 people died in a station roof collapse*

PHOTOGRAPH: ARMIN DURGUT/AP

'Change is possible' Serbia has rallied behind students but future is unclear

Julian Borger
Novi Sad

When Serbian protesters took over the town of Novi Sad at the weekend and staged a triumphant street festival, occasional chants could be heard of an old slogan dating back a quarter of a century.

"Gotov je!" ("He's finished!") was the mantra of the 2000 revolt that brought down Serbia's post-communist dictator Slobodan Milošević. This time it was aimed at the current president, Aleksandar Vučić, but the chant did not travel far among the tens of thousands gathered in Novi Sad.

The words were from another era and the students who have led the past three months of protests have no confidence that the existing system can produce a better leader. They are not pointing out the emperor has no clothes, they say, only to end up with a new emperor.

"We need to rebuild everything from scratch," said Ana Đurović, a film-making student, standing in the midst of a dense, jubilant crowd on one of the three bridges across the Danube blocked by protesters as evening fell on Saturday. "Students are not trying to participate in politics or government. That's not the plan."

With the students reluctant to get involved in conventional politics against a well-entrenched regime, there is a troubling question hanging over the euphoria of the protests: now what?

Serbian democrats have reason to be cautious. Milošević's democratic successor, Zoran Đinđić, held office as prime minister for little more than two years before being shot through the heart by a sniper, a special forces veteran taking orders from organised crime.

The trigger for the latest protests was the deaths of 15 people when the canopy roof outside Novi Sad railway station collapsed on 1 November, amid evidence of slipshod construction, fraud and corruption. The emblem of the protests has become a scarlet palm print, depicting the bloody hands of those in power.

The students' strategy is to focus on the Novi Sad station disaster with specific demands for transparency and accountability, in the hope of changing Serbia.

"If they do every single thing that students want from the government, we will have a total change in our society, because they will have to start arresting people at the top of government," said Ivan Bjelić, an activist who has spent 23 days in jail for his part in the rallies.

The protests have so far wrongfooted Vučić and his Serbian Progressive party (SNS), which had grown adept over more than a decade at sidelining the opposition, through a mix of government patronage and the threats of character assassination through friendly tabloids, dismissal or financial pressure.

The students have kept their distance from the opposition parties and operate collectively, with no identifiable leaders the government can target. And with each tabloid denunciation or sporadic physical attack, including two car-ramming incidents, the protests have grown.



▲ *Students marched 50 miles from Belgrade to Novi Sad at the weekend*

"It's really very challenging for this government, because they don't know how to talk with these young people who are just asking for justice and for truth," said Srdan Golubović, a film director and one of Đurović's professors at the University of Belgrade.

Golubović and most of the dramatic arts faculty were standing with the students on one of the Novi Sad bridges on Saturday. He compared the protests to the mass uprisings of 1968, in their student leadership, their emphasis on direct democracy and systemic change, as well as their sheer scale.

"Many people from all the cities and small towns in Serbia are no longer afraid. That's the most important thing - the loss of fear," Golubović said.

The students' broadening base of support was evident over the weekend in Novi Sad. Local farmers brought dozens of tractors and thousands of bikers arrived on their motorcycles on Saturday afternoon. Meanwhile, army veterans marched through the city centre to pay their respects at the railway station.

There have now been protests in about 200 towns. In the run-up to the weekend, Belgrade students walked about 50 miles to Novi Sad through traditionally SNS-loyalist villages and were feted all the way. A fleet of taxis from Belgrade turned up on Sunday to offer them free trips back, and on the same day, the national bar association declared a one-month lawyers' strike in solidarity.

Internal pressure from journalists has shown signs of changing state media. Pro-government outlets had played down the protests to the point of ignoring them, but the state broadcaster, RTS, showed live pictures of the crowds engulfing Novi Sad. The SNS denounced the coverage as "scandalous".

Vučić has continued to hint, without evidence, that obscure outside forces are orchestrating the protests. "We don't need governments imposed from the outside ... without elections and without the will of the people," he said on Instagram.

At the same time, the government has been back-pedalling ever faster. More than a dozen people were charged in relation to the Novi Sad disaster, including the former transport minister Goran Vesić. Vesić resigned, and then last week so did the prime minister, Miloš Vučević.

Like the government's earlier threats, the concessions have only served to embolden the protests and boost their popular support.

"We were brought up not to participate in politics," Đurović said. "We were taught we cannot change anything. Now we've proved that change is possible."

There is widespread agreement in Serbia that there has been a profound change in society over the past few months, but there is no clarity on what will happen next. The students have a set of principles and demands but freely admit there is no blueprint.

Vučić has said he intends to assemble a government of experts, though his probable appointees are unlikely to quell the protests. He could also call snap elections, giving the opposition a quandary over whether to take part.

Miša "Ronin" Bačulov, a martial arts champion and motivational speaker who has become a city councillor in Novi Sad and a prominent ally of the students, says elections would be meaningless unless preceded by a truly representative provisional government to create an even playing field in the skewed state-run media and electoral system.

"Now it's like getting into a rigged match. We at least want to have a fair chance," Bačulov said admitting there could be no guarantee that the protests have made such fundamental changes an inevitabilty. "It's like we're leading by 20 points, and it's the last round," he said. "But in a real fight, you can't be sure until the last second that you're going to win."

'Now it's like a rigged match. We at least want a fair chance'

Miša 'Ronin' Bačulov
City councillor

People flee Santorini after rise in seismic activity fuels fears of stronger earthquake

Helena Smith
Athens

Earthquake fears have prompted people to flee Santorini, as Greece's most popular island destination continues to be hit by what scientists described as a "barrage" of tremors.

With authorities on heightened alert amid the risk of an impending natural disaster, residents, tourists and workers are scrambling to leave the island on ferries and planes.

By midday yesterday, Aegean airlines had announced it was doubling the number of flights from Athens to Santorini for the next two days, as travel agents said the new flights were sold out "within seconds".

"We're monitoring the situation very closely and, following discussions with the ministry of civil protection, will act accordingly," an airline spokesperson said. Ferry companies also said they would put on extra services.

More than 200 undersea tremors shook the island over the weekend – most in waters between Santorini and Amorgos – with scores of fresh overnight earthquakes prompting people to sleep outside or in their cars.

"I cried all night because I was very afraid and didn't know what to do," a Mexican tourist on a two-day visit to Santorini told the Greek daily Protothema. "We were all saying we should stay calm but how can you be calm when the ground is shaking again and again?"

An earthquake measuring 4.8 on the Richter scale was registered at 2.17pm local time yesterday. Landslides were also recorded.

Dr Gerassimos Papadopoulos, a seismologist, said: "The number of tremors has increased, magnitudes have risen and epicentres have shifted north-east … The risk level has escalated."

Later in the day, as speculation about a volcanic eruption also grew, he emphasised that the earthquakes were "tectonic, not volcanic".

By order of Greece's civil protection ministry, schools in Santorini and the surrounding islands of Ios, Anafi and Amorgos are to remain shut until Friday, while people were advised as a precautionary measure to avoid derelict buildings and gathering in enclosed spaces.

Warnings were also issued to avoid the shoreline and certain ports in case a quake triggered a tsunami. "It appears a seismic fault line has been activated and could cause an earthquake above six [on the Richter scale]," another seismologist, Prof Manolis Skordylis, said on public radio. "We haven't had the main earthquake yet."

Emergency medical crews continued to arrive on the island yesterday joining special forces, rescue teams and drone handlers who had already been dispatched. Officials have not ruled out the army being sent in. In the event of a tsunami, inhabitants have been told to head to elevated areas inland, where rescue workers have established a staging area, pitching tents in a basketball court close to the island's main hospital.

"We are dealing with a very intense geological phenomenon," the Greek prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, told reporters. "I ask that islanders remain calm and listen to the guidance of the civil protection ministry."

Greece sits on multiple fault lines and is often rattled by earthquakes. In 1956, a 7.7-magnitude earthquake hit Amorgos and Santorini, triggering a tsunami that resulted in the deaths of 53 people.



▲ *People have been leaving the island after a 'barrage' of tremors*



Up and away Bear cubs climb a tree on the orders of their mother, who stayed at the bottom to protect them from another adult bear in Martinselkonen, eastern Finland.

PHOTOGRAPH: VALTTERI MULKAHAINEN/ SOLENT NEWS

Conservative De Wever is sworn in as Belgium's prime minister

Agence France-Presse
Brussels

Conservative Bart De Wever has been sworn in as Belgium's new prime minister, after striking a hard-fought coalition deal that moves the country to the right.

The agreement, struck late on Friday after seven months of negotiations, makes De Wever the first nationalist from Dutch-speaking Flanders to be named Belgian premier.

The 54-year-old, who in recent years has backed off from calls for Flanders to become an independent country, took the oath of office before King Philippe, in a ceremony at the royal palace in Brussels.

Split between French- and Dutch-speaking communities and with a highly complex political system, Belgium has an unenviable record of painfully protracted coalition discussions – reaching 541 days in 2010-11.

This time around, five groups sought to forge a coalition after June elections that failed to produce a clear majority – with talks led by De Wever's conservative N-VA, which claimed the most seats.

The new government brings together three parties from Dutch-speaking Flanders: De Wever's N-VA, the centrist Christian Democrats and the leftist Vooruit (Onward). It includes two from French-speaking Wallonia: the centrist Les Engagés and the centre-right Reformist Movement. Together, they hold an 81-seat majority in Belgium's 150-seat parliament.

Indians turn to 'visa god' in hope of securing US work permits

Penelope MacRae
Delhi

Indian professionals have been flocking to Hindu temples believed to grant prayers for a US visa after Donald Trump signed several executive orders aimed at making immigration to the US more difficult.

The rush for divine help has been in evidence at Chamatkari Hanuman temple – popularly called "visa Hanuman" – in Ahmedabad in the western state of Gujarat. The temple priest Vijay Bhatt told the Times of India that visa applicants were asked to place their passports before Lord Hanuman, a Hindu deity known for his monkey-like appearance, and recite a devotional hymn.

"It's all about faith," he told the paper. "If you believe, it will happen." He claimed to have witnessed instances where devotees received approvals within hours of performing rituals, even after multiple rejections.

At Chilkur Balaji temple in Hyderabad – known as the "visa god" shrine – aspiring emigrants had been chanting prayers and completing 108 circumambulations barefoot, the paper said. And in Shree Siddhi Peeth Chamatkari Hanuman temple in Delhi, "many people give up meat, alcohol, onion and garlic for 41 days hoping their visa will be granted", according to Narayan Mishra, the temple priest. "We usually find that their wishes do come true."



▶ *Chilkur Balaji temple, Hyderabad, is popular with aspiring emigrants*

Moving to the US has long been a status symbol for many Indians but Trump has demanded tougher visa vetting procedures.

There has been a split among some of Trump's biggest backers over the flagship H-1B visa programme, pitting Elon Musk against immigration hardliners who want it scrapped. At least two-thirds of recipients of the skilled foreign-worker visa come from India. Musk says the programme needs "major reform" but argues there is not enough US talent to fill tech jobs.

French director found guilty of sexual assault

Kim Willsher
Paris

A French film director has been found guilty of sexually assaulting the actor Adèle Haenel in the early 2000s, when she was between 12 and 15, but was not jailed, following a landmark #MeToo trial.

Christophe Ruggia, 60, who denied abusing Haenel, was given a four-year sentence - two suspended and two to be served under house arrest with an electronic bracelet.

Haenel, now 35, was one of the first leading actors to accuse the country's film industry of turning a blind eye to sexual abuse. The actor, who has won two Césars, the French Oscars, had accused Ruggia of subjecting her to "permanent sexual harassment" during and after the making of his 2002 movie, The Devils, in which she played a girl with autism. She said Ruggia had repeatedly touched her inappropriately.

Haenel, acclaimed for her performance in the 2019 French film Portrait of a Lady on Fire, has said she felt guilty after the filming of The Devils and had suicidal thoughts.

Ruggia had told the court he understood the Devils shoot had been "painful" for the actor but accused her of creating a "parallel universe" regarding the abuse. Other crew members working on the film described his behaviour towards Haenel as "invasive" and "misplaced".



▲ *The actor Adèle Haenel leaves the court after the trial of Christophe Ruggia, below, who received a four-year sentence: two years suspended and two under house arrest*
PHOTOGRAPH: TERESA SUAREZ/EPA



After the judgment, Ruggia's lawyer, Fanny Collin, said he would be appealing against his conviction. The court also ordered the director to pay Haenel €15,000 in damages , and €20,000 for the years of psychological therapy she had to undergo as a result of the abuse.

In 2020, Haenel stormed out of the Césars ceremony in Paris shouting "Shame!" after the director Roman Polanski - who is still sought in the US for the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl in 1977 - was named best director for his film An Officer and a Spy.

In May 2023, Haenel, who won her first César in 2014 for her supporting role in Suzanne, and a second for best actress for Love at First Fight the following year, announced she was ending her cinema career, accusing the industry of "widespread complicity" with sexual abusers.

Several female stars of French cinema were in the courtroom to hear the verdict, including Judith Godrèche, one of the figureheads of France's #MeToo movement, and the director Céline Sciamma, Haenel's ex-partner and the director of Portrait of a Lady on Fire. Godrèche hugged Haenel following the verdict.

In a letter published in Telerama magazine, Haenel wrote: "I decided to politicise my retirement from cinema to denounce the general complacency of the profession towards sexual aggressors and more generally the way in which this sphere collaborates with the mortal, ecocidal, racist order of the world such as it is."

She said the French film industry had reacted with indifference to #MeToo accusations.

At the next major #MeToo trial in France the actor Gérard Depardieu will appear in court on sexual assault charges. The hearing was adjourned in October until 24 March after the star's lawyer said his client was too ill to appear. Depardieu will undergo a medical examination in early March to determine if he is fit.

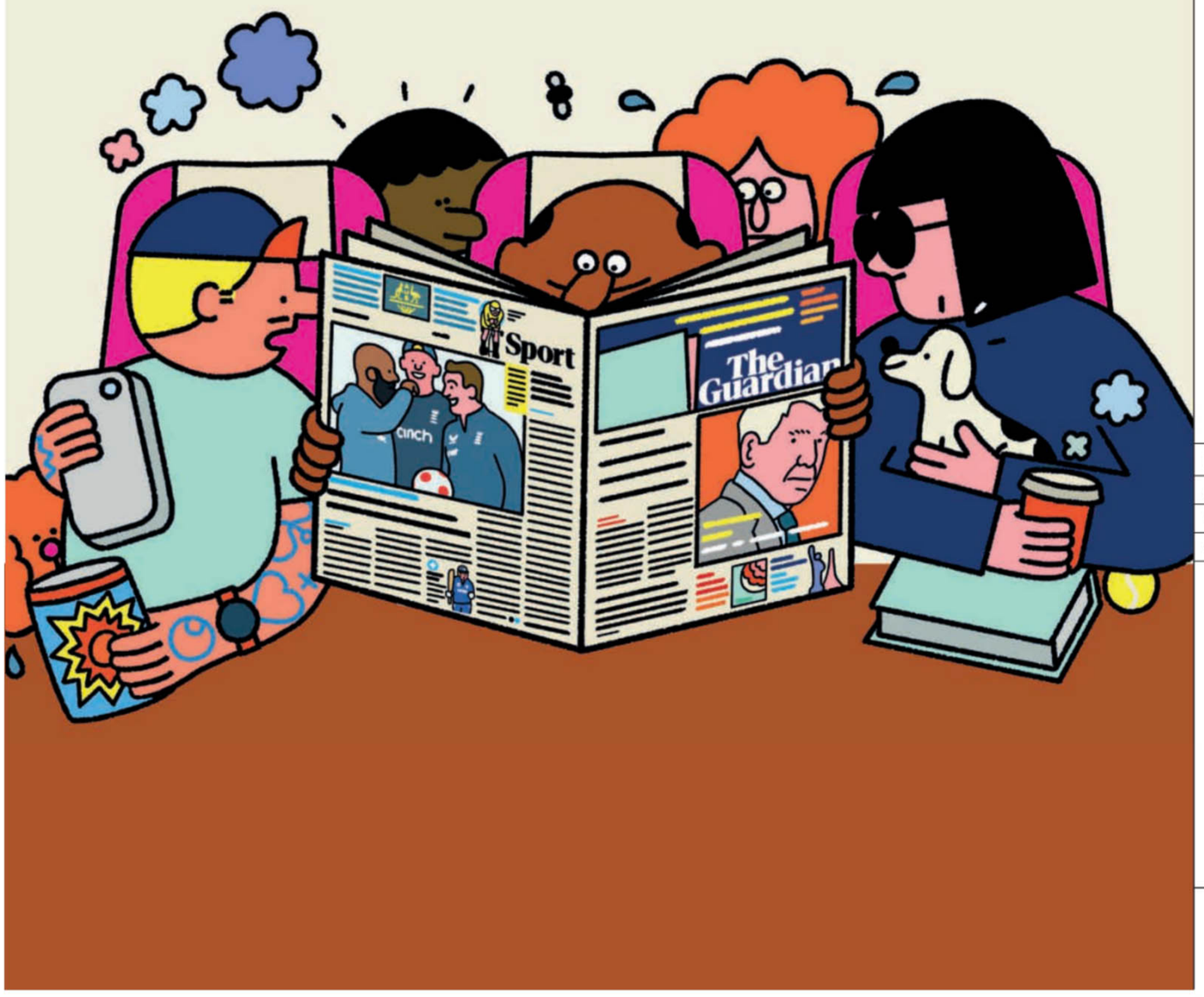
The 76-year-old faces accusations by two women of sexual abuse, assault and harassment that allegedly took place during a 2021 shoot on the set of the film Les Volets Verts (The Green Shutters). The actor has denied the allegations and claims he has been targeted by "false accusations".

About 20 women have accused Depardieu of various sexual offences, including rape and sexual assault, all of which the actor has denied. In an open letter published in 2023, he said: "Never, ever have I abused a woman."

Last year, Godrèche, who has accused two high-profile directors of raping her as a teenager, urged the cinema industry to face up to sexual abuse.

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Business



Protesters outside the high court yesterday as rival groups of investors put forward their debt relief plans

PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA JONES/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Thames Water 'putting gun to head' of court over £3bn debt

Jasper Jolly

A group of investors has accused Thames Water of putting "a gun to the head" of the high court in London by threatening to go into temporary nationalisation if it does not receive approval for a rival £3bn debt offer.

The court yesterday heard the first day of arguments deciding between two rival plans to lend emergency cash to Thames Water, Britain's biggest water company. Thames provides water and sewerage services to nearly a quarter of the UK population in London and south-east England.

Thames Water has been on the verge of collapse and temporary nationalisation for several months, weighed down by debts of about £19bn. It is hoping to secure the £3bn in debt funding to give it long enough to secure new equity investment worth £3.25bn or more.

The financial turmoil has come amid widespread outrage over the extent of sewage overflowing into Britain's rivers and seas. About 80 campaigners marched to the court yesterday to protest against the deal. Clean water campaigners and Charlie Maynard, the Liberal Democrat MP for Witney in Oxfordshire, have submitted to the court that they are opposed to the restructuring plan because interest costs of nearly 10% a year will eventually be paid by the company's 16m customers.

Thames Water has said that it will collapse by the end of March if it does not receive court backing for a deal with the holders of so-called "class A" debt. That group includes US hedge funds as well as British investors.

On the other side is a group of investors who hold "class B" debt with an alternative plan that they say would be cheaper. The class B plan was filed to the court in the name of Westonbirt LP, a Cayman Islands-registered fund controlled by Polus Capital Management.

In their opening submissions to the court on the first of at least four days of evidence, the company and lawyers for the two groups of investors aimed barbs at each other.

Thames Water said the class B offer had come in a "shambolic way", and argued that the class A plan was the only viable option. Thames wrote: "It borders on the fanciful to suggest that the directors would in these circumstances 'roll the dice' with the class B [recapitalisation] given the myriad issues with that plan." The only other option would be temporary nationalisation under a special administration regime (SAR), they argued.

In their opening submission to the court, the class B bondholders said that when Thames Water says it plans to raise new equity and "states that the class A favoured equity bid should be sanctioned otherwise the group will enter SAR, the court will have a gun put to its head as there will be a limited pool of alternative actual equity bids it could fall back on".

Thames Water's in-house general counsel, Andy Frasier, and its chief financial officer, Alastair Cochran, faced detailed questions on the terms of the class A deal.

The company and the creditors are desperate to avoid temporary nationalisation that would wipe out their investments. However, some politicians and campaigners argue that nationalisation would provide better value for taxpayers.

Thousands of Asda staff win latest stage in equal pay case

Sarah Butler

Thousands of Asda workers have won the latest stage in a decade-long equal pay case against the supermarket that could lead to a payout worth £1.2bn.

The GMB union said the workers were on "the cusp of justice" after Manchester employment tribunal ruled that 12 out of 14 lead claimants in the case, which involves 60,000 mostly women in shop-based jobs, had roles of equal value to their mostly male counterparts employed in the retailer's warehouses.

The case, which is backed by GMB and the law firm Leigh Day, centres on the fact that the mostly female shop workers are paid up to £3.74 an hour less than the predominantly male warehouse staff.

The court battle has implications for workers in all the big supermarkets involved in similar cases. The total industry bill for compensation in back pay could be as much as £8bn.

The ruling found that checkout operators and shop floor assistants in categories including bakery, chilled, produce, customer services and the George clothing departments carried out work of equal value to at least one warehouse role.

Two roles were found not to be of equal value - online shopping packers and store workers who handle only packaged or tinned groceries. Those positions are understood to equate to about 11,000 claimants, or a fifth of the total. GMB said it was considering an appeal on their behalf.

Nadine Houghton, a national officer for GMB, called on Asda, which is struggling to turn around falling sales after a private equity-led takeover, to "stop wasting time and money dragging this case through the courts and get round the table with us to agree a settlement".

The women, who launched their claim in 2014, now face just one final stage in the case, which requires Asda to provide a reason, not related to sex, for the difference in pay.

An Asda spokesperson said: "We strongly reject any claim that Asda's pay rates are discriminatory. Asda will continue to defend these claims at the next stage of the litigation because retail and distribution are two different industry sectors that have their own market rates and distinct pay structures."

£1.2bn

Total payout that Asda employees could receive from the supermarket if the claimants are successful

Sun website to charge £2 a month for its top stories and columnists

Mark Sweney

Sun readers will have to pay £2 a month to access columns by star writers including Jeremy Clarkson, popular content such as the agony aunt Dear Deidre and some exclusive stories and investigations, as the UK's biggest tabloid launches a paid-for content strategy.

Called Sun Club and initially priced at £1.99 a month, it launches today, almost a decade after the Sun scrapped a subscription strategy that put all of its content behind a paywall.

The new offering will require readers to pay for some of the Sun's daily output, including exclusive video content. Other columns to go behind the new paywall include those by Rod Liddle, Loose Women's Jane Moore and its political editor, Harry Cole.

Billed as a membership programme offering "no holds barred access to our first-rate content", Sun Club also gives access to deals such as the long-running Holidays from £9.50 promotion. Previously that was only available to buyers of the print edition, or subscribers paying £6.99 a month for the digital edition of the paper through the app.

"The Sun has always offered readers more than a paper," said its editor-in-chief, Victoria Newton. "Sun Club will help us expand our offer to audiences even further."

Sun Club follows the launch of a registration wall that asks visitors to the site to sign up for free to read certain stories.

The Sun's main website has been free to access since 2015, when it scrapped its hard paywall after two years. While the £2-a-week digital Sun+ service had attracted about 200,000 paying subscribers, the tabloid found it meant it lost too much readership overall to free rivals such as MailOnline and the Mirror.

Business view
Nils Pratley



Losing AstraZeneca's £450m investment in Liverpool looks terrible for 'pro-growth' Labour

The announcement in March last year that AstraZeneca would be investing £450m to expand its vaccine plant in Speke, Liverpool, was presented in full flag-waving style by the company and the government of the day.

Sir Pascal Soriot, the AstraZeneca chief executive, reflected it had been 25 years since the merger of Astra of Sweden and Zeneca of the UK; the firm was now "truly global" but also "proud of our British roots". Jeremy Hunt, the then chancellor, said the £450m investment, plus £200m to expand its research facility in Cambridge, was "a vote of confidence in the attractiveness of the UK as a life sciences superpower".

There were additional reasons for the boosterish tone. Relations between the life sciences industry and the Tory government had been dire in the two years after the Covid pandemic. Companies grumbled about research and development tax credits, the NHS spending formula for prescription medicines and a post-Covid hangover in the health service's ability to conduct clinical trials. The Speke deal seemed to signal a reset.

It helped that the investment would be in vaccine-making capacity, the very thing the UK found itself lacking in the pandemic. And it was definitely useful that this was AstraZeneca. Only a year earlier, Soriot had blamed the UK's "discouraging" tax rate for a decision to build a separate £320m manufacturing plant in Ireland rather than the north-west of England.

The only doubt over expansion at Speke came in the small print. The company's final investment decision was "contingent upon mutual agreement with the UK government and third parties". But that clause didn't sound significant because both sides knew how the game is played. While at one level it is outrageous that a £175bn company such as AstraZeneca should expect a bung from the taxpayer, the reality in global pharma-land is that countries fall over themselves to offer incentives to build state-of-the-art facilities, especially the vaccine-making variety, that will be around for decades. You wouldn't believe what Singapore will offer, pharma executives have said for years.

Now the Speke investment is off and the precise reasons are disputed, inevitably. "Several factors have influenced this decision including the timing and reduction of the final offer compared to the previous government's proposal," said AstraZeneca. Did the incoming Labour government, wielding the Treasury's "value for money" formula, have good reasons to trim the £90m offer from the Tories? Possibly, if it turned out that AstraZeneca's R&D spending would be lower than expected.

Yet the company's reference to the "timing" of the final offer is significant, sources say. Note that the Times reported last month, after obtaining correspondence under the Freedom of Information Act, that AstraZeneca's UK chair had warned the incoming government soon after the general election last July that getting the deal over the line was "an urgent issue as we need to begin work on the project in August in order to meet our business case timelines".

> *There were plenty of warnings that ministers should take the worsening mood music seriously and get the deal nailed down*

Delay in Whitehall decision-making – as much as haggling over money – looks to have been key. If so, the timing of the election didn't help, but the killer may have been the failure to move quickly afterwards. The government can't claim it was unaware of the risk of the investment slipping away. There were warnings aplenty, including from this column last August, that ministers should take the worsening mood music seriously and get the deal nailed down if they wanted to avoid being embarrassed.

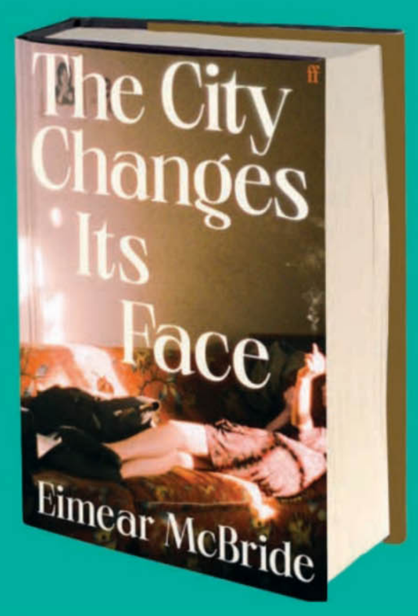
One can agree that the whole corporate subsidy show is murky and grubby – whether we're talking about pharma plants, steel furnaces in south Wales or battery gigafactories in Somerset – and that the Treasury obviously has a duty to keep a lid on the largesse. But the bottom line here is that the outline terms were agreed and the goal was wide open.

Viewed from abroad, it must look bizarre that the UK's largest company and an "unashamedly pro-growth" UK government have not been able to complete a major investment in a life sciences sector that is supposed to have a starring role in the new "modern" industrial strategy. Never mind the precise narrative of events – the advertising is terrible.

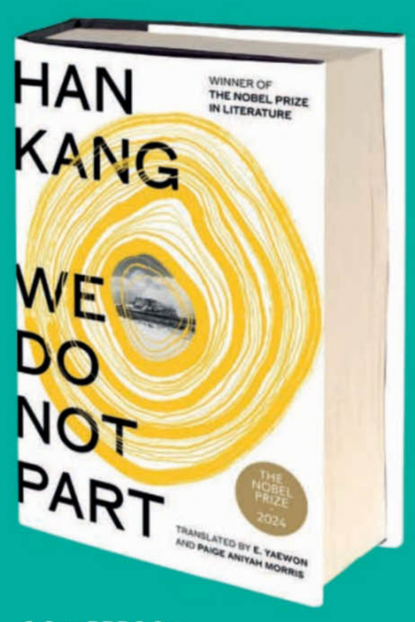
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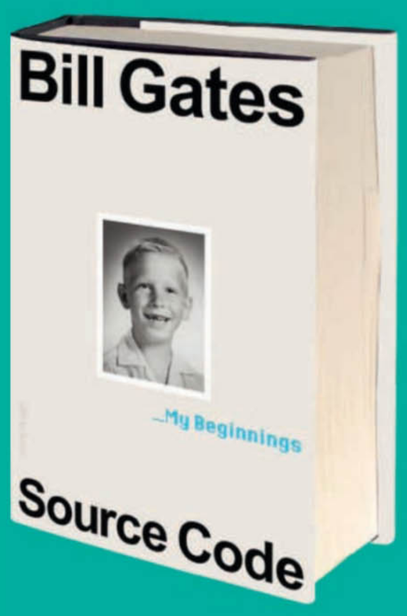
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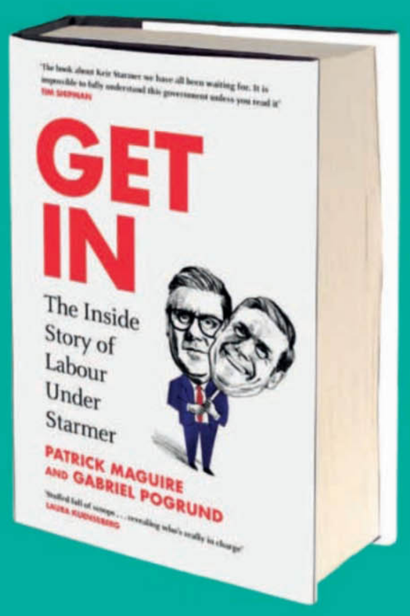
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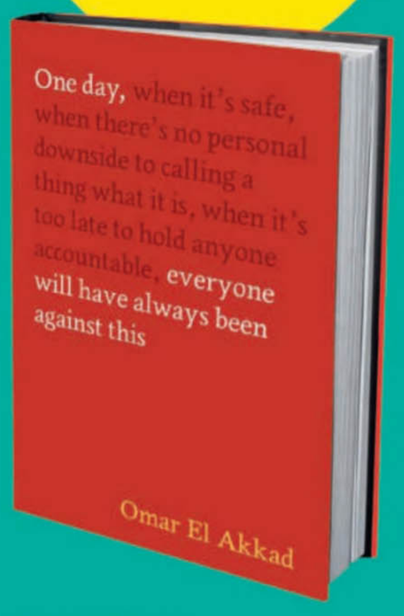
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Beijing's financial district. DeepSeek faces challenges from Chinese startups such as Moonshot AI and Zhipu. Above, the National Supercomputer Center in Wuxi in eastern China's Jiangsu province

PHOTOGRAPHS: GUIYONGNIAN/GETTY/ISTOCKPHOTO/AP; CHINATOPIX/AP

DeepSeek's rivals

The Chinese firms that could match the disruptor's impact

Amy Hawkins
Senior China correspondent

DeepSeek's release of an artificial intelligence model that could replicate the performance of OpenAI's o1 at a fraction of the cost has stunned investors and analysts. Markets reeled as Nvidia, a microchip and AI firm, shed more than $500bn in market value in a record one-day loss for any company on Wall Street. Investors fear that DeepSeek will challenge the dominance of US AI leaders.

Donald Trump described DeepSeek as a "wake-up call". In China, DeepSeek's founder, Liang Wenfeng, has been hailed as a national hero and was invited to attend a symposium chaired by China's premier, Li Qiang. The pace at which China has been able to catch up with frontier AI research in the US is accelerating.

But DeepSeek is not the only Chinese company to have innovated despite the US's embargo on advanced technology. Matt Sheehan, a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and an expert on Chinese AI, said: "If the US government thinks all we need to do is crush DeepSeek and then we'll be OK, then we're in for a rude surprise." In recent weeks, other Chinese companies have rushed to publish their latest AI models, which they claim are on a par with those developed by DeepSeek and OpenAI:

Alibaba Cloud

On 29 January, the first day of the lunar new year holiday, the Chinese technology company Alibaba Cloud, a subsidiary of Alibaba, released an updated version of its Qwen 2.5 AI model, called Qwen 2.5-Max.

According to Alibaba Cloud, Qwen 2.5-Max outperforms DeepSeek V3 and Meta's Llama 3.1 across 11 benchmarks. The company said it was "full of confidence in the next version of Qwen 2.5-Max".

Some analysts suggested Alibaba Cloud's decision to release Qwen 2.5-Max just as businesses in China closed for the holidays reflected the pressure DeepSeek has placed on the domestic market. But Sheehan said it might also have been an attempt to ride on the wave of publicity for Chinese models generated by DeepSeek's surprise.

Zhipu

Zhipu is a Beijing-based startup that is backed by Alibaba. Known as one of China's "AI tigers", it was in the headlines recently, not for its AI achievements but because it was blacklisted by the US government. On 15 January, Zhipu was one of more than two dozen Chinese entities added to a US restricted trade list. Zhipu was added for allegedly aiding China's military advancement with its AI development. The company condemned the decision and said it lacked a factual basis.

Allegations about military uplift aside, it is clear Zhipu's progress in the AI space is rapid. Its most recent product is AutoGLM, an AI assistant app released in October that helps users operate their smartphones with complex voice commands.

Moonshot AI

On the same day DeepSeek released its R1 model, 20 January, another Chinese startup launched a large language model (LLM) that it claimed could also challenge OpenAI's o1 on mathematics and reasoning. Moonshot AI is another Alibaba-backed startup, based in Beijing and valued at $3.3bn. Unlike Alibaba, a behemoth that was founded in 1999, Moonshot AI is a relative newcomer. Like DeepSeek, it was founded in 2023.

Its offering, Kimi k1.5, is the upgraded version of Kimi, which was launched in October 2023. It attracted attention for being the first AI assistant that could process 200,000 Chinese characters in a single prompt. Moonshot AI later said Kimi's capability had been upgraded to be able to handle 2m characters.

Moonshot AI "is in the top echelons of Chinese startups", Sheehan said. "It wouldn't surprise me at all if Moonshot or Zhipu has a model that equals or comes close to DeepSeek in performance within the next weeks or months."

> ***'If the US thinks all we need to do is crush DeepSeek, it's in for a rude surprise'***
>
> **Matt Sheehan**
> *Expert on Chinese AI*

ByteDance

Another lunar new year release came from ByteDance, TikTok's parent company. On 22 January it unveiled Doubao-1.5-pro, an upgrade to its flagship AI model, which it said could outperform OpenAI's o1 in certain tests.

As well as performance, Chinese companies are challenging US competitors on price. Doubao's most powerful version is priced at 9 yuan per million tokens, nearly half the price of DeepSeek's offering for R1. For comparison, OpenAI's o1 costs the equivalent of 438 yuan for the same usage.

Tencent

Primarily known for gaming and WeChat, the ubiquitous messaging app, Tencent has also made strides in AI. Its flagship model is a text-to-video generator called Hunyuan, which it said could perform as well as Meta's Llama 3.1. Some estimates suggest Hunyuan required about a 10th of the computing power used by Meta to train Llama.

OpenAI Company claims 'deep research' tool can match analysts

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

OpenAI has stepped up its development of artificial intelligence agents by launching a tool that crafts reports it claims can match the output of a research analyst.

The ChatGPT developer said the "deep research" tool "accomplishes in 10 minutes what would take a human many hours".

The announcement comes just days after the San Francisco-based company said it would speed up product releases in response to advances made by its Chinese rival DeepSeek.

Deep research is an artificial intelligence agent – the term for a system that can carry out tasks on a user's behalf.

OpenAI said deep research would find, analyse and synthesise hundreds of online sources to create a comprehensive report, sifting through "massive amounts" of text, images and PDFs to do so.

The company said its tool, which will be available in the ChatGPT app and API, was a "significant step" towards its goal of developing artificial general intelligence, a theoretical term referring to systems that match or exceed humans at any intellectual task.

Last month, OpenAI unveiled Operator, an AI agent it claims can book a table at a restaurant or carry out an online shop based on a photo of a shopping list. It is only available in a preview version in the US.

In a video released on Sunday, OpenAI showed deep research analysing the market for translation apps. The company said the tool would take between five and 30 minutes to complete each task and would cite the source for each claim it made.

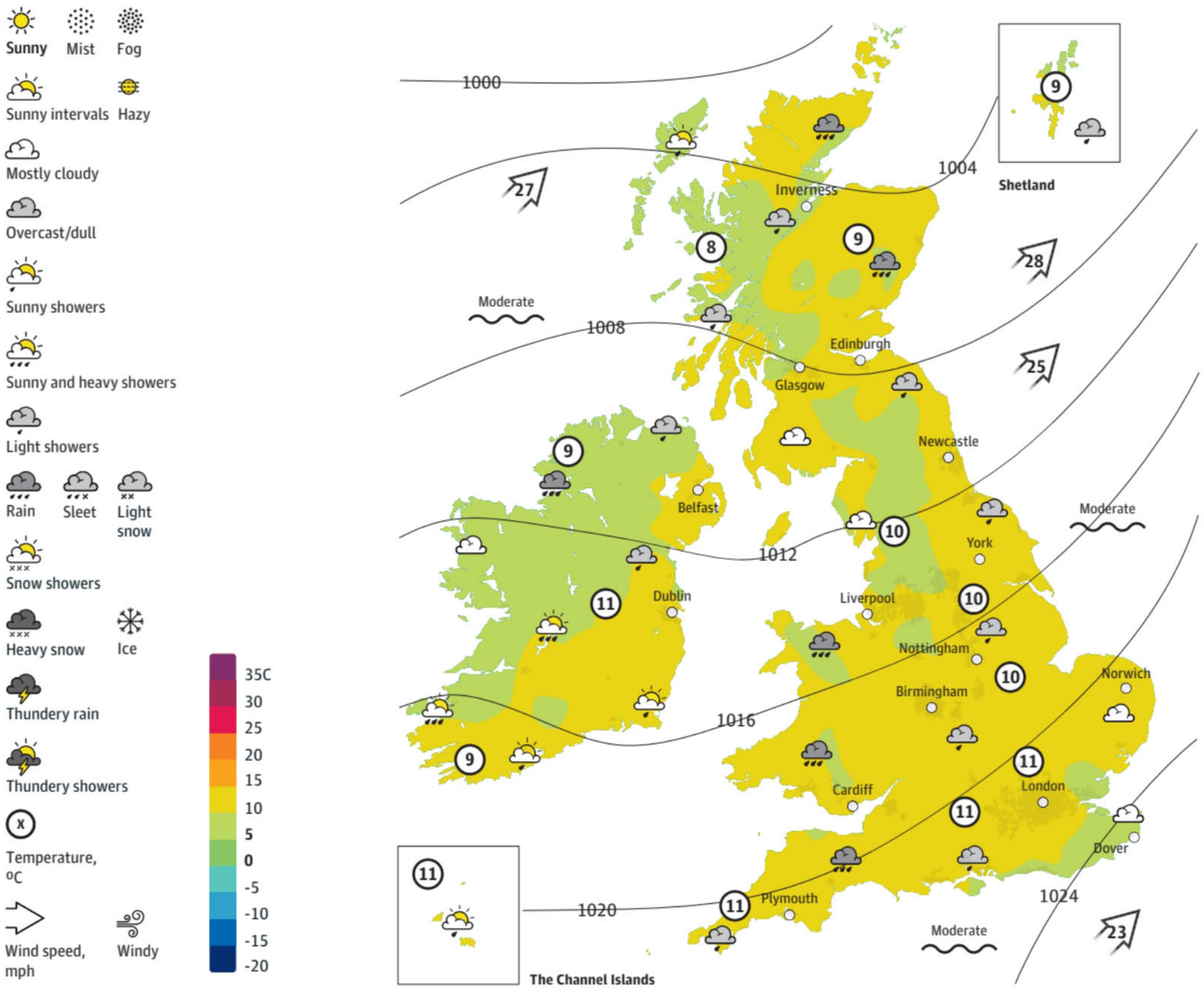
OpenAI said deep research was for professionals who worked in areas such as finance, science and engineering, but it could also examine purchases such as cars and items of furniture.

It is based on o3, OpenAI's latest "reasoning" model, which takes longer to process queries than conventional models and has yet to be released in full publicly. It comes after the company announced the release on Friday of another derivation of o3 – a free, slimmed-down version called o3-mini.

Deep research will be available in the US for users of OpenAI's Pro tier with a limit of up to 100 queries a month. It is not available in the UK.

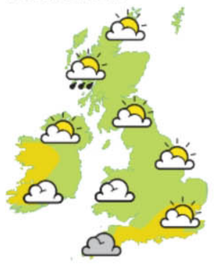
Weather
Tuesday 4 February 2025

UK and Ireland Noon today

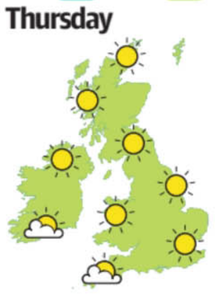


Forecast

Low 3 High 8
Tomorrow



Low -2 High 8
Thursday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

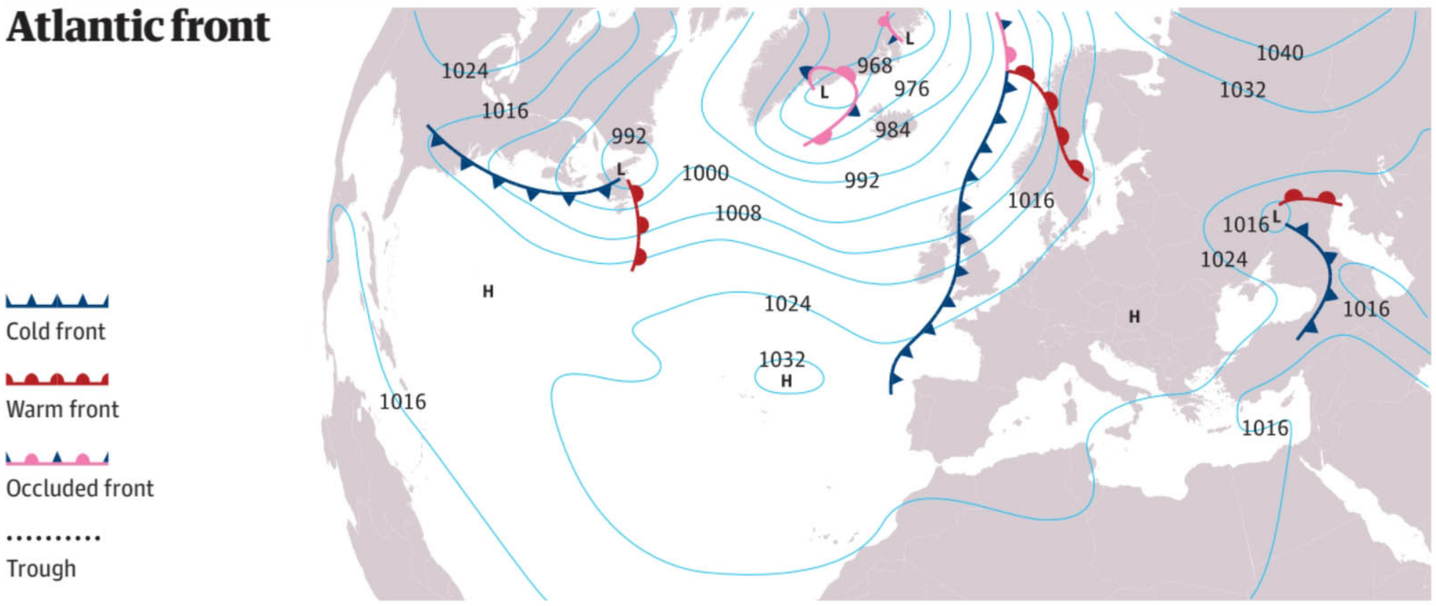
Latest	
02 Feb 2025	426.35
Weekly average	
26 Jan 2025	426.92
03 Feb 2024	422.34
03 Feb 2015	400.33
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	3 11	25%	Low
Manchester	3 10	60%	Low
Edinburgh	3 11	85%	Low
Belfast	2 10	85%	Low
Glasgow	3 11	90%	Low
Inverness	2 11	85%	Low
Leeds	3 10	60%	Low
Liverpool	2 10	85%	Low
Newcastle	2 10	85%	Low
Sheffield	3 10	60%	Low

Atlantic front



Weather tracker

An atmospheric river has been under way through the weekend, pummelling northern and central parts of California with wind, heavy rain and hill snow, and is forecast to continue into tomorrow.

The weather system, locally called the Pineapple Express, is set up by low pressure situated to the north-east of Hawaii, which propels moist tropical air from Hawaii and the Pacific Ocean on blustery westerly winds. The result is a stream of heavy precipitation piling into parts of the west coast of the US, falling as snow down to about 1,200 metres (4,000ft) with rain at lower levels. A cumulative total of up to 500mm (20in) of rain is expected to have fallen by tomorrow, while up to 1.8 metres of snow will be possible in mountainous areas.

In Canada, an arctic air mass has brought strong katabatic winds to parts of British Columbia. These north-easterly winds funnel cold air through fjords and towards the west coast, strengthening in the process, gusting up to 75mph. The strong winds and low temperatures brought the risk of wind chill values of -20C to -25C from Saturday, and these are expected to continue into today. **James Parrish and Morgan Thomas** *MetDesk*

Around the world

Algiers	16	Lisbon	15
Ams'dam	7	Madrid	13
Athens	12	Malaga	17
Auckland	24	Melb'rne	35
B Aires	31	Mexico C	22
Bangkok	33	Miami	27
Barcelona	15	Milan	10
Basra	23	Mombasa	33
Beijing	1	Moscow	0
Berlin	5	Mumbai	29
Bermuda	20	N Orleans	24
Brussels	7	Nairobi	26
Budapest	5	New Delhi	22
C'hagen	3	New York	7
Cairo	21	Oslo	5
Cape Town	26	Paris	6
Chicago	-1	Perth	34
Corfu	16	Prague	3
Dakar	22	Reykjavik	0
Dhaka	26	Rio de J	31
Dublin	11	Rome	15
Florence	15	Shanghai	7
Gibraltar	15	Singapore	30
H Kong	16	Stockh'm	1
Harare	29	Strasb'g	3
Helsinki	-4	Sydney	30
Istanbul	8	Tel Aviv	20
Jo'burg	27	Tenerife	22
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	10
K'mandu	22	Toronto	-2
Kabul	3	Vancouv'r	0
Kingston	31	Vienna	5
Kolkata	28	Warsaw	3
L Angeles	17	Wash'ton	13
Lagos	32	Well'ton	20
Lima	26	Zurich	4

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0522	3.9m	1726	4.2m	**London Bridge**	0532	7.0m	1804	6.6m
Avonmouth	1109	12.6m	2328	12.0m	**Lossiemouth**	0340	3.7m	1543	4.0m
Barrow	0310	8.7m	1533	8.9m	**Milford Haven**	1015	6.7m	2235	6.2m
Belfast	0257	3.2m	1512	3.5m	**Newquay**	0910	6.7m	2130	6.2m
Cobh	0929	3.9m	2144	3.8m	**North Shields**	0728	4.6m	1934	4.9m
Cromer	1044	4.5m	2236	4.9m	**Oban**	0936	3.6m	2142	3.3m
Dover	0240	6.7m	1502	6.3m	**Penzance**	0838	5.3m	2059	4.9m
Dublin	0326	3.8m	1544	4.0m	**Plymouth**	0944	5.3m	2206	4.9m
Galway	0909	4.9m	2138	4.6m	**Portsmouth**	0330	4.6m	1540	4.4m
Greenock	0409	3.3m	1628	3.6m	**Southport**	0217	8.4m	1430	8.7m
Harwich	0316	3.9m	1557	3.7m	**Stornoway**	1052	4.6m	2328	4.0m
Holyhead	0203	5.2m	1422	5.5m	**Portland**	1032	1.9m	2252	1.7m
Hull	1016	6.9m	2226	7.4m	**Whitby**	0802	5.1m	2008	5.4m
Leith	0636	5.2m	1844	5.3m	**Wick**	0314	3.1m	1521	3.4m
Liverpool	0250	8.8m	1510	9.0m	**Workington**	0313	7.7m	1534	8.0m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0733
Sun sets	1655
Moon rises	0941
Moon sets	none
First Quarter	5 Feb

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2025

Lighting up

Belfast	1710 to 0807
Birm'ham	1659 to 0741
Brighton	1658 to 0730
Bristol	1707 to 0742
Carlisle	1655 to 0754
Cork	1728 to 0807
Dublin	1714 to 0803
Glasgow	1658 to 0804
Harlech	1708 to 0752
Inverness	1650 to 0809
London	1655 to 0731
M'chester	1659 to 0746
Newcastle	1651 to 0750
Norwich	1647 to 0730
Penzance	1722 to 0750

Sport

Football

Jonathan Wilson: can Guardiola rebuild City?

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Cricket

Raf Nicholson: how to fix women's game in England

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▲ *London Spirit take the field at the Oval. All Hundred players and staff are hired on a freelance basis*

BEN HOSKINS/ ECB VIA GETTY IMAGES

Banana logic

Wondering what a Hundred franchise owner gets for their millions? Vibes, baby

Jonathan Liew



Five years ago an artist named Maurizio Cattelan bought a banana from a grocery store in Miami and taped it to the wall of a gallery. People came to look at the banana. People wanted selfies with the banana. The banana divided opinion. Some were affronted and insulted by the banana. Some applauded the artist on his clever subversion of traditional artistic tropes. Either way, pretty soon everyone was talking about the banana.

In November 2024, the banana - not the same banana, obviously, but a fresh banana bought that morning - was taken on a global publicity tour to drum up business before its auction at Sotheby's. After a frenzied bidding war, the banana was bought for about £5m by Justin Sun, a cryptocurrency investor. Shortly afterwards he called a press conference and, in front of the watching media, ate the banana. "It's much better than other bananas," Sun said. "It's really quite good."

The only reason for recounting all this is that something similar appears to have just happened with the London Spirit. Take a British institution. Round up all the tech magnates and gaudy new money you can find. Create a bit of theatre and buzz. Draw a VIP circle, and then a VVIP circle inside the VIP circle. Hire yourself a reassuringly plummy-voiced auctioneer in a pinstripe suit. And that is it. You can start the bidding.

As for the thing you are selling, it does not matter. Look, here is a cricket team we invented this morning. They are called the London Spirit. We have put them in blue shirts, although feel free to change their name and dress them however you want. Here is a picture of Liam Dawson wearing a London Spirit shirt. Obviously you will not own a physical Liam Dawson. The real Liam Dawson will decay at regular intervals and need to be replaced. What you are paying for is the *idea* of Liam Dawson. The audacity of putting a skiddy left-arm spinner in a blue shirt and selling it in the first place.

And so it was that on Friday, at Berkeley Square in London, a consortium of Silicon Valley investors paid £145m for 49% of a name, a set of fonts, and a sporting franchise that has won 23 of its 65 games. Like the other seven Hundred teams being sold off, the London Spirit contains no actual physical assets. Players and staff are hired on a freelance basis. Their ground, Lord's, belongs to the majority owners MCC. As for digital assets, the London Spirit X account has 162 followers at the time of writing and has not posted since July 2021.

None of this feels real. And yet the money is real: real cash, from real people, that can be spent on real things. The first five franchise sales yielded £350m, which will be shared between the recreational game, the 18 counties and MCC. Debts can now be paid off, grassroots facilities improved. Pretty much overnight, English cricket feels like a place of dreams and enterprise.

Was it all worth it, then? Did the marketing geniuses at the England and Wales Cricket Board just manage to sell eight bananas for half a billion pounds? Well, kind of. For all the whiff of novelty and gimmick, of course the Hundred was not created out of thin air but carved out of the existing architecture of English cricket: those precious August holiday weeks, the Twenty20 Blast that was the financial lifeblood of so many counties. Built on the toil of the schools and clubs and academies and coaches that produced these market-ready players in the first place. Forced through with bullying and threats, secrecy and often just plain lying.

Even so, this column extends a cordial invitation to any reader who can plot a more palatable course through a landscape of declining interest in bilateral international cricket, who can devise a more painless way of raising £500m. Because there is no empirical market value here. No algorithm can tell you the true worth of a made-up team in a made-up competition, and to the buyers involved the sums are trivial.

The Ambani family, who just bought 49% of Oval Invincibles, is worth around £240bn. Their £61m stake is comfortably less than the amount they reportedly spent last year on a Mediterranean cruise featuring private performances from Katy Perry and Pitbull. In this context, it makes more sense to think of the Hundred as a kind of luxury good than a business investment. Revenue remains negligible, overseas broadcast rights a speculative market. The AI-driven future in which Dawson's death-overs hitting is being beamed to a billion phone screens, overlaid with live betting prices, remains largely theoretical. What really matters is the prestige, the hubris, the invited influencers and Bollywood actors taking selfies in the Lord's pavilion. The idea of buying a cool thing simply because you could, and then eating it live on camera.

The London Spirit X account has 162 followers

Of course English cricket gets sniffy about these things, because English cricket is conservative and racist, suspicious of new things and suspicious of brown people and - above all - suspicious of new brown people. But by the same token English cricket has had 150 years to create a sustainable business model for itself, and basically failed. Perhaps, in the absence of any actual sellable product, the only real option left was to flog the vibes, soft power, authentic whiff of Ye Olde English Cricket, Eau de Lord's.

England no longer loves or values cricket. Why not pass the reins to people who do? For all the dizzying sums of money, the billionaire brazenness, this is in essence a bet on cricket: its past, present, future. It is a monumental gamble. But when all you have is a banana on a wall, you may as well get what you can for it.

IPL team owners agree to buy stake in Manchester Originals

Taha Hashim

The owners of Lucknow Super Giants have agreed a stake in Manchester Originals, extending the Indian Premier League's footprint in the Hundred.

RPSG Group had failed in acquiring a stake in London Spirit last week but tabled a winning bid yesterday, with the Originals earning a full valuation understood to be around £116m. While Lancashire, the host county, have announced RPSG's successful bid it remains unclear whether a controlling stake has been acquired, with the club yet to confirm details. Reports claim that a 70% stake has been agreed, 49% from the England and Wales Cricket Board with the rest from the county side.

"We have been very focused on securing a great partner - ideally from the IPL - and RPSG has been our preferred bidder for some time," read a statement from Lancashire. "We are delighted by the outcome and look forward to working together to create an exciting future. Together, we have a shared ambition to create a very special cricket team for the people of Manchester and the wider north west region."

> ***'We have a shared ambition to create a very special cricket team for the people of Manchester'***
>
> **Lancashire CC**
> *Club statement*

RPSG's successful bid comes after the owners of the Mumbai Indians landed a 49% share in Oval Invincibles on the opening day of the Hundred auction last week, worth around £60m. Northern Superchargers, Trent Rockets and Southern Brave remain on offer, with the sale of the Brave set to bring about further IPL involvement. GMR Group, the co-owners of Delhi Capitals, bought a majority stake in Hampshire last year.

Hundred ownership will extend RPSG's presence across short-form tournaments; aside from the Lucknow Super Giants, the Indian conglomerate owns Durban's Super Giants who play in the SA20. Sanjiv Goenka, RPSG's chairman, has taken on a public role in running the Lucknow side and was present alongside Rishabh Pant when the India wicketkeeper was unveiled as the franchise's new captain last month. With the possibility of a controlling stake in the Originals, Goenka could well become a familiar sight at Old Trafford.

Lancashire and RPSG will enter a period of exclusivity before the deal is finalised. The club have announced that a members' forum will be held next week regarding the sale. The statement added: "Key items on the agenda will include details of our partnership with the RPSG Group, the projected financial outcome for Lancashire Cricket and the potential use of the funds generated. The investment remains subject to a satisfactory conclusion of the final due diligence and legal processes and a further announcement will be made in due course."

Jonathan Liew *Page 33 →*



◀ *Brendon McCullum played a straight bat on Joe Root's potential T20 return*
JOHN WALTON/PA

McCullum tells England to be bolder against spin in India

Taha Hashim

Brendon McCullum believes England need to be relentless when facing spin, after their 4-1 Twenty20 international series defeat by India.

While hitting sixes seemed the tourists' focus regardless of the state of the game, their head coach does not want the side to hold back against the turning ball in 20-over cricket. Varun Chakravarthy was England's main source of discomfort, the leg-spinner named player of the series after taking 14 wickets at 9.85.

"At times, we've been a touch tentative," McCullum said. "We want to keep trying to apply pressure. Particularly when they've got such a good batting lineup, you don't really have a time where you can just take time out of the game. Four or five years ago in T20 cricket it was like that, and I think we've seen it evolve so quickly that there is no dead time now.

"I think our guys are really good players of spin. We've probably not been at our best against them but credit goes to Chakaravarthy and [Ravi] Bishnoi as well. I know the scoreline reads 4-1 and it's disappointing to lose the series but Rome wasn't built in a day. I think we've seen a pretty clear gameplan of how we want to play the game."

Joe Root, arguably England's finest technician against spin and in the squad for the upcoming one-day games against India, has been tipped in some sections of the media as a possible solution for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka next year. Root has just come off a franchise stint in the SA20, averaging 55.8 from eight innings while striking at 140. But McCullum was not willing to look too far ahead when asked about a potential return for Root, who has not played a T20 international since May 2019. "We have a little while to go before we get to the World Cup," the head coach said. "We will make decisions like that down the line. I think it's too far to forecast that."

As for the lingering controversy of the concussion substitute India used in the fourth T20, with the fast bowler Harshit Rana replacing Shivam Dube, a batting all-rounder, McCullum said: "We respectfully disagree with the decision from Javagal [Srinath, the match referee] to allow someone with a different skillset to step into that role. I had a quick chat to Javagal after. It was lighthearted, and there was no emotion involved. We respectfully disagreed and we moved on."

Regarding Dube's inclusion for the final match of the series, two days on from a blow to the helmet, McCullum said: "I was a little bit surprised because I was just worried about player welfare. Concussion is well known now in any sport and there's a lot more known about how dangerous they can be. Especially when you have guys bowling 90mph."

The three-match one-day international series begins on Thursday, with Saqib Mahmood to play the opener. McCullum expressed his pleasure at seeing Jofra Archer make it through five T20s, though a cut on the quick bowler's hand is being managed. Jamie Smith is poised to miss the first two ODIs having struggled with a tight calf, while England have kept Rehan Ahmed on. The leg-spinner was selected initially only for the tour's 20-over leg.

Rescue plan
How to fix issues with failing side

Start with a new coach then implement reforms in the wake of Ashes rout, writes Raf Nicholson



1 Give the job to Edwards Before Jon Lewis was appointed England's head coach in November 2022 he had never worked in women's cricket. Sometimes, an outsider can revolutionise a culture, but in this case Lewis tried to bring in "Bazball" values without understanding that what works in men's cricket will not always translate into the women's game. Lewis will surely depart and his successor needs to understand the limitations and potential of the domestic setup, know the names of every single up-and-coming cricketer in the country, and not take any nonsense. Yes, I am talking about Charlotte Edwards. Offer her as much money as it takes to buy her out of her existing Hampshire, WBBL and WPL deals, and back her to the hilt - including in her own choice of captain - as she picks up the pieces of this Ashes debacle.

2 Introduce a domestic red-ball tournament The Test match is the jewel in the crown of the Ashes. Winning it is worth four points. If England want to regain the Ashes in 2027, this should be an area of focus. As it stands, the domestic restructure means English players will participate in a Women's T20 Blast and a Women's One-Day Cup (as well as the Hundred), but what about adding a red-ball domestic competition? England could easily gain competitive advantage. Australia play no multiday domestic cricket. If they face an England team in the next Ashes who were regularly doing so, that could be an intimidating prospect. Of course the domestic schedule is becoming busier every season, so it may work best for a separate strand of players who are thought particularly suitable for longer-form cricket to compete in this. Men's cricket has red-ball and white-ball specialists, so why shouldn't we?

3 Fix the inability to play spin Easier said than done, but one thing we have learned is a short, one-off camp in India with a handful of players (of the kind which Lewis organised in 2023) does not do any good. This is going to require a longer-term fix. One problem in England is that we tend to prioritise short-term over long-term success, which means that spinners who have excellent control but who do not turn the ball (such as Sophie Ecclestone and Sarah Glenn) are the ones who make it into the England setup. Hence why, when Alana King comes along and sends down a ripping leg-break, the English batters have no answers. We need to find the spinners in England who turn the ball the most (Hampshire's 16-year-old leg-spinner Eve O'Neill looked promising in the recent Under-19 World Cup) and nurture their talent. We also need to be patient. King spent years honing her craft, and made her debut for Australia at the age of 26.

4 Bring a Clark-style leadership programme England's overreliance on Heather Knight is not just unhealthy, it is a strategy fraught with risks. If your captain gets injured, you end up looking like headless chickens (as England did against West Indies at the T20 World Cup). How to fix the problem? A female leadership programme. Australia have one. It is run by the former Australia captain and executive at Cricket Australia, Belinda Clark, and 27 of the 33 women who have graduated from it have gone on to hold leadership roles. That includes Tahlia McGrath - last seen stepping seamlessly into the shoes of Alyssa Healy when the Australia captain was injured halfway through the Ashes. Australia are a team full of leaders. England should be, too.

5 Make everyone else more competitive It might sound counterintuitive, but the way to make the Ashes a better spectacle is to make other nations more competitive, to avoid the scenario where England are regularly thrashing countries such as Pakistan and New Zealand in bilateral cricket, and then crumble at the first sign of pressure during World Cups and Ashes series. To change that, we need to go right to the top and alter the International Cricket Council's revenue-distribution model. First, revenue should be distributed much more equally among nations, to avoid perpetuating the "Big Three" dominance of England, Australia and India. Second, boards should be required to spend 50% of their revenue on developing their women's teams, and be penalised for non-compliance by losing Full Membership status. The Ashes will always be iconic, but it should never be the only competitive bilateral women's cricket.

6 Improve the English weather ... The 16-0 whitewash is explained easily by the fact that it rains a lot in England. We could start by sending our players to a surfing camp at Bondi. If that does not work, global warming ought to eventually do the trick.



Charlotte Edwards should be made head coach and backed to the hilt

England resist putting Dupont on pedestal before showdown

Gerard Meagher

England have vowed not to put France's superstar scrum-half Antoine Dupont on a pedestal as Steve Borthwick seeks to end his side's miserable run of form against *Les Bleus* on Saturday.

Borthwick is likely to be without Cadan Murley for the match after he picked up a foot injury in the 27-22 defeat by Ireland last weekend but, while Dupont and co represent a daunting challenge, Tommy Freeman has insisted France are "only human".

Dupont was at the forefront of France's ominous opening-round victory against Wales, setting up three tries in his 50 minutes on the pitch. England, meanwhile, began their Six Nations campaign with a defeat in Ireland after another second-half capitulation last Saturday.

Murley endured a mixed day on debut, scoring the opening try before twice attempting to carry the ball out from England's in-goal area and putting his side under pressure in the process. He did not take part in England's training session at their Bagshot base yesterday and is said to be struggling for the France game. In his likely absence, Ollie Sleightholme, Tom Roebuck and Elliot Daly could all come into the side while Freddie Steward could also shift to the wing.

"You can't underestimate how good a player [Dupont] is, but he's human, he's like everyone else, you take his legs and he goes down," Freeman said.

"It's all about picking things up nice and early with him, putting him under pressure, and I'm sure like any other player when you put pressure on them they start to leak a few opportunities. At the end of the day everyone is human, it's rugby. They'll have a gameplan, we'll have a gameplan and we'll back ours to the moon and back."

Ollie Chessum, who came off the bench against Ireland, is pushing for a start against France. He made his comeback from a long-term knee injury in Leicester's 80-12 defeat by Toulouse last month – another match in which Dupont starred – and was part of the England side that crashed to a 53-10 defeat the last time France visited Twickenham.

Asked how to stop Dupont, Chessum said: "I don't know, if I had the answers then I'd be one of the best paid coaches in the world. I suppose we've just got to treat it for what he is.

"He's an excellent player, but we've got excellent players in our team as well. We'll bring our threats, I'm sure he'll bring what he brings and we'll see what happens on the weekend. We are playing France, not Toulouse this weekend – it is a different team."

Freeman said the review into England's seventh defeat in nine games was measured but he insisted the squad members held one another to account as Borthwick now plots a first win against France in four years. The head coach will be tempted to shift Marcus Smith to full-back and hand a first start to Fin Smith given France's propensity to kick long.

"I play with Fin week in, week out," Freeman said. "To play with Fin, I know his cues a little bit more, but I've been playing with Marcus a lot more now. There are different elements to different games, but Marcus runs a lot more and can create something out of nothing for you and give you the ball more in space.

"They are different players and will bring different attributes of the game alive, and it's exciting to play with both of them. With Marcus at full-back, when he gets the ball in a bit more space he's a bit more dangerous as well. I think it works nicely."

Jamie George is likely to return for the game against France, after being fast-tracked back into the squad.



▲ *Cadan Murley is likely to miss the match against France with injury*

Analysis
Robert Kitson



Watching the Messi of rugby weave magic is a priceless experience



Antoine Dupont poses a searing threat for England on Saturday

ABDULLAH FIRAS/ABACA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Tickets to watch France play England this weekend are not cheap. Premium adult seats are £199 apiece and even the most affordable ones up in the gods will set you back £89. Before you phone the Rugby Football Union to enquire if an England win is included as part of the deal, however, ask yourself how often in life you have the chance to witness pure genius.

Admittedly this can be a subjective debate. Taylor Swift fans will have a different opinion to, say, Bob Dylan disciples. But in contemporary sport there can surely be increasingly little debate. With all due respect to the colossal talents of Novak Djokovic, Max Verstappen, Patrick Mahomes, Simone Biles and Mohamed Salah, the name Antoine Dupont must be close to the top of the list.

Perhaps only Biles, a mere four months younger than Dupont, can rival France's scrum-half for multifaceted, all-round brilliance. But in gymnastics there are no hulking forwards constantly trying to smash you into next week. Dupont can kick with both feet, he can run and offload, he can tackle like a youthful bull, he can see space like no one else can and, by way of an added bonus, he is captain of his national team as well. The word genius, in this case, really does apply.

Last Friday night against Wales he ended up being substituted after just 49 minutes, essentially because he was too good. Three try assists against moderate opposition might not sound much in isolation but the wider message it sent out was unmistakeable. With the game already won, let's keep "Tony Bridge" nice and fresh for Twickenham. Watch out England, we're coming for you. The lofty title being used on Irish television was "the Messi of rugby". Even seen-it-all ex-pros such as the Ireland and British & Irish Lions full-back Rob Kearney were unequivocal.

"For me, he's the greatest to ever play the game," Kearney said. "Dupont's the smallest guy on the field and he's still able to have this enormous impact. He's as strong as anyone, kicks off both feet, passes well, great rugby brain. There are no faults to his game. He can do everything and he does it week in, week out, every single time." Furthermore – and this really should send a shiver down the spines of all France's future opponents – it appears he is still improving.

His Olympic gold medal-winning stint playing sevens for France last year has made him more effective around the rucks – witness his four turnovers in the Champions Cup final last season – and sharpened his radar when it comes to spotting and exploiting defensive gaps.

To watch him first hand when Toulouse thrashed Exeter before Christmas was also to appreciate the positive influence he has on those around him. Toulouse racked up 64 points and Dupont was the dynamo who made it all tick. Another former Ireland international, Shane Horgan, who played for years alongside the outstanding Brian O'Driscoll, is another huge fan. "He's got all the constituent parts of everything you'd want in a brilliant rugby player. He's almost the perfect player."

Which prompts a few questions, the first being whether England or anyone else will be able to subdue France's shining comet during this Six Nations campaign? "The boys joke around and call him 'The Martian', like he's not from Earth, he's an alien," Toulouse's international forward Emmanuel Meafou said last year. "He does some stuff at training where you can't do anything but shake your head and wish you could do that, too. He's also a real humble guy."

How France would love to rewind the clock to the fateful 2023 World Cup pool game against Namibia when Dupont, with his side already miles ahead, sustained a fractured cheekbone. Would Les Bleus have lifted the Webb Ellis Cup had he stayed fully fit? No one will never know but his side, as a bare minimum, would have been appreciably harder to beat. Which begs another wider thought: might Dupont just be the greatest player to tread the turf at Twickenham?

England have had their oval-ball favourites but never a scrum-half of such magisterial talent nor a playmaking catalyst in the same class. And when red-rose supporters think of the greatest cockerel-strutting French teams seen in south-west London not even their influential No 9s – Jacques Fouroux, Jerome Gallion, Pierre Berbizier or Fabièn Galthie – would be leapfrogging the 28-year-old Dupont.

Which leaves those Mount Rushmore legends from New Zealand: Jonah Lomu, Richie McCaw, Michael Jones and Dan Carter. Or David Campese and Serge Blanco, instigator of that ultimate team try scored by Philippe Saint-André for France against England in 1991. Or Barry John, Mike Gibson and Jackie Kyle, all of whom illuminated Twickenham years ago.

Not forgetting, of course, Wales's Gareth Edwards, hailed widely as the greatest rugby player of the past half-century. Rewatch his all-time classic try for the Barbarians against the All Blacks in 1973 and listen to Cliff Morgan's lyrical commentary – "Oh that fellow Edwards. Who can touch a man like that?" – and it seems inconceivable the great scrum-half could ever be nudged into second place.

Maybe, though, that moment is finally arriving. "It's taken 50 years to be compared with somebody," Edwards said last year when asked if he saw something of himself in his modern-day rival. This Saturday could just be the day Dupont assumes his mantle as the undisputed GOAT. If you are lucky enough to have a ticket, keep it safe.

Sky Bet Championship

Dazzling Le Fée upstages Hackney to finish Boro off

Middlesbrough	**2**
Burgzorg 11, Hackney 59	
Sunderland	**3**
Neil 33, Isidor 51, Giles 87og	

Louise Taylor
Riverside Stadium

A terrific Tees-Wear derby illuminated by the imagination and sweet passing incision of Sunderland's outstanding Enzo Le Fée and Middlesbrough's Hayden Hackney ended with Régis Le Bris's visitors only three points off an automatic promotion place.

While Sunderland celebrated quite a comeback, Boro's manager, Michael Carrick, looked almost close to tears after Le Fée, on loan from Roma, glided beyond Luke Ayling and a mortified Ryan Giles diverted the Frenchman's late cross into his own net.

Not that a seventh-placed Boro side well capable of ending up in the playoffs should despair following a decent transfer window.

Just before kick-off their new loan signing from Sevilla, Kelechi Iheanacho ambled on to the pitch and waved to his new public before being hugged by Carrick. Boro's manager must have wished he had signed the former Leicester striker in time to play here but, initially, Iheanacho seemed almost surplus to requirements.

An apparently discombobulated Sunderland swiftly found themselves behind when Hackney's beautifully calibrated through pass prefaced Delano Burgzorg accelerating clear. All that remained was for Burgzorg to send a right-foot shot whizzing low, and unerringly, beyond the visiting keeper's reach after proving impervious to Luke O'Nien's desperate last-ditch tug on his shirt.

If it was easy to see why Boro rejected a £10m bid from Porto for Hackney yesterday, the 2,200 Sunderland supporters who had made the 30-mile trip down the A19 were distinctly unimpressed with their side's defending in the face of Boro's pace suffused attacking.

"It was an intense game against a strong team and we needed to play with more passion and confidence," Le Bris said. "But we have Enzo Le Fée and he is so talented. He helped us show we could take control and create chances."

Le Bris had reason to be grateful when Marcus Forss spurned an excellent opportunity to double Boro's lead after collecting another defence-confounding pass from Hackney. It proved costly as Dan Neil quickly equalised. The midfielder has caught the eye of Premier League clubs in recent months and demonstrated precisely why when he dispossessed Burgzorg before powering in a shot from just outside the area. Admittedly the ball took a deflection off George Edmundson's chest, wrong-footed Mark Travers – but, not for the first time, Sunderland had demonstrated resolve and resilience under pressure.

Almost incrementally Le Bris's side worked their way back into things and, suddenly, a previously omnipotent Boro looked desperate to slow things down. At this juncture Carrick was presumably relieved that the 19-year-old Liverpool forward Jayden Danns had not signed his loan deal with the Wearside club early enough to be involved.

Boro had originally been all kaleidoscopic positional interchanging and a blur of intelligent passing and movement but by half-time they seemed almost cowed by Le Fée and co. Significantly it appeared Sunderland had fathomed a way to beat Carrick's hitherto efficient press.

The home manager's worst fears were realised when Wilson Isidor vindicated Le Bris's decision to turn his loan from Zenit St Petersburg into a formal transfer by giving Sunderland the lead.

It started with Le Fée delivering a through pass that tempted Travers off his line in the face of Isidor's advance. When the French striker shaped to shoot, the goalkeeper fell for the deception and, having committed himself, was left to watch in horror as Isidor rounded him before flicking the ball into the empty net.

The moment had arrived for the Redcar-born Hackney to remind everyone he can play a bit too by equalising courtesy of the crispest of shots from the edge of the area after Aidan Morris's interception of O'Nien's slapdash pass to Jobe Bellingham.

Unfortunately for Carrick, Le Fée refused to be upstaged and, confronted by his adhesive first touch and high-calibre cross poor Giles got his feet in a game-changing tangle.

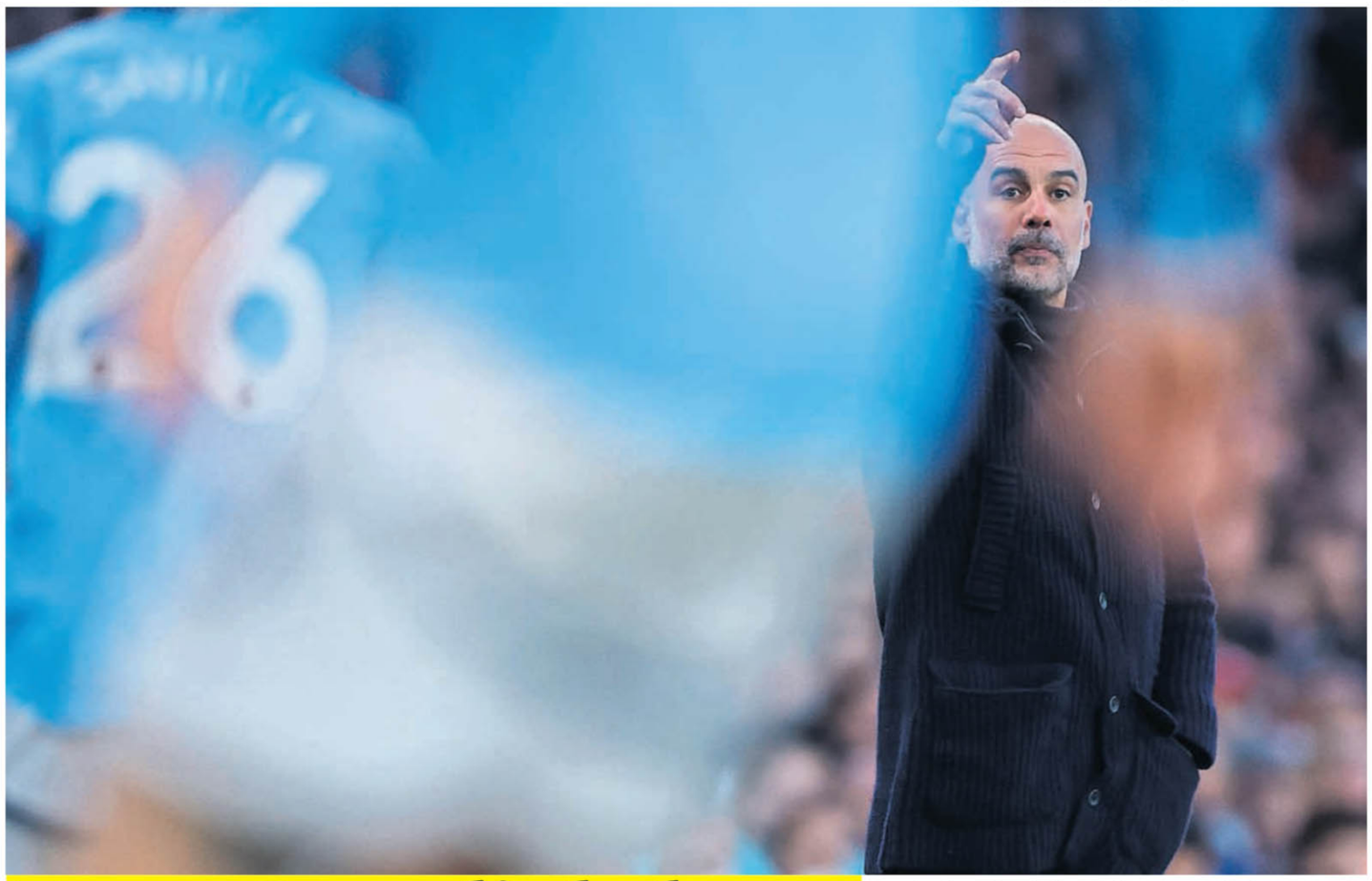
"It's a horrible way to lose a game," Carrick said. "We started ever so well so it's a tough one to take."



▲ *Wilson Isidor shows his delight after putting Sunderland 2-1 ahead*

Middlesbrough	Sunderland
4-2-3-1	**4-3-3**
Travers; Ayling, Edmundson, Van den Berg, Giles; Morris🟡, Hackney; Whittaker, Azaz (Iling-Junior 60), Burgzorg🟡; Forss (Conway 69)	Patterson; Hume, Mepham, O'Nien🟡, Cirkin; Rigg (Abdul Samed 71), Neil, Bellingham🟡; Roberts (Poveda🟡 88), Isidor (Mayenda 81), Le Fée
Subs not used	*Subs not used*
Glover, Barlaster, Fry, Borges, Woolston, Finch, McCabe	Moore, Ballard, Aleksić, Hjelde, Ogunsuyi, Jones

Referee Stephen Martin **Attendance** 29,161



▼ *Pep Guardiola has now been managing at the highest level for 17 years*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Does Guardiola have the energy to rebuild bruised, broken City?

The thrashing at Arsenal suggests the champions' woeful run at end of 2024 was more than just a blip

Jonathan Wilson

By the time Ethan Nwaneri whipped in Arsenal's fifth, the mood at the Emirates was euphoric. The 17-year-old's finish, arced into the bottom corner from that inside-right position through which so many of Arsenal's attacks had come, felt like the perfect finale to a dominant 5-1 win over reigning Premier League champions Manchester City. And it was, in more ways than one.

Its youthful chutzpah seemed an appropriate way to round off a win in which 18-year-old Myles Lewis-Skelly had been the most eye-catching player, having scored the third goal with an impudent shimmy into the box. Yet there was a strange realisation on seeing the replay. Nwaneri's finish hadn't nestled in that close to the corner of the goal; it wasn't quite as good as it had initially appeared. And that felt emblematic of the game as a whole.

Of course Arsenal were magnificent – the first team ever to score five against a Pep Guardiola side and win by four or more goals. Of course they deserve enormous credit, particularly given the scars left by the run of 12 successive league defeats to City that culminated with Guardiola's side effectively sealing the title against Arsenal in April 2023. Of course there was much to admire in their youthful intent. But equally there was a strange feeling that, memorable as Mikel Arteta's triumph over his mentor was, Arsenal hadn't needed to be that good to win.

City had equalised at 1-1 in the second half, and in that moment there was a sense that Arsenal had allowed them back into the game. Goalkeeper David Raya had already been forced into two fine saves, Kai Havertz had missed a glaring chance and there was a growing feeling that Arsenal's diffidence might cost them, that they were somehow playing less the City of today than the image of City implanted in their head by those six years of defeat. By the end they were rampant, scoring 106 seconds after City's equaliser as part of four goals in the final 37 minutes. Yet, according to one model, their xG for the game was only 1.06. As much as anything else, this was about City's soft centre, about the way the fight left them entirely.

Is this the end? Not just for this season but for the Guardiola project as a whole? There's a reluctance to call it, if only because City have been so dominant, because they have enjoyed such advantages, because Guardiola has been so obviously the most significant figure in shaping the tactical direction of the game over the past 15 years. Can it really be over? Is that it? Defeat at Tottenham in the Carabao Cup, a month of nonsense, and – boom! – that's it, *no mas*?

Champions rarely lose so heavily, but Liverpool did in 2020, going down 7-2 at Aston Villa. Although that was a dreadful season for them, including a run of six straight home league defeats, it happened amid the strangeness of the Covid lockdown and Liverpool did ultimately rally to finish third. Generally, the precedents for City are not good: the closest analogy is perhaps Inter, who collapsed in 1966-67. Dominant under Helenio Herrera, who had reshaped the tactical landscape just as surely as Guardiola, they won only two of their final 11 games of the season, losing in a European Cup final and Coppa Italia semi-final and surrendering the league title, and were never quite the same again.

As with City, the sense was of injury and fatigue triggering crisis in a squad that had perhaps grown stale and, once their aura had gone, it turned out they had no way back.

City have stabilised to an extent: they had lost just one of their nine fixtures before the capitulation at the Emirates. There had been a sense of normality returning, while the wave of new signings plus Erling Haaland's new contract had suggested a club girding itself for a rebuild. It was not the calm, gradual process of the past few seasons, an indication of how recruitment had gone awry, but the chaos of November and December was over. Would it perhaps come to be seen as two freakish months?

Sunday proved it was not. City remain staggeringly open. They make mistakes. They do not press with the precision they used to. Opponents no longer fear them, rather seeing in them an opportunity for a notable result. After Leyton Orient in the FA Cup, they face Real Madrid, Newcastle, Liverpool and Tottenham, who have already beaten them twice this season. This could be another month of misery for City.

And what then? Can the rebuild work, or is something too far broken? Guardiola has been a manager at the top of the game for 17 years; few last more than a decade. Does he still have the energy to keep fighting, to keep evolving, to start again? History suggests few come back from seasons like this, that auras once lost are rarely re-established. Guardiola is close to unique, but restoring City to dominance may be beyond even his abilities.

Chelsea spoil Potter's return and reclaim top-four place



▼ *Aaron Wan-Bissaka turns Cole Palmer's cross into his own goal to gift Chelsea three points*
JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

Chelsea 2
Neto 64, Wan-Bissaka 74og

West Ham 1
Bowen 42

Jacob Steinberg
Stamford Bridge

Graham Potter knows nothing but disappointment at Stamford Bridge. Back at the club that sacked him after less than seven painful months in charge, Potter endured Chelsea denying his new team with two scrappy goals in a tight second half. West Ham, who played well and edged in front when Jarrod Bowen punished an error from Levi Colwill, had the meagre consolation of knowing they had given rivals with greater resources a scare.

This was not convincing from Chelsea, even if they rose into the top four thanks to an equaliser from the excellent Pedro Neto and a Cole Palmer-inspired own goal from Aaron Wan-Bissaka. Enzo Maresca's team were pallid for long spells and irritation was rising before a sudden surge overwhelmed an injury-hit West Ham, who still summoned sufficient effort to rally and almost force an equaliser when Tosin Adarabioyo thwarted Mohammed Kudus in added time.

"I was very happy because I consider tonight the toughest game mentally," said Maresca, who was surprised to hear this was the first time since 2013 that Chelsea had won a home game after trailing at half-time. "You need to be patient. We conceded from our mistake. That's when you need to be mentally strong. Second half we found more space and the guys from the bench were very good."

Perhaps the closure of the transfer window will restore calm to Chelsea, quietening the noise around their squad. There has been a weird vibe and deadline day had rolled on with João Félix flying to Milan, a loan in the offing, and Aston Villa agreeing to borrow Axel Disasi for the rest of the season. West Ham, meanwhile, were left counting the cost of two years of botched recruitment.

The visitors had a threadbare feel with Lucas Paquetá and Edson Álvarez joining the injured contingent and Evan Ferguson not registered after joining on loan from Brighton. There were two full-backs in their back three, two goalkeepers on a light bench and a first start in mid-field for Andy Irving, a 24-year-old Scot signed without fanfare from SK Austria Klagenfurt last year.

West Ham still impressed. There were signs of Potter's ideas taking hold, and a 3-4-2-1 system restricted Chelsea. Their best opening came from a counterattack which ended with Noni Madueke shooting wide.

Chelsea strained to raise the tempo, with Palmer heavily marked. Marc Cucurella missed with a free header, Enzo Fernández dragged a shot wide, Jadon Sancho curled over and there was concern when Nicolas Jackson went down clutching his hamstring.

West Ham – short of firepower with Michail Antonio, Crysencio Summerville and Niclas Füllkrug missing – grew in confidence. Kudus threatened and Irving volleyed over. Bowen had two bites at turning in a corner. Filip Jörgensen denied West Ham's captain.

Jörgensen had received a huge cheer by fans delighted to see him replace Robert Sánchez. The Swedish goalkeeper was not entirely convincing, though, spilling an early cross from Irving. Chelsea, sleepy and vague, were asking for trouble.

It was not a surprise when Kudus forced Colwill into a wayward back-pass in the 42nd minute. The ball ran to Bowen, who raced clear to caress a lovely shot beyond Jörgensen.

Chelsea deserved to be behind. They almost levelled through Palmer, whose free-kick drew a stunning save from Alphonse Areola, but they needed more intensity in the second half.

Maresca soon put Neto on for the ineffective Sancho and introduced Marc Guiu for Jackson, who has gone eight games without a goal. Potter, meanwhile, was restrained on the touchline. It was left to Bruno Saltor, Chelsea's interim coach for one game after Potter's sacking, to complain about Colwill tripping Bowen in the buildup to the equaliser. "We feel it was a foul on Jarrod," Potter said. "If we could have held out longer we could have sustained something."

The mood turned when Chelsea levelled. Neto crossed from the right, Cucurella turned the ball back and Fernández's shot was blocked. Neto, hungry and alert, arrived to score. West Ham, hoping in vain that a VAR check would rule Guiu had touched the ball before it reached an offside Cucurella, geared up for a siege.

Neto's dynamism made an impact. Scrapping hard with Bowen, he won possession before Chelsea went ahead. The ball came to Palmer, he swerved past Vladimir Coufal and his cross went in off Wan-Bissaka.

West Ham brought on three inexperienced teenagers: Luis Guilherme, Oliver Scarles and Lewis Orford. Chelsea were invigorated by the £60m Neto and the France forward Christopher Nkunku. Even so there was concern at the state of Jackson's hamstring and Guiu limping down the tunnel at full-time. Maresca hoped both forwards were fine but he has work to do.

Chelsea	West Ham
4-2-3-1	**3-4-3**
Jörgensen; James (Gusto 61), Tosin, Colwill, Cucurella; Caicedo, Fernández; Madueke (Nkunku 61), Palmer (Chalobah 90), Sancho (Neto 52); Jackson (Guiu 52)	Areola; Coufal (Mavropanos 72), Kilman, Cresswell (Guilherme 87); Wan-Bissaka, Irving (Orford 77), Soucek, Emerson (Scarles 71); Kudus, Soler (Ings 77); Bowen
Subs not used	*Subs not used*
Sánchez, Acheampong, Dewsbury-Hall, George	Fabianski, Foderingham, Casey, Rodríguez

Referee Stuart Attwell **Attendance** 39,459

In brief

Everton

Six-year-old girl hit by bottle from away end

A six-year-old girl was hit in the face by a bottle thrown at Everton supporters from the Leicester section at Goodison Park on Saturday. Merseyside police and Leicestershire police have issued an appeal for information and are working with both clubs to identify the culprit, who threw the bottle at the end of Leicester's 4-0 defeat. The girl was uninjured but distressed by the incident. It is believed the object was thrown from the Lower Bullens end of the away section. Anyone with information can call 101 or direct message @MerPolCC on X, quoting reference number 25000087039. Or witnesses can contact david.stevens@leics.police.uk or @LeicsEvents. **Andy Hunter**

Sky Bet League Two

Williamson sacked by bottom side Carlisle

The EFL's bottom club Carlisle are looking for a third manager of the season after sacking Mike Williamson yesterday. No caretaker has been installed at Brunton Park as yet, suggesting a new face could be imminent, with former Bolton boss Ian Evatt the frontrunner. Former Newcastle player Williamson signed 11 players in January hoping to revive the form of a club who are tracking for a second successive relegation. While reports yesterday suggested Carlisle's ambitious American owners, the Piatak family, were considering an audacious bid for former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard to fill the vacancy, the PA news agency believes that is not on the agenda. **PA Media**

On other pages

● **'Disrespected': Hermoso recounts Rubiales kiss in court** *Page 4* →
● **Kerr called police officer 'stupid and white', jury hears** *Page 10* →

Results

Football

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Liverpool	23	17	5	1	56	21	+35	56
Arsenal	24	14	8	2	49	22	+27	50
Nottingham Forest	24	14	5	5	40	27	+13	47
Chelsea	24	12	7	5	47	31	+16	43
Manchester City	24	12	5	7	48	35	+13	41
Newcastle	24	12	5	7	42	29	+13	41
Bournemouth	24	11	7	6	41	28	+13	40
Aston Villa	24	10	7	7	34	37	-3	37
Fulham	24	9	9	6	36	32	+4	36
Brighton	24	8	10	6	35	38	-3	34
Brentford	24	9	4	11	42	42	0	31
Crystal Palace	24	7	9	8	28	30	-2	30
Manchester Utd	24	8	5	11	28	34	-6	29
Tottenham	24	8	3	13	48	37	+11	27
West Ham	24	7	6	11	29	46	-17	27
Everton	23	6	8	9	23	28	-5	26
Wolves	24	5	4	15	34	52	-18	19
Leicester	24	4	5	15	25	53	-28	17
Ipswich	24	3	7	14	22	49	-27	16
Southampton	24	2	3	19	18	54	-36	9

Chelsea (0) 2 — Neto 64, Wan-Bissaka 74og
West Ham (1) 1 — Bowen 42
39,459

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Leeds	30	18	9	3	60	19	+41	63
Sheffield Utd*	30	19	6	5	41	21	+20	61
Burnley	30	15	13	2	36	9	+27	58
Sunderland	30	16	10	4	45	26	+19	58
Blackburn	30	13	6	11	34	29	+5	45
West Brom	30	10	14	6	39	27	+12	44
Middlesbrough	30	12	8	10	49	39	+10	44
Norwich	30	11	9	10	49	42	+7	42
Bristol City	30	10	12	8	38	35	+3	42
Sheffield Wed	30	11	9	10	43	46	-3	42
Coventry	30	11	8	11	41	38	+3	41
Watford	30	12	5	13	40	42	-2	41
Millwall	30	10	10	10	30	27	+3	40
QPR	30	9	11	10	33	39	-6	38
Preston	30	8	13	9	33	38	-5	37
Oxford Utd	30	9	10	11	34	44	-10	37
Swansea	30	9	7	14	32	42	-10	34
Stoke	30	7	11	12	28	37	-9	32
Cardiff	30	7	10	13	33	51	-18	31
Portsmouth	30	7	9	14	36	52	-16	30
Hull	30	7	8	15	31	40	-9	29
Derby	30	7	6	17	32	41	-9	27
Luton	30	7	6	17	30	49	-19	27
Plymouth	30	5	10	15	29	63	-34	25

**Sheffield Utd deducted 2pts*

Middlesbrough (1) 2 — Burgzorg 11, Hackney 59
Sunderland (1) 3 — Neil 33, Isidor 51, Giles 87og
29,161

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH
Hemel Hempstead 3 Boreham Wood 4

LA LIGA
Girona 2 Las Palmas 1

SERIE A
Cagliari 1 Lazio 2

Tennis

ATP ABN AMRO OPEN (Rotterdam, Netherlands)
First round: S Tsitsipas (Gre) bt H Mayot (Fr) 6-1 7-5; **H Hurkacz** (Pol) bt F Cobolli (It) 6-3 6-2; **D Medvedev** (Rus) bt S Wawrinka (Swi) 6-7(8) 6-4 6-1; **M Bellucci** (It) v M Rottgering (Neth) 6-3 6-2

ATP DALLAS OPEN (Texas, United States)
First round: A Davidovich Fokina (Sp) bt B Holt (US) 6-1 7-5; **M Arnaldi** (It) bt C Eubanks (US) 6-3 6-4; **R Hijikata** (Aus) v A Mannarino (Fr) 7-5 6-3

WTA MUBADALA ABU DHABI OPEN (UAE)
First round: W Sonobe (Jpn) bt Yuan Y (Chn) 6-4 6-3; **L Sun** (NZ) bt C Garcia (Fr) 6-1 6-3; **A Krueger** (US) bt M Kessler (US) 6-3 6-7(4) 6-3; **K Volynets** (US) bt S Kartal (GB) 3-6 6-4 6-4; **V Kudermetova** (Rus) bt L Samsonova (Rus) 5-7 6-1 7-6(5)

WTA TRANSYLVANIA OPEN (Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
First round: V Tomova (Bul) bt M Sherif (Egy) 3-6 6-4 6-1; **A Kalinina** (Ukr) bt G Ruse (Rom) 6-2 6-3; **S Lamens** (Neth) bt A Bondar (Hun) 7-6(2) 7-6(6); **C Dolehide** (US) bt D Snigur (Ukr) 7-5 2-6 6-4; **M Stakusic** (Can) bt S Cirstea (Rom) 6-1 1-6 6-4.

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Sky Bet Championship
Burnley v Oxford Utd; QPR v Blackburn
Sky Bet League Two
Newport County v Morecambe; Salford City v Bromley
Vanarama National League
Dagenham & Redbridge v Forest Green; Halifax v Fylde; Rochdale v Oldham; Wealdstone v Tamworth
Vanarama National League North
Alfreton v Southport; Brackley v Needham Market; Chorley v Buxton; Oxford City v Marine; Peterborough Sports v Farsley; Scarborough v Radcliffe; South Shields v Hereford
Vanarama National League South
Bath City v Chelmsford; Farnborough v Chesham; Hampton & Richmond v Dorking; Hornchurch v Tonbridge
Vertu EFL Trophy
Port Vale v Wrexham (7pm); Rotherham v Bradford (7.30pm); Stevenage v Birmingham
William Hill Scottish League Two
Elgin v Bonnyrigg; Stirling v Spartans; Stranraer v Forfar

Greg Wood's racing tips

Market Rasen **1.10** Henrysbrotherjack **1.40** I'm A Lumberjack **2.10** Emotional Roller **2.40** Morandi Second **3.10** Rialannah **3.45** Tanganyika **4.20** Lady Kluck
Taunton **1.25** Jurancon **1.55** Saint Anapolino **2.25** Mount Gay Run **2.55** Tour Ovalie **3.30** Lady Pretender **4.05** Activist **4.40** Two To Tango (nap)
Newcastle **4.30** Royal Deeside **5.00** Conquest Of Power **5.30** Tasever **6.00** Tomorrow Day (nb) **6.30** War And Love **7.00** Dark Kestrel **7.30** Monsieur Fantaisie

Lack of homegrown superstar mythology should help Rashford recover at Villa



▶ *Fans flock to a Marcus Rashford mural in Manchester after the player was racially abused following the Euro 2020 final*
CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/ GETTY IMAGES

No other footballer presents such an obvious mismatch between celebrity status and actual on-field performance

Barney Ronay

Watching Sky Sports News this weekend it was hard not to feel a rush of sympathy for Flex, the YouTube pundit and transfer-chat expert. Flex seems like a nice bloke. He's clearly well informed on players and clubs. He seems to genuinely care about this stuff.

On this occasion, however, he was thrown a genuine hospital pass, asked to stand next to a vast picture of Marcus Rashford's head and talk about, well, basically, the entity that is Marcus Rashford. What is it? Is it good? What can it do? What do you think, Flex, about all this? Basically, Flex, just say Marcus Rashford words.

At which point Flex found himself stuck in a kind of semantic logjam, reduced to repeating the words "Marcus Rashford" over and over again, at one point 10 times in a minute, eyes a little wide, saying things like: "Marcus Rashford has to do what's best for Marcus Rashford if Marcus Rashford feels Marcus Rashford can still contribute to what Marcus Rashford wants now for Marcus Rashford."

This is not a criticism. Flex nailed it. He got out in one piece. It was in many ways an entirely logical response. Rashford's late-breaking move to Aston Villa had yet to appear in the treeline. What else are you supposed to say about someone who is essentially just content, a brand, algorithm fodder?

There is a kind of trap here, Flex's Conundrum, which states that it is impossible to discuss Rashford properly because he doesn't really play much football and isn't that interesting when he does; at the same time it is also impossible to stop discussing him because he's Marcus Rashford.

This is what the digital noise-world has given us. Andy Warhol defined a good photograph as one that's in focus and of a famous person. Maybe a good modern football discussion is one that's about a famous person, where that famous person's name is clearly enunciated at least 10 times.

In this sense Rashford is arguably the best example of a post-truth footballer. What we have here is a superstar without superstar achievements, superstar numbers or, let's face it, superstar talent. But who is nonetheless a superstar all the same. His public existence is an extraordinary thing in an extraordinary time, when every act, every close-up, every twitch is spun out, pored over, given meaning, processed across every platform.

This is not really how humans are supposed to exist, or what sport is supposed to be. Little wonder it is hard against this backdrop to assess exactly what a loan move to Aston Villa means, or how it's likely to work out.

The optics of Rashford's unveiling video weren't exactly promising. "I can't wait for the first training session," he said, looking heartbreakingly glum. "The sense of ambition is what is attractive," he added later, with all the uncontainable excitement of a man discussing the slow and painful death of his beloved pet rabbit.

And yet this is clearly the right thing for Rashford, if only because he just had to get out of Old Trafford before he was swallowed entirely by the machine. A move to Villa represents clear lines. Unai Emery is a pragmatist. This is his show. There is no homegrown superstar mythology to muddy the epicure.

Rashford will be asked to train and play with good footballers under a coherent coaching system,



▲ *Marcus Rashford joins Aston Villa on loan for the rest of the season*

and to play in a defined role. What he has here is a clear matrix of success or failure, with numbered instructions on how to get there. Plus the chance to find out some things that sound disarmingly basic, from what is his actual position right down to how much does he actually want to do this.

Is it a good thing for Villa? As a loan move the risks are relatively low. As are the potential rewards on the face of it. Villa have signed a player with three assists in his past 48 Premier League games, whose Emery-facing metrics – interceptions, tackles, indications of labour, effort, team play – are all way down. But this is also part of the fascination. It brings us back to the most basic question of all. Is he actually any good?

It is a question that seems uniquely hard to ask, let alone answer. In part because Rashford is so popular (and also unpopular) with Manchester United fans; because he has a machinery of extreme celebrity at his back; and because of the unavoidable political sensitivities around a footballer who has fought some vital battles via his social media channels.

One thing bleeds into another. Even asking if Rashford is actually any good can feel a bit like announcing that you also run an inflammatory alt-right YouTube channel called Why Enoch Was Right About The Great Chem-Trail Vaccination Steal.

But it is a fascinating question in its own right. If only because no other footballer presents such an obvious mismatch between celebrity status and on-field performance. That fame premium is clearly visible. Rashford is the fourth-highest-paid player in the Premier League, up there with Mohamed Salah, Kevin De Bruyne and Erling Haaland. Why? Even Casemiro, also in that company, has been world-class in the past.

Whereas Rashford's record is decent but not elite. In the Premier League he has 87 goals in 287 games, 40 assists across nine years, the same number as Jermaine Pennant, fewer than Brian Deane, Chris Brunt and Steed Malbranque. His supporters, fans, entourage, have taken to fudging this by saying, well, at his best he did have a 30-goal season. But did he?

He definitely had a 17-goal league season and 30 in 56 games overall. Either side he's a 10-a-season man, unable to string together two good years. It used to be easy to see things like this, to allow people simply to be quite good but not great. Rashford is a talented player with excellent movement, when he actually moves, and eye-catching skills. But he's also not as good as Cole Palmer, Harry Kane, Ollie Watkins, Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden, Anthony Gordon, Morgan Rogers, Eberechi Eze, Dominic Solanke. He's not as good as Bryan Mbeumo, Cody Gakpo and various other less famous people.

And yet Rashford is the conversation every time, to the extent he will now routinely complain about being the conversation, while failing to acknowledge being undeservedly

the conversation is also why he earns so much money, is so famous, and has an A-list career.

This is a new phenomenon, the interference of fame in the internal metrics of sporting merit. It can also cause problems. In this respect Rashford is an example of something else, too: the Negative Value Player. There is value in having him. But there is value in not having him too, in not carrying all that noise. Rashford signing for Villa is good news for Arsenal, who were never interested enough and have two domestic loans already. It's good news for Paris Saint-Germain, who have built a much-fanfared new identity around jettisoning the fame-over-substance footballer.

Mainly it's a great move for Ruben Amorim, who has found himself caught early on by a process that gets its hooks into all United managers now, the urge to go to war with one of their own players, convinced that if they can just weed out Idle Star X, this might all suddenly start to work.

This is football's version of the Pardoner's Tale, in which a group of drunken men decide the only way to escape death is to find death, who they have become convinced is an actual person, and to kill him, not realising this is impossible and they will naturally die in the process.

Erik ten Hag's death, his Rashford, was Cristiano Ronaldo. Getting rid of a 37-year-old celebrity poacher wasn't going to solve the wonky structures that led to a 37-year-old celebrity poacher being in your team in the first place. But Ten Hag still had to fight that battle just as Amorim had to fight this one. If only because he seemed stuck at this first obstacle, unable to talk about anything else in his press conference, was becoming, like Flex, a man who says "Marcus Rashford" for a living.

Who knows where this will end? Maybe when enough managers have fallen, enough idle senior players been slayed, death will finally be satisfied. But it is also important to remember Rashford didn't make any of this happen, that the Manchester United Effect was inflicted on him too.

Rashford was overplayed, overhyped, over-anointed as a very young man. His physical grace, his basic skills, his star power were misleading. He looked ready, but wasn't ready. He never had time to grow, was expected to be The One right from the start, and did his best to keep running from there to here, as managers, teammates, systems, regimes came and went. A saner club and a saner surrounding industry would surely have made a better Rashford.

There is still plenty of hope here. Villa are a great club, Emery an excellent manager. Rashford is talented enough to make this work. It will require discipline, hunger and a degree of personal and professional development. But he deserves a chance to find out how good he is; and above all a chance to be happy, nine years into one of the stranger sporting lives.

New Villa No 9 very unlikely to play for United again

Jamie Jackson

Marcus Rashford is extremely unlikely to play competitively for Manchester United again even if Ruben Amorim is no longer the head coach, with the relationship between the forward and his boyhood club near irreparable.

Rashford joined Aston Villa on loan on Sunday for the rest of the season and the 27-year-old forward is expected to depart again in the summer, permanently or on loan, even if Amorim is no longer there. The England international has a contract at Old Trafford until 2028.

There remains an outside possibility that Rashford could play again for United in pre-season, should Amorim have departed. Last summer Jadon Sancho and Erik ten Hag, Amorim's predecessor, reached a rapprochement after their fallout, which led to Sancho playing in warm-up games. Sancho then joined Chelsea on a season's loan.

Amorim denied that it would be embarrassing for United should Rashford prove prolific for Villa, who confirmed the loan signing of the Paris Saint-Germain forward Marco Asensio on deadline day, and it is understood that there is no call-back clause in the loan to cover for this eventuality.

Rashford, who will wear No 9 for his new side, said the Villa manager, Unai Emery, was a key factor in attracting him to the club. "He's a top manager and what he's done for the club since coming in is unbelievable," he told Villa TV.

"It's their constant ambition which is attractive and why you want to join such a club. You want to keep improving year on year and that's what the team's been doing.

"They are still in the Champions League and we want to go as far as we can in that and if you don't aim to win it you'll never win it, so that will be my main objective and keep pushing in the league to get as high as possible. This is my first time playing for any other team so you don't know what to expect but it's been more excitement, not scared of going into a new environment."

Asensio, a 29-year-old former Real Madrid player, has been loaned by PSG after a season and a half there. He has started 10 games this season but none since 22 November.

Villa were also hopeful last night of completing the loan signing of the Chelsea centre-back Axel Disasi for the rest of the season. The clubs agreed a £5m loan fee, with Villa covering the 26-year-old's salary.

United did not move for defensive cover on deadline day despite fears Lisandro Martínez sustained a serious knee injury on Sunday, in the 2-0 defeat by Crystal Palace, that could rule him out for the season. Reports in his native Argentina said it was an anterior ligament injury.

▼ *Evan Ferguson will spend the rest of the season at West Ham*
WEST HAM UNITED/GETTY IMAGES



Deadline-day deals: Ferguson to West Ham and Chilwell to Palace

Brighton striker agrees loan switch to bolster Potter's attacking options

West Ham have bolstered their attacking options by signing Brighton's Evan Ferguson on loan for the rest of the season.

Graham Potter, who has also recalled the midfielder James Ward-Prowse from loan at Nottingham Forest, was keen to bring in a striker after injuries to Niclas Füllkrug and Michail Antonio. West Ham explored a number of options before winning the race to sign Ferguson, who is fit again after an ankle problem. Arsenal, Bayer Leverkusen, Bournemouth, Chelsea, Everton and Tottenham also considered the 20-year-old, who made his professional debut under Potter at Brighton. Ferguson, who has scored only once this season, will hope to revive his career at West ham.

Brighton have acquired Stefanos Tzimas from Nürnberg for an undisclosed fee on a contract to 2030 but the Greece Under-21s forward will return to the Bundesliga 2 club for the remainder of the season. **Jacob Steinberg**



Ben Chilwell has joined Crystal Palace for the rest of the season

Exiled defender exits as Félix joins Milan

Crystal Palace completed the loan signing of the England international Ben Chilwell from Chelsea last night. The 28-year-old left wing-back, who will provide competition for Tyrick Mitchell, had been frozen out at Stamford Bridge under Enzo Maresca.

Chilwell said: "I'm very excited to be here. Crystal Palace are a club that's going in a great direction. You look at the last few months, with the results and how the team's playing, and it was a no-brainer to make the decision to come here."

Celtic have completed the loan signing of the Crystal Palace midfielder Jeffrey Schlupp, who joins until the end of the season.

João Félix last night followed Chilwell out of the door by joining **Milan** on loan. The 25-year-old Portuguese forward joined the Blues for a second time this summer in a £44m move but has struggled for game time. He flew to Milan last night as the clubs beat the clock to complete the deal, which has a £5m loan fee.

Chelsea have agreed a deal to sign the teenage midfielder Mathis Amougou from **Saint-Étienne** for a £12m fee. They also enquired about the **Sporting** youngster Dário Essugo, but that will now have to wait until the summer.

Borussia Dortmund have completed the loan signing of the Chelsea midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka. The 21-year-old has appeared only in the Conference League and Carabao Cup for the Blues this season.

Kelly swaps Toon for Juventus

The **Newcastle** defender Lloyd Kelly has joined **Juventus** on loan for the rest of the season, with the Italian club having an obligation to make the deal permanent for around £20m in the summer. The 26-year-old joined Newcastle on a free transfer last summer.

Fulham looked poised to re-sign the winger Willian, now 36, on a free. **Bournemouth** have signed the 18-year-old forward Eli Junior Kroupi and loaned him back to **Lorient**.

Ipswich have signed the **West Brom** goalkeeper Alex Palmer for an initial £2m fee - potentially rising to £4m with add-ons - and he is likely to compete for the No 1 spot at Portman Road with Aro Muric out of form and Christian Walton injured. The 28-year-old has spent his entire career at the Hawthorns.

In the Championship, the promotion contenders **Burnley** have pulled off something of a coup to sign the forward Marcus Edwards on loan from Sporting until the end of the season. The 26-year-old knows Burnley's manager, Scott Parker, from his time in Tottenham's academy.

Middlesbrough have signed the former Leicester striker Kelechi Iheanacho on loan from Sevilla for the rest of the season, while **Atlanta United** completed the £22m signing of the Boro striker Emmanuel Latte Lath.

Palace reject Spurs' £70m Guéhi offer

Continued *from back page*

comeback against Elfsborg, playing the first 45 minutes. But he was left out of the squad that won at Brentford on Sunday amid fears that something was not quite right.

It meant Spurs tried to sign another centre-back but they were unable to persuade Crystal Palace to sell Marc Guéhi, despite making an offer of £70m including bonuses. Guéhi, who starred for England during their run to the Euro 2024 final, will be out of contract in 18 months. Newcastle tried to sign him last summer and Chelsea looked at him this month. Liverpool are long-term admirers. Spurs will try again for him in the summer. Spurs also lost out to Aston Villa for the loan signing of the Chelsea central defender Axel Disasi.

Tel's signing was the boost. He can play across the frontline but is on record as saying his preferred position is as an inside left, where he can cut on to his stronger right foot. The former Rennes player, who is 6ft tall, is known for his good first touch, movement and readiness to shoot.

Tel, a product of France's Clairefontaine academy, was a prodigy when he came through at Rennes in 2021-22 as a 16-year-old, widely held to be one of most exciting young players in Europe. He made only 10 substitute appearances for the club, one of them in the 2-2 Europa Conference League draw against Spurs; his total minutes played was just 81.

But Bayern had seen enough, also in his appearances for France at youth level, to pay €28.5m for him. Tel scored six goals in his first season at Bayern; 10 last time out plus six assists. The ability has been there for all to see, sometimes in sustained bursts. But it has simply not happened for him this season, partly because of the intense competition for forward places at Bayern. Hence the openness for a fresh challenge.

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The Hundred: where £145m buys vibes not assets



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ADRIAN DENNIS/AFP

Own goal ruins Potter's Blues return

Chelsea	West Ham
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Cole Palmer (left) is mobbed by his teammates after his cross was deflected in for Chelsea's second
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City spending hits £172m with signing of González

Jamie Jackson

Manchester City signed Nico González from Porto for €60m (£49.8m) inside the final hour of the 11pm transfer deadline last night, with the champions' fourth major signing of the winter window taking their spending to £172.3m.

The fee for González represents the former Barcelona player's release clause. City were reluctant to pay the full amount but it is thought the club structured the transfer to source the fee over several instalments, with the Spanish midfielder signing a four-and-a-half-year contract.

González said: "This is the perfect opportunity for me at this stage of my career. I am 23 and I want to test myself in England. There's no better club than Manchester City for me to do that. I know the reputation Pep has and I cannot wait to work with him. In fact, I am honoured he wants me to play in his team. I am truly excited."

Txiki Begiristain, City's director of football, said: "Nico is a very talented young midfielder. He is an ideal acquisition for Manchester City."

González bolsters Pep Guardiola's options and adds depth to the manager's squad as he can operate as a defensive, central or attacking player. After Rodri's season-ending knee injury the manager had been light in midfield, having been able to call on Mateo Kovacic and Matheus Nunes, the veterans Ilkay Gündogan and Kevin De Bruyne, plus the utility player Rico Lewis, whom Guardiola has fielded centrally on occasion.

During the window City also signed the forward Omar Marmoush for €70m (£59.1m) plus €5m in add-ons from Eintracht Frankfurt and the defenders Vitor Reis, bought from Palmeiras for £29.6m, and Abdukodir Khusanov, signed for £33.8m from Lens.

Deadline day arrival

Tottenham strike loan deal for Bayern's Tel with option to buy

David Hytner

Tottenham have completed the loan signing of the Bayern Munich forward Mathys Tel with an option to buy for £50m in the summer after going back in for one of the hottest properties of the winter transfer window.

It appeared last week that the 19-year-old was not inclined to join Spurs, where the manager, Ange Postecoglou, has been desperate for a new attacking option. Tottenham had offered £50m to make a permanent deal happen straight away.



Mathys Tel has made just four starts for Bayern Munich this season

Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United had been among the other clubs to look at Tel, who has fallen out of favour at Bayern, making only four starts this season under the manager, Vincent Kompany. But Spurs were able to talk him round, Postecoglou playing a key role, the player and his agent, Gadiri Camara, flying to London before the deadline to finalise the move.

Tel fits the profile for Spurs' project - specifically, that he is young and gifted - and Postecoglou can be relieved at his signing given how hard the club have been hit by injuries. Brennan Johnson, Dominic Solanke, Wilson Odobert and Timo Werner are the forwards currently out.

The day brought confirmation of Postecoglou's worst fears in another problem area - central defence - with Radu Dragusin facing a long-term absence with a torn anterior cruciate ligament. The Romanian sustained the damage in the Europa League win against Elfsborg last Thursday.

Spurs had signed the centre-half Kevin Danso from Lens on Sunday, taking him on loan with an obligation to buy for £20.9m in the summer but the Dragusin setback came on top of the situation with the club's other specialists in the position - Cristian Romero and Micky van de Ven.

Romero's thigh problem is "tricky", Postecoglou said, and it is not clear when he will be back, having been out since 8 December. Van de Ven, who injured his hamstring on the same date, made his

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On the move

Ferguson and Chilwell secure exits



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Opinion and ideas



Traders on the floor of the New York stock exchange yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL M SANTIAGO/GETTY

Donald Trump has shown his hand. Time for a united front

Gaby Hinsliff



Can a country ever be too big to fail? Waiting for global stock markets to open yesterday morning felt grimly reminiscent of the beginnings of the sub-prime lending crash, the moment many finally understood the old cliche that when the US sneezes, everyone catches a cold. But when it threatens to hack its nose off with a chainsaw, before changing its mind at 10 minutes to midnight, then nobody knows where they stand.

The world's biggest economy is now experiencing what looks like its very own Liz Truss moment, only this time in a country powerful enough to take everyone else down with it. If the US really is prepared to keep playing this mad game of chicken – threatening ruinous tariffs against Mexico then postponing them, sowing fear and discord constantly among its allies – that risks creating the kind of all-American supernova that sucks everyone into a black hole.

Canada, which a few weeks ago was sending firefighters to help battle the Los Angeles wildfires, was told it wouldn't just be whacked with tariffs but would be punished to the point where it "ceases to exist as a viable country" and submits to becoming the 51st state of its aggressive neighbour. "Much lower taxes, and far better military protection for the people of Canada – AND NO TARIFFS," Trump declared on his Truth Social platform. Also, no sovereignty. Magnanimously, the president has said he wouldn't actually invade Canada – more reassurance than Denmark got when it rejected demands to hand over Greenland – but merely use economic force to similar ends.

The demeanour of both the outgoing prime minister, Justin Trudeau, and the probably incoming rightwing populist Pierre Poilievre as they vowed to fight back, suggested they no longer consider that a joke. Trump paused the tariff threat late last night. Yet Britain's reaction to this shabby treatment of a Commonwealth ally has been tumbleweed rolling down Downing Street, even as Ontario supermarkets swept American beer from their shelves and arguably the world's politest nation booed the US anthem at weekend ice hockey games.

Could British reticence be related to the way the president waited for the morning Keir Starmer was due to meet all 27 EU leaders for the first time since Brexit to announce that the EU is definitely getting it in the neck – but maybe differences with Britain "can be worked out"? Like a

Donald Trump has shown his hand. Time for a united front

Gaby Hinsliff

← *Continued from front*

mafioso offering protection, this probably isn't a kindness. (Those differences historically involved British reluctance to eat chlorine-washed chicken, or make the NHS pay higher market prices for US drugs.)

But even if it is, the fact that the school bully has picked on someone else isn't really the point. What do we imagine will happen to us if a "move fast and break everything" presidency tips our trading partners into recession? Or if Britain's bond markets start following the US's upwards, raising borrowing costs to the point where Rachel Reeves' scope to avoid spending cuts disappears? Which of our enemies benefits from a weakened, undefended Europe? Like it or not, we're all in this together now, trying to contain the threat from a superpower to whom the west has historically looked for protection. And all because Trump has developed a monstrously simplified theory of the world in which (for him) tariffs solve everything.

Threatening to impose them is now the first lever he yanks when politically challenged – as he did successfully when Colombia initially declined to accept planeloads of returned immigrants, and now again to force Mexico to put troops on the border – and if he ever really wants something from the UK that we decline to give, presumably we would fare no differently. But he also seems to consider tariffs a better way of raising revenue than taxes. Slapping them on the US's biggest trading partners for seemingly spurious reasons will raise billions, mostly from American consumers who have already suffered painful inflation but will now pay more both for imported goods and goods made at home using imported components. But those billions can then presumably be spent radically cutting taxes. It's as if the president were trying to remake the world's biggest economy overnight, rebalancing it away from taxing income or wealth to a form of tax on consumption favouring the wealthy, but in the process forcibly remaking everyone else's economy too.

In theory, the markets should already have priced in the risks of what the Wall Street Journal calls "the dumbest trade war in history", given Trump advertised it so openly in advance. Early reactions yesterday – London's FTSE 100 down 1.4% on opening, the Nikkei in Japan down 2.8%, and Wall Street's indexes sliding as analysts at JP Morgan warned of a potentially "business unfriendly" stance – look more slump than crash, with analysts assuming tariffs won't last. But there is more turmoil to come.

Over the weekend, Elon Musk's team of hatchet men were busy identifying what he claims are $4bn-a-day savings in spending, allegedly locking officials out of their own computer systems and riding roughshod over Congress's right to determine how money is spent in the process. It is hard to imagine cuts that deep not playing havoc first with commercial government contracts, but more pertinently with human lives.

The US's entire overseas aid programme was fed "into the woodchipper" first, Musk announced, casually torpedoing humanitarian programmes around the globe – from famine relief in war zones to childhood vaccinations – and terminating a key western soft-power mechanism for competing with Russian and Chinese influence. The implications are grim.

Since nobody voted to Make America Poor Again, maybe ordinary Americans will soon tire of this. But Brexit showed that voters' reaction to realising they've been had is often to double down, because it's too painful to think they have brought this on themselves.

So even if Britain is better placed than some to survive it, don't doubt the gravity of the moment. Every British government this century has had an unwanted sisyphean task dumped upon it, from responding to 9/11 to the banking crash, Brexit to the pandemic. Now Starmer has his: to do together with allies whatever tiny things we can to prevent a rogue US triggering a global recession and perhaps even a slide to war. Those who argued for waiting to see whether Trump really meant it had a point. But we've seen enough to know these tactics are utterly destabilising. Now we must act as if we mean our response.

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

US politics

Donald Trump's coup is hidden behind chaos to enrich the wealthy

Donald Trump is provoking a US constitutional crisis, claiming sweeping powers to override or bypass Congress's control over spending in a brazen attempt to centralise financial power in the executive branch. If he succeeds, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman warns, it would be a 21st-century coup – with power slipping from elected officials' hands. The real story hidden behind the president's trade war, he says, is the hijacking of government. And Mr Krugman's right.

By usurping the authority to shut down government programmes at will – even those funded by Congress – Mr Trump could slash federal spending and taxes while pretending to balance the books. In reality, he'd be robbing the poor to enrich the wealthy. In a world where economic jargon has been corrupted to depict exploitation as "wealth creation", the audacity of Mr Trump – and his lackeys – to personally profit is breathtaking. Mr Trump's philosophy is simple: let the uber-rich do whatever they want, with little or no oversight. The result will be vast wealth for a select few while life grows nastier and shorter for the many.

His plan took shape last weekend when Mr Trump removed a top-ranking Treasury official who had been blocking his billionaire crony, Elon Musk, from accessing the federal payment system – exposing the sensitive personal data of millions of Americans, as well as details of public contractors who compete directly with Mr Musk's businesses. The system disburses over $5tn annually, and Mr Musk and his allies, wrote analyst Nathan Tankus, are "clearly aiming to redesign" it to serve the Trumpian agenda – opening the door for the US president to seek retribution against his political opponents.

To see the impact, look no further than one of Mr Trump's first moves: freezing trillions in federal spending – particularly on foreign aid, nongovernmental organisations, "DEI initiatives", "woke gender ideology" and the "Green New Deal". The courts blocked the measure as unconstitutional – but not before it wreaked havoc on government agencies and nonprofits, especially those aiding vulnerable groups like homeless veterans. Mr Musk claims he will close the US agency for international aid (USAid) – but this remains moot as a federal body is legally required to administer aid.

Just like his trade war, Mr Trump's claim to "impoundment" authority – the supposed right to unilaterally halt spending – exposes the core contradiction of his power grab: he postures like a monarch because he's too weak to govern as a president. He wields tariffs at will, bypassing Congress with "national security" claims – yet cut a deal with Mexico that both sides spun as victory.

In his first term, Mr Trump's protectionist crusade – tariffs on China, a Nafta shake-up and attacking allies' trade policies – was sold as a revolution. Instead, it was a self-inflicted wound. His administration slapped $80bn in new "taxes" on Americans through tariffs, only to see supply chains reroute to Vietnam and Indonesia rather than bring jobs back home. The real cost? A 0.2% hit to GDP and 142,000 jobs lost, according to the Tax Foundation. Without serious investment in domestic industry, the America First trade strategy didn't rebuild US manufacturing – it just drove up costs. Mr Trump's chaos isn't confidence – it's desperation. He's trying to conjure power he doesn't actually have. He is manufacturing a perception of dominance in the hope that Americans will simply accept it. The real danger is letting his illusion of power become reality.

English Heritage

Cuts at the charity behind Stonehenge will hit quality and are worth battling

Reports that English Heritage, the charity that runs more than 400 state-owned buildings and monuments, plans to reduce its staff and opening hours as part of a cost-cutting drive should worry anyone who cares about the nation's culture. These castles, ruins and other sites play an important part in people's lives – particularly on weekends and holidays, when treasured memories are made. The value placed on access to these historic places can be seen from the fact that more than 1.3 million people are members. Stonehenge has 1.5 million visitors annually.

It and other jewels in the charity's crown will be left alone by the accountants. Winter closures are planned only at less-favoured sites where visitors are sparse, bosses have said. But given that membership, visitor and volunteer numbers are all up, it is concerning that the charity is so short of money that it may cut nearly 200 jobs.

English Heritage is a less-glamorous cousin to the UK's best-known buildings and landscapes charity, the National Trust (which operates in Northern Ireland and Wales as well as England). While the Trust, which was founded in 1895, has an elected council of members, English Heritage's members get free entry and parking but no voting rights. Measured by members and income, English Heritage is roughly a fifth of the Trust's size, and has existed in its current form since 2015.

This was when David Cameron's government decided to take away its government grant and spin it off as an independent entity. The optimistic gloss put on this was that it would enable the organisation "to grow with greater freedom". Instead, just a couple of years after public funding was fully phased out, there is a real chance that the charity's work will be degraded as a result of the need to make savings.

A consultation with staff and their unions is ongoing. But MPs, members and anyone with an interest in the heritage sector should be dismayed by the prospect of the charity's workforce being deskilled, if curators are replaced by other staff, as has been reported. Tourists and local visitors expect high-quality information and displays at landmarks such as Dover Castle and Hadrian's Wall. But these kinds of visits, combining historical education with pleasure (shops, cafes, children's games), have been decades in the making – with roots in the postwar campaign to democratise leisure by opening up beautiful buildings that were previously the preserve of the very wealthy to the ticket-buying public.

Experts are part of this winning formula. It is their knowledge that English Heritage, and other organisations, rely on when designing an experience – for example, the walk around the site of the Battle of Hastings – or updating displays to reflect contemporary concerns.

English Heritage's chief executive, Nick Merriman, has only been in post for a year. His aim will be to strengthen the organisation by recruiting more members and volunteers. The interest in Tudor England kindled by the BBC's adaptation of Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall trilogy could provide a boost to monasteries and abbeys such as Binham and Rievaulx. But with costs rising, it is not an easy task. Castles that have survived for hundreds of years can withstand a downturn in their keepers' fortunes. But the historic public realm that they represent, like the rest of the culture sector, is in need of knights to defend it.

The BBC won its news battle with Apple, but AI is winning the war

Archie Bland



My first mistake at the Guardian came, agonisingly enough, in my first article as a member of staff, and remains memorialised on the internet to this day. My subject was not a theoretical physician, a note at the end politely explained, but a theoretical physicist. Ten years later, it still makes me shudder.

Still, I felt a little better about it when I saw the run that Apple's artificial intelligence system went on recently. In its automated summaries of news notifications sent out to some iPhones, it asserted that Luigi Mangione, the man accused of killing the UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, had shot himself. It said that Benjamin Netanyahu had been arrested. It said that Pete Hegseth, not then confirmed as Donald Trump's defence secretary, had resigned. And it said that Rafael Nadal was gay. For the avoidance of doubt: he didn't, he wasn't, he hadn't and he isn't.

This litany of howlers were the product of the Apple Intelligence AI system, which was rolled out across the company's recent phones in the UK in December. There was no way for publishers to opt out, and an inscrutable little arrow next to the source news organisation's logo was the only marker that this was Apple Intelligence's output, rather than their own. After the BBC ran a series of richly indignant news stories about the phenomenon, Apple did something it almost never does: it reversed course, and paused the service. (Full disclosure: my wife works for Apple.)

You could see why Apple pulled the plug: the story was funny and weird enough to get traction. Saying, as another of the summaries did, that Luke Littler had won the darts world championship final before he'd actually played in it, is the six-fingered hand of news events: something that almost looks real, but reveals itself as fatally and hilariously flawed if you pay close enough attention. If it had been up and running last summer, you dread to think what it might have done to the news of the assassination attempt against Donald Trump.

Still, the central dynamic here is of two implacably opposed cultures: one that embraces public iteration, and the many missteps that users will endure along the way; and one which knows that if it keeps getting things wrong, the whole point of its existence will be annulled. There's no realistic way to reconcile these tendencies, but you might think a journalistic carve-out would be a grownup solution.

We can't expect Apple Intelligence to shudder when it reflects on these errors, because it doesn't actually comprehend what a fact is – it just knows what one sounds like. What's more alarming is the view from the other end of the telescope: that we might very easily not have known about these mistakes, and that there were almost certainly many others that went unnoticed.

All of this came to light only because journalists – at the BBC, but also ProPublica and the Washington Post – happened to receive the alerts in question. The summaries were locally generated on users' phones, and Apple has no way to track them. That means that it is very likely that other users will have received inaccurate alerts, and blamed them on journalistic incompetence – or quite reasonably believed them to be true.

* **Archie Bland** *is the editor of the Guardian's First Edition newsletter*

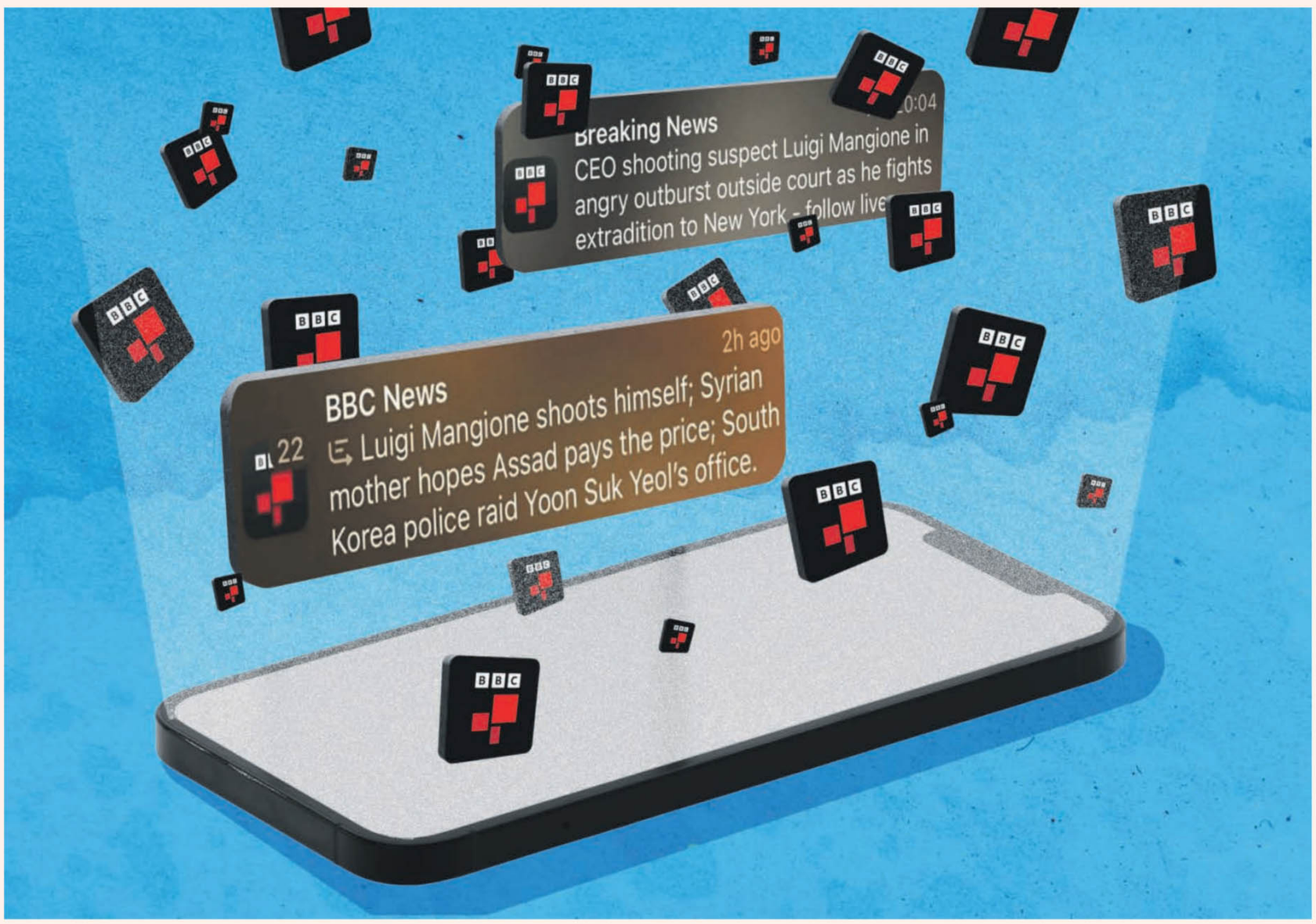


ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN/GETTY IMAGES

"Why did Apple make its use of AI in these alerts so invisible? If only there were two letters it could use as a legible icon!

The BBC wasn't the only news organisation to notice the problem, but it was the only one to really go after it publicly. The vigour of its coverage was partly a submerged message to readers. "It didn't hurt that it let people know that if they were seeing this, it wasn't the BBC doing it," one journalist there says. "But it was also about drawing a line in the sand with Apple and saying – look, this looks like it comes from us, and our reputation is completely founded on being reliable."

Some might scoff at this, and point out that news organisations make their own mistakes all the time – more consequential than my physicist/physician howler, if less humiliating. But cases of bad journalism are almost always warped representations of the real world, rather than missives from an imaginary one. Crucially, if an outlet gets big things wrong a lot, its reputation will suffer, and its audience are likely to vote with their feet, or other people will publish stories that air the mistake. And all of it will be out in the open.

You may also note that journalists are increasingly likely to use AI in the production of stories – and there is no doubt that it is a phenomenally powerful tool, allowing investigative reporters to find patterns in vast financial datasets that reveal corruption, or analyse satellite imagery for evidence of bombing attacks in areas designated safe for civilians. There is a legitimate debate over the extent of disclosure required in such cases: on the one hand, if the inputs and outputs are being properly vetted, it might be a bit like flagging the use of Excel; on the other, AI is still new enough that readers may expect you to err on the side of caution. Still, the fundamental difference is not in what you're telling your audience, but what degree of supervision you're exercising over the machine.

In the end, the most telling part of all this may be Apple's reaction. Even if it stonewalled for a month after the BBC's first story, it is striking that a company with a longstanding reputation for defensiveness ultimately relented. But it will undoubtedly bring the product back, and it has not said where the bar is for accuracy that it will consider sufficient.

The really interesting question is why Apple made its use of AI in these summaries so invisible – if only there were two letters representing the technology that might easily be assembled into a legible icon! It points to a much larger problem: when you're dealing with the introduction of a new technology that your users don't really understand, adhering to your defining mission for simplicity may make things pretty complicated.

The truth is, even if Apple is less defined as an AI business than some of its rivals, it is nevertheless a participant in a gold rush. The AI products that stick with us may be a bit like the Qwerty keyboard against various alternatives, or Internet Explorer's victory over Netscape: worse, but ultimately victorious because of their unconquerable scale. If so, a frictionless experience might be a very effective strategy.

If the complaints of even the most venerable news outlets are part of the price, it won't even touch the sides. In its latest software update last week, the same one that disabled the news summaries, Apple turned on AI by default for the first time.



Gen Zs don't dig garden centres, and I know why

Claire Ratinon



When I first heard that garden centres are facing a wave of closures, I thought of the one around the corner from where I live. On a recent Wednesday afternoon, the car park was full and the cafe was bustling with people my parents' age and older, chatting over milky coffees and slices of cake. The retired ladies who talk to me in the gym changing room love to come here for a jacket potato after their aquafit class.

Yet, as I stepped through the automatic doors, the plants weren't immediately visible. First, I had to pass a bright deli counter, an area filled with homeware and crockery, shelves of fragrant toiletries, and a section of children's toys before anything remotely connected to gardening came into view. I waded through gloves, power tools, pesticides and outdoor furniture, and then, finally, I found the annual bedding plants and potted shrubs. Here, all was quiet.

This isn't the type of place I tend to go looking for plants. There's something about the floral wellies and superfluous tat of your average garden centre that I find off-putting. Curious as to whether others felt the same way, I asked my Instagram followers whether they sought out their plants in large garden centres like this one. Over 100 people responded, sharing a surprising depth and breadth of feeling about these places.

I related most to those who said the abundance of plastic and shelves full of chemicals had put them off. "I think they perpetuate all the ways the gardening industry is screwing up the environment," one gardener named Emma told me. These gardeners favoured smaller, family-run operations, specialist nurseries and plant fairs run by dedicated plantspeople who could offer advice and inspiration. A number of people told me they preferred to know how and where plants were grown before buying them; ideally, they bought plants propagated locally, without chemicals, certainly not using peat, which releases substantial amounts of CO_2 when it's extracted from the ground.

Even so, most people described garden centres as joyful places where they like to spend time with their families, gather ideas for their gardens, have a good look at plants before investing in them and – yes – enjoy some coffee and cake. One respondent even described those in rural areas "as a core civic space". Given all this, it might seem surprising that some are closing down. Both Dobbies and Homebase have announced the closure of a number of their sites in recent months.

One of the reasons for this, proposed in a recent Daily Mail article, is that young people are to blame. It claimed gen Z are visiting garden centres for the cafes, candles and cuddly toys but are failing to drop enough cash to keep these businesses afloat. Yet look a little closer, and it becomes clear that young people are interested in plants. According to one survey, 83% of 18 to 34-year-olds think gardening is "cool". Given that most are less likely to own a home (let alone a garden) of their own than previous generations, that's a welcome surprise. And since gen Zs and millennials are far more concerned about the climate crisis than older generations, it follows that they would be looking for ways to garden that align with their values, mirroring the sector-wide trend for nature-centred approaches.

There are many prominent gardeners who represent a broader shift away from gardening as a purely aesthetic practice, and instead create gardens that are nature-centric as well as beautiful. Instead of obliterating insects with pesticides and uprooting so-called weeds, many I know and admire engage in considered cultivation, where tidiness is eschewed in favour of a nurtured wildness welcoming to wildlife. Ecological home grower Poppy Okotcha and edible gardener Huw Richards both exemplify how younger gardeners are embracing a more holistic approach.

I find that being more environmentally conscious in the way I garden compels me to interrogate the choices I make, both for the green spaces I steward and in my life beyond. Learning the alchemy of propagation, creating new plants from cuttings, or splitting a mature plant into multiple new ones to share with your fellow gardeners are remarkable experiences that have encouraged me to decouple my gardening practices from the consumerism of garden centres.

Similarly, I'd urge new young gardeners to find ways to garden without emptying their bank accounts. Perhaps what makes gardening meaningful can't simply be bought in a garden centre.

* **Claire Ratinon** *is an organic food grower and writer*



A meteorite from the Perseid shower

ALAMY

It came from outer space

In 2021, a meteorite finished its 100-million-mile journey outside a house in a Cotswolds cul-de-sac. As scientists descended on the site, the race was on to identify where it was from – and what it could tell us

Helen Gordon

The long read

At 21.54 on 28 February 2021, 16 cameras belonging to amateur sky-watching network UKMON picked up a bright shape headed towards Earth. Pictures show a long white line, which was visible for eight minutes, a glowing globule of light against the dark sky. "For me it's like fishing," said Richard Kacerek, one of the founders of UKMON. "You cast your line and then you wait. There are days when you catch nothing but there are days when you catch a really, really big fish and it's so exciting." The fireball of February 2021 was such a fish: a lump of flaming extraterrestrial rock travelling at a speed of about 8.4 miles a second – 15 times the speed of a rifle bullet – and headed for the Cotswolds market town of Winchcombe.

Meteorites are rocks from space that have entered our atmosphere. Most were once part of asteroids – the rocky, airless remnants left over from the formation of our solar system 4.6bn years ago. Almost all of them are what collectors call "finds", meaning that the stone has been discovered by searching the ground, having fallen earlier – in most cases several thousand years earlier. A "fall", a meteorite that is seen in flight and then recovered, is very, very rare. Worldwide, typically only about 10 such rocks are picked up each year. Before 2021, the last reported UK fall was a rock the size of a cricket ball that landed in a hedge in Glatton in Cambridgeshire in May 1991.

With its woods, heaths, moors and arable farm land, and with so many other terrestrial rocks and pebbles to confuse things, most of the UK is terrible meteorite-hunting territory. Even so, with enough flight data you can attempt to calculate a meteorite's trajectory, to try to figure out where it has landed.

On 1 March, the morning after the fireball, Ashley King, a planetary scientist at the Natural History Museum (NHM) and lead of the UK Fireball Alliance (UKFall), began scanning the data from the camera networks. UKFall brings together the different hobbyist camera networks and the professional scientists who want to find and study the meteorites. The scientists studied a map of the Cotswolds and drew an oval shape covering a 280km^2 area where parts of a meteorite might have landed. Now the race was on to try to recover the rocks.

As soon as a meteorite enters the Earth's atmosphere it begins to change, thanks to the effects of oxygen, wind, rain or any other contaminating material. This is why recently fallen meteorites are especially prized. Meteorite collectors term them "fresh". The weather in the Cotswolds on 28 February and 1 March was clear and dry but it was imperative to reach the meteorite – if it had survived the journey – as soon as possible.

Because the UK was in lockdown, the teams from the NHM, the University of Glasgow and other institutions couldn't immediately travel to Winchcombe. Usually they would try to keep a search area to themselves for three or four days but now, as King and his colleagues anxiously scanned the weather forecasts, they took the decision to ask the public for help. Once the meteor speed slows to below 3km a second it stops shining and enters what is called "dark flight", when it is no longer observable. To work out where it landed you have to make various assumptions about what the rock is made of, what shape it is and what the wind will have done to it.

The map of where it could have fallen was released. King spent the day talking to journalists and making announcements on the radio. To minimise contamination, King issued the following instructions to the public: "If you find something that might be a meteorite take a photograph of it in situ; record the location; only handle it wearing gloves; put it into a sealable plastic bag or some aluminium foil. Email us!"

The less the meteorite was altered by its stay on Earth, the greater the scientific value would be. Meteorites – because of their great age and because, compared with Earth rocks, they are relatively pristine – provide a window back in time through which we might glimpse the processes that formed and shaped the solar system, the moons, the planets and our own world. Most rocks on Earth have been subjected to plate tectonics – the constant destruction and recycling of our Earth's crust – and to weathering on the surface. Any information about the very early Earth has been destroyed. If we want to read those earliest pages of Earth's history, meteorites from asteroids are the oldest objects available for study. Without them we cannot begin to answer the questions: where did we come from? How did we begin?

With a population of 5,000, Winchcombe is a pretty town of honeycomb-coloured limestone and timber-framed buildings. The Wilcock family home is a neat 1960s detached house on a quiet cul-de-sac on the outskirts of town. Early in the morning of 1 March, Cathryn Wilcock, a retired primary school teacher, opened the curtains of her living room and noticed a pile of dark lumps and powder at the edge of her driveway. It looked as though someone had upended an old barbecue.

The Winchcombe meteorite had probably travelled more than 100m miles to reach our planet. Had it landed just a few metres to the left it would have fallen into a thick privet hedge and probably never been discovered. Had it landed a few metres closer to the road, Cathryn would have assumed it was rubbish churned up by a passing car and swept it away. Instead, her husband, Rob, went out to investigate.

Rob immediately recognised that something strange had occurred. He got together some rubber gloves, old yoghurt pots and plastic bags and went outside to pick up the stones.

The NHM and other institutions that deal with meteorites are used to fielding inquiries from people who think they've found a space rock. Among the scientific meteorite community, such rocks have their own name: meteorwrongs. Randy L Korotev, a scientist at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, has a webpage devoted to them. "I have examined thousands of photos that people have sent to me over the past 20-plus years. Probably for less than 1 in 1,000 photos have I thought: 'Yes, that might be a meteorite,'" he has written, with some exasperation. Slag is a particular issue. A glassy byproduct of smelting ores to retrieve metal, it looks nothing like the local rocks around it. It looks a bit like what your idea of a meteorite might be: dark and gnarly, something forged with fire. As a meteorite enters the Earth's atmosphere, slowing down, it begins to rapidly cool, and its molten surface forms a dark, glassy coating called a fusion crust. Unlike a meteorite, slag has large vesicles – holes caused by gas bubbles when the rock was originally cooling – and no fusion crust.

Another challenge is that when people see a fire in the sky, they tend to assume that it's very close to them. In reality, because the meteorite is high in the sky and therefore visible across vast swathes of land, it may be very far away. With the Winchcombe meteorite, King had photographs of rocks sent in from places as distant as Scotland. The NHM scientists were swamped with replies. So when, around 4pm on the Monday, King viewed an email with a photograph of someone's driveway, he was initially suspicious. The photograph showed some dark black lumps surrounded by dark black powder. It was the sort of splat shape you might expect if something fell to the ground from a great height.

"I have to admit that I wasn't absolutely convinced at first," King said. "That splat shape … it was a little bit too perfect. You do get people who will fake things. It's a weird thing to do but it happens," he said. What were the chances of the meteorite landing so neatly and conveniently in front of someone's house? (According to the Harvard astrophysicist Avi Loeb: "Statistically, you have to wait for a billion years before your home will be hit by a meteorite.")

But fake or not, King wanted to get his hands on the potential meteorites as quickly as possible. In addition to the weather, there was another reason to hurry. With news of the meteorite all over the internet, professional meteorite hunters would be alerted to the scene. Here, the Covid lockdown was in some ways a piece of good fortune. "Otherwise we could have been overrun with big meteorite hunters from abroad," King told me. These are the sorts of people who can jump on a plane at a moment's notice to get to the site of a suspected fall.

On 2 March, Richard Greenwood, a scientist at the Open University, sat down at his desk to see what King had sent him. Rob Wilcock's picture was the first image he opened. "To be honest it was like one of those moments when your legs start going wobbly because I saw this thing … and I just thought – that is a meteorite," he told the BBC. "It was instantaneous."

By 3 March, King was negotiating with the NHM and the government to get permission to travel to the Cotswolds. Greenwood, who lives near Winchcombe, set off as soon as he could. When he arrived at the Wilcocks' house, Rob came out holding a plastic bag. "It was the second wobbly moment of the day. I looked inside and I could not believe it," Greenwood said. Not only was there a meteorite in the bag, it looked to be a very, very unusual one: a carbonaceous chondrite. Comprising only about 4% of all meteorite falls, these are among the most primitive and pristine of space rocks. They are also rich in water and organic material. Some scientists believe that carbonaceous chondrites were responsible for delivering the first water to our planet. Without meteorites, so the theory goes, there would be no rivers or oceans, lakes or streams. Some

'It was one of those moments when your legs start going wobbly … It was very hard to contain the emotions'



Hannah, Rob and Cathryn Wilcock at the Natural History Museum

CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY



also believe that the organic material they contain - amino acids and other prebiotic molecules - could have combined with simple molecules, such as ammonia and carbon dioxide, to create the first proteins and RNA molecules: the blueprint to build and operate every living entity on Earth.

"There is just literally the country's most interesting meteorite in 400 years and I'm the first person who knew that's what it was," Greenwood told reporters. "It was very hard to contain the emotions."

News began to ripple through the meteorite community. Minutes after Greenwood met Wilcock, Luke Daly from the University of Glasgow posted in a group chat: "Holy [--] just got off the phone with Ashley [King], and Richard [Greenwood] met with one of the black rock finders and reckons it a CM chondrite! Ashley is on his way now. Don't spread this!"

Having travelled for nearly four hours on eerily empty tubes and trains from south London, King arrived in Winchcombe. Because of lockdown rules, the Wilcocks set up a small table on the patio to look at his finds.

"Watching their faces light up, I started to realise for the first time that this was something really special," Rob Wilcock told me. The enormity of what had taken place was beginning to sink in. Two days later he looked on as some of the most important names in meteoritics crawled over his front lawn wielding tweezers. Rob had already collected further fragments and built a little protective structure around the area of the driveway where the main mass of the meteorite (the largest section) had landed. Now he was sent up a ladder to check the flat roof for material. Even tiny specks were worth collecting. Cathryn gave the scientists some old toothbrushes to help sweep up the grains. Later, the scientists cut out the square of driveway where the meteorite had landed and transported it to London. There, they attempted to recover more fragments. The tarmac itself would feature in the museum archives along with the plastic bags and Waitrose yoghurt pots that Rob had used to collect the meteorite.

Scientists and volunteers joined the hunt. It was hard going. Many possible meteorites turned out to be lumps of sheep droppings

A meteorite found at Saint-Pierre-le-Viger, north-west France, in 2023

LOU BENOIST/AFP/GETTY

In total, 319.5g of the meteorite was recovered from the Wilcocks' property. They donated everything to the NHM, the Winchcombe Museum and the Wilson Art Gallery and Museum in Cheltenham. "It just seems to have really found the right people to fall on," King said of the Wilcocks. "It couldn't have been any better."

Meanwhile King finally received the data from the dark flight model. They now had a potential strewn field: a much smaller, more searchable area where larger pieces of the meteorite could have landed and remained intact. New hunts were organised. Scientists and student volunteers spread out 2 metres apart in lines like police at a crime scene. They walked slowly over the cold fields, heads down, looking for small, black stones that had travelled to Earth from somewhere between Mars and Jupiter. It was hard going. Many possible meteorites turned out to be lumps of sheep droppings.

Meteorite hunter and collector Luther Jackson describes this sort of hunt as a mixture of science and detective work. For instance, strewn fields typically have what hunters call a big and a small end. The big end is where larger pieces fall first. The small end is where the smaller pieces, which are lighter and therefore travel further, will land. Within the strewn field Jackson will look for likely places to hunt: "Anywhere with a very uniform surface, such as a football pitch or tennis court, is good." He makes a point of talking to everyone he meets. "You never know what information will come up, or offers [from people] to let you search their land." Often he brings a stick with a magnet attached to test rocks. (Not all meteorites are magnetic - those from the moon, for example, are not - but most are, being rich in iron. Some scientists discourage the use of magnets because they can erase any record of the magnetic field of the meteorite's parent body.) It's slow, back-breaking work.

In Winchcombe the scientists' efforts were finally rewarded when Mira Ihasz, a volunteer with the University of Glasgow search team, found a stone weighing 152g - the largest intact piece. The main mass recovered from the Wilcocks' driveway was not "intact", having fractured into millimetre- to centimetre-sized pieces and powder.

If the British countryside - with its rain, mud, vegetation, sheep's droppings and so on - is far from ideal meteorite-hunting territory, the Sahara is its opposite. Dark meteorites stand out against the sand, and even very old falls are often well preserved in the dry desert climate, meaning there are an estimated tens of thousands of years' worth of fallen meteorites waiting to be discovered.

Towards the end of the 20th century, these facts - combined with a favourable legal and geopolitical situation and the presence of many skilled local hunters, often members of nomadic groups - turned Morocco into one of the world's greatest exporters of space rocks. The UK has recorded a mere 23 falls and finds. The number



of officially recognised Moroccan meteorites exceeds a thousand – though this is described by scientists as "a gross underestimate". Many meteorites collected in Morocco are not precisely documented and so not attributed specifically to that country. The majority are only submitted for official recognition when they are perceived to have sufficient commercial value.

At an auction in 2022 a bean-sized 1.7g fragment from the Winchcombe meteorite went for £9,256, 120 times the value of its weight in gold. In a general way, meteorites can cost anything from a few pounds to hundreds of thousands, their value largely determined by the collecting community.

In recent years, as meteorites have grown in popularity, prices have shot up – about which the dealers had mixed feelings. Higher prices are obviously good for the seller but many people complained to me particularly about the rocketing prices commanded by really fresh falls, taking interesting new meteorites out of the reach of the general collecting community.

In Morocco, news of a new meteorite fall is liable to bring hundreds of people to the most inhospitable desert locations. Many will be inexperienced and ill-prepared – sometimes with tragic results. "In 2017, there was a fall in July when it was extremely hot and the military told us that two people died because they didn't have enough water, and they didn't know where they were," Hasnaa Chennaoui Aoudjehane, a professor at the Hassan II University of Casablanca, told me.

In 1980s Morocco, when Chennaoui was studying for a geology degree, the subject was considered an exclusively male pursuit. Today she is one of the country's leading meteorite authorities, though she is often still the only woman on trips into the Sahara to hunt for meteorites. Back in 2011, she received a call from the Meteoritical Society, the group that maintains the official register of all known meteorites, asking her to travel to a remote part of southern Morocco near the border with Algeria. There were rumours that a black rock had fallen from the sky. Some reports claimed that it was an incredibly rare meteorite type. Chennaoui accepted the mission.

When a meteorite lands in our place, the vast otherness of space comes into direct contact with our earthbound everyday lives

In addition to the risk of getting fatally lost in an often seemingly featureless landscape, dangers include (but are not limited to) scorpions, snakes, shifting sand dunes and buried landmines. "You have to go to the field with people that have a good knowledge of the area. And you have to trust them. I cannot go into the desert with someone that I've never travelled with before," Chennaoui said.

To reach the site of the 2011 fall required a five-hour, 45-mile drive along a rocky desert track. "We were in the middle of nowhere. Absolutely nowhere. And when we arrived at the site we found hundreds and hundreds of people. Men, women, children. People had heard that there were rocks coming from the sky and that they had value."

Though she personally found only tiny fragments of the meteorite that together weighed much less than 1g, Chennaoui conducted interviews, documented locations and saw stones found by other meteorite hunters. The stones looked as though they'd been dipped in black vinyl. "I have never seen anything so nice in my life; the fusion crust is so shiny, and very black," she said in an interview for Live Science. Altogether 7kg of the meteorite were collected. On 17 January 2012, the Meteoritical Society formally added the meteorite to their register. It was named Tissint after the village nearest to the fall site. Most exciting of all was where this meteorite was found to have originated: the planet Mars.

It is stupendously rare to witness a fall from Mars. Fewer than 0.3% of meteorites in collections are from the red planet. And like Winchcombe, Tissint is distinguished by having fallen in a dry area and been picked up soon afterwards with minimal contamination. Chennaoui was the lead author on the first Tissint report, working with 20 researchers from different countries. She was even able to see evidence of weathering that had occurred on Mars's surface. It was almost as if it had just been blasted off the surface of Mars.

Meteorite hunting can be a frustrating pastime. You might have access to camera footage and sophisticated weather data, or live next to an optimum meteorite hunting site, but you can't influence when a space rock will decide to drop in. At a meteorite show in France I met Thierry Monter, a French meteorite dealer and graphic designer. On his stand was a semicircle of tarmac that on closer inspection turned out to be part of a tennis court. In February 2023 Monter was abroad, on holiday with his girlfriend, when he heard about a new meteorite fall back in France. "It was just horrible," he told me. "The worst vacation of my life! I was waiting for years for a meteorite fall and then it happened in France and I wasn't there! I was checking the news every day and watching as pieces were found."

As soon as he arrived home, Monter set out for the fall site in Saint-Pierre-le-Viger in Normandy. He was seven days late and knew that most of the decent spots would already have been picked over but decided to try his luck on a local tennis court. (A good place to hunt because there was a large flat surface with no grass or bushes.) "I saw something that looked like gravel but there was a sparkle on it!' He'd found his first meteorite. Then he found some more, and then some more. In total he collected about 400g in many pieces, some of which he was selling at the show. Because it had smashed apart on impact you could see the dark black fusion crust on the outside and a creamy interior studded with rust-coloured spots. He was also selling the very, very small impact crater that the meteorite had made on the tennis court. "I am not rich. Quite the contrary in fact. And if I earn some big money I could turn being a meteorite dealer into my job," he said.

For Monter, the fact that the meteorite had landed in France of all countries made it even more significant. When, out of all the places on the planet a meteorite could land, it lands in our place, the vast otherness of space comes into direct contact with our earthbound everyday lives. Recently a bright fireball was sighted over the English Midlands. The chair of a greenhouse factory in Cresswell, a village in the middle of the search area, was interviewed by the press. "We were just amazed that such a thing could happen in our little corner of Staffordshire," he said.

In Winchcombe, the Wilcocks have installed a small metal plaque on their driveway to commemorate the place their meteorite landed. Wherever they fall, these remarkable, unlikely stones seem to demand from us an act of witness. *This incredible thing; it happened here.* A wooden post in Essex commemorates the 1923 Ashdon meteorite; a brick pillar in Yorkshire the 1795 Wold Cottage fall; a sculpture in Alsace the 1492 Ensisheim event. Such monuments seek to fix in place and time something transient. They speak of a desire to recognise that here, in this place, on this specific spot, the fabric of the everyday world was briefly pulled aside. ●

Adapted from The Meteorites: Encounters with Outer Space and Deep Time by Helen Gordon, published by Profile (£20). To order for £18, go to bookshop.theguardian.com. P&P charges may apply

Meteorites at the Museum of Natural History in Vienna

ZHANNA TRETIAKOVA/ALAMY

✻ **Helen Gordon** *an editor and author of books including Landfall*

Established 1906

Country diary

Newbury, Berkshire

The sensory presence of foxes is woven through my days and nights lately – sightings, sound, smells, evidence. It is the mating season and, being largely solitary creatures, they are advertising their presence to one another in a manner hard to ignore; in a way that carries across dark, silent miles or cuts through the fumes of urban traffic. Foxy scent markings – musky notes of singed fur, sandalwood, spice and hawthorn flowers – bring me up sharp at a hole in a hedge, by a gatepost or anywhere down the lane.

In snow, or in the creamy chalk soil that has washed out of gateways in recent storms, tracks give away encounters. Paw prints, narrower than a dog's, that you can draw a kiss through without touching the pads, track slightly sideways, printing a straight, tacking running stitch across the land. Occasionally, tracks cross and run alongside one another for a while, or pool in a coming together.

Country foxes take care not to be seen and we take care not to mention when we do see them (though we are not immune to losing all our chickens either). Many are inevitably shot, called into range sometimes with an electronic fox caller that mimics the squeak of dying prey sounds, or are otherwise exposed by their own eyeshine in the sweep of a lamp from a vehicle at night. From my window at bedtime, I hear them track across miles in the dark, the dog foxes "woo-oo-ooing" at regular intervals, the vixens answering with a scream.

Waiting for my nieces at a foggy railway station in town, a familiar "woo-oo-oo" comes softly from a dimly lit alleyway. I employ the gamekeepers' trick of "squeaking" in the fox and he comes in close and walks alongside me for a moment on the other side of a scrappy privet hedge. When there is a gap, he makes eye contact with little fear, as if to say: "Well? What?" Eventually, he saunters off, woo-ing as he goes, the white tip of his tail swinging like a low-slung cigarette walked smouldering into the night.
Nicola Chester



ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER

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Protect the children's bill from academy lobbyists

Your editorial (Breakfast clubs improve children's lives. Labour can be proud of this bill, 31 January) is a welcome riposte to the academy lobby's attempt to hijack debate on the children's wellbeing and schools bill. We must focus on what we need to do to improve our school system and challenge the view that the past 14 years were a great success.

Doubtful claims, without robust supporting evidence, that the bill will "destroy the huge gains made over the last decade and a half" have been widely repeated. Attention is often drawn to the opinions of CEOs of large academy chains. Evidenced comparisons between academies and maintained schools are rare, and reference is seldom heard, for example, of the fact that UK 15-year-olds have the lowest life satisfaction score in Europe.

But other legacies are also not receiving attention: high levels of pupil absence and exclusions, unsustainable levels of teacher recruitment and retention, low teacher morale, the poor state of many school buildings, a crisis in provision for special educational needs and disabilities (Send) pupils, no progress on narrowing the attainment gap, a perverse accountability system that encourages off-rolling and an exam system that almost certainly contributes to the low levels of pupil satisfaction.

The bill recognises some of the issues that our schools and children face, but there is much more to be done. Above all, we need to trust our teachers and treat them as professionals. It is crucial that Bridget Phillipson challenges those who are talking of "vandalism" and academy "style" being cramped. She must set out with evidence why the last 14 years have not been a great success and insist that from now on every child matters.
Alasdair Macdonald
London

● The criticisms being directed at the government's proposals to restrict the freedoms of academy schools might carry more weight if they were accompanied by evidence that these freedoms have helped to raise standards (Who is criticising Labour's new education bill – and why?, theguardian.com, 29 January). Prof Stephen Gorard at the University of Durham concludes that "academy schools are no better at raising attainment than the (local authority) schools they replaced".

There is evidence that academies have used their freedoms to employ younger and less experienced teaching staff, increasing numbers of whom are unqualified, while diverting money into the pockets of senior management. Furthermore, research by the investigative journalist Warwick Mansell has revealed that the 50 largest academy trusts, which educate the same number of pupils as the 10 largest local authorities, are spending almost three times as much on six-figure salaries for senior managers.

The government is absolutely right to rein in academy freedoms.
Michael Pyke
The Campaign for State Education

● A small but important point in your editorial, which refers to the Tory leader: "Mrs Badenoch's jibe – are Olympians not qualified to teach PE? – was a rhetorical flourish, not a serious point." The answer to such a question, from anyone claiming to understand education, pedagogy or learning should be a firm and unequivocal no. It rests on a simplistic, regrettably widespread, assumption. Brilliance is not evidence of the ability to teach, however gifted an individual may be in the skill in question.
Paul McGilchrist
Cromer, Norfolk

Reinstate youth schemes to take on knife crime

At last, a sensible solution from Martin Kettle to the current crisis of youth misogyny, knife crime, mental ill health and radicalisation (Look beyond Westminster for real ideas after Southport, 30 January). Those of us in the youth and community sector have watched successive governments demolish our excellent universal, statutory service, leaving it hanging by the fragile thread of short-term, problem-focused charity funding.

Isn't it plain to see that social education is fundamental to steering young people towards sociable, conscious and contented lives? While youth work is not a panacea, it offers a curriculum based on understanding adolescence, building positive relationships and bringing out the immense talent and creativity of young people.

Our work involved (and still involves for the remaining workers) actively reaching out to vulnerable, disenchanted, often angry children and young people, and isolated (sometimes just as angry) lone parents and older people. Social education used to be universally free for everyone.

And who will pay? As the old adage goes: £1 in early life saves hundreds later, on prisons and psychiatric care, and prevents devastating human misery. It's time to stop floundering. Bring back the universal, state-funded youth and community service and reinstate the dissolved programmes in colleges, councils and universities.
Dr Annette Rimmer
Manchester

● During Idris Elba's television programme on knife crime, it was hard to watch and learn about all the needless deaths (Catchup TV, 1 February). With youth club funding slashed and high school exclusion, none of this was surprising. The young man who has come under the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence scheme, and was taken in by his favourite football team, has changed his life and moved away from knife crime.

The funding for this scheme runs out soon. When clubs such as Manchester City can pay a certain football player £500,000 a week, isn't it about time a small percentage should be taken to help this sort of programme across the country?
Linda Theobald
London

'Organic duckweed' danger at Heathrow

Anyone who has worked in the rail industry will be familiar with the term "organic duckweed". Roger Ford of Modern Railways magazine coined it to characterise Whitehall opposition to rail electrification. An electric railway is cheaper to run, more reliable, cleaner and quieter. Despite this, the Department for Transport argued against electrification on the ground that some yet-to-be-developed power source, such as ultra-cheap hydrogen from pond algae, might make electric traction redundant. Hence "organic duckweed" as shorthand for successive ministers' faith in implausible solutions that are – always – just over the horizon.

Now a similar approach is being deployed for aviation. The chancellor claims production of sustainable aviation fuels will – sometime, somehow – offset the impact of the extra flights (Report, 27 January). So, I look forward to my first flight powered by organic duckweed. Until then, the government should enhance more down-to-earth transport systems, rather than indulge in flights of fancy at Heathrow airport.
Allan Dare
Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire

Corrections and clarifications

● An article (Minister accepts England and Wales police face staff cuts, 1 February, p8) said that options being explored by Lincolnshire police included "reducing the number of officers by up to 1,000 by 2029". In fact, the potential cut is of 200 officers, from 1,200 to 1,000.

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Stronger together in the Trump tariff war

Well, tariff day has come. There is an absolute, deathly silence emanating from our UK and EU allies. Where are the supporting phone calls from your prime minister to ours? Every word, every gesture will help us resist these inane attacks on our peaceful existence (Trump places 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico, along with 10% on China, 1 February).
Don M Skelton
Calgary, Canada

● The great thing about Trump in action is seeing the kind of rubbish that Nigel Farage would come up with.
Peter Brooker
West Wickham, Kent

● Northern gannets may feature on a new €200 note (Report, 1 February). How ironic. The world's largest colony of northern gannets is on the Bass Rock in regrettably non-euro Scotland.
Veda Franz
Perth

● If the Church of England was a large corporation with so many of its senior managers having to resign, and its systems and structures so clearly failing, the head of the organisation would feel compelled to take responsibility and resign. When will King Charles do the decent thing (Bishop of Liverpool resigns amid misconduct allegations, 1 February)?
John Galloway
London

● Zoe Williams' son is absolutely right when he tells her that all old people look the same to people who are not old (G2, 28 January). At our son's recent 50th celebration, a young waitress came out with the birthday cake, looked around, spotted my 80-year-old brother and placed the cake in front of this real oldie, presumably thinking that 50 must mean the oldest man in the group.
Linda Gresham
Kings Heath, Birmingham



Dada Masilo

Choreographer and dancer who fused ballet and contemporary styles with her African culture

More than a profession, dance was a calling and an innate need for the South African performer and choreographer Dada Masilo. "I'm very miserable when I'm not moving," she said in a 2013 documentary. "I have no stress when I'm dancing. If anyone wants to make me happy, just put me in the studio, put me on stage."

Masilo, who has died unexpectedly after a short illness aged 39, brought happiness as well as provocation to audiences worldwide as she toured her singular works fusing ballet and contemporary dance with her South African culture.

She transformed titles including Swan Lake and Giselle into something vital for their times, not only deconstructing them on a technical level and injecting southern African dance styles, but revoicing them from a contemporary point of view to reflect social issues. Her work touched on war, power, greed, domestic violence and rape.

In Swan Lake (2010) she dealt with gender stereotypes and homophobia, depicting a gay prince in an unhappy marriage. Her feminist Giselle (2017), set in a South African village, was full of superstition, shame and vengeance. A version of The Rite of Spring, called The Sacrifice (2021), centred on grief, pain and healing, drawing on Tswana dance, from Botswana - Masilo had discovered she had Tswana heritage - and was hailed as "deeply moving and astonishingly fresh" by the Observer critic Sarah Crompton.

In 2024 Masilo had begun touring a deconstructed Hamlet, set in urban South Africa, in which she played Ophelia and placed the character at the centre of the story. She also worked with the South African artist William Kentridge and the choreographers Gregory Maqoma and PJ Sabbagha.

Masilo received many awards for her work, including a UK National Dance award in 2020 for Giselle and most recently Italy's Premio Positano Léonide Massine lifetime achievement award and a star on the wall of Soweto theatre to acknowledge her contribution as a Johannesburg artist.

Masilo, centre, in The Sacrifice at Sadler's Wells, London, in 2023. Below, attending the Lyon Biennale, France, in 2012

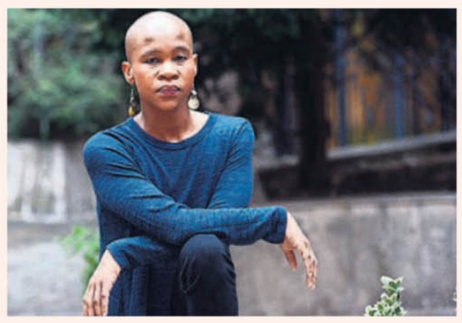
TRISTRAM KENTON/ THE GUARDIAN; PHILIPPE DESMAZES/ AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Her ambition was not to become a choreographer. To dance was her passion - she performed in all her works - but there simply were not any choreographers making the kind of work she wanted to perform. "So I thought, 'Well if no one is doing it, then it has got to be yourself'," she said.

Masilo was a petite, striking presence, with shaven head and spry, quicksilver movement. She spoke modestly but quickly, her energy quietly fizzing. Friends talked of her kindness and her ability to find joy in the smallest things but also her ability to express herself fearlessly, and her artistic choices were bold and brave.

"As a society, we tend to sweep things under the carpet," she explained. "There's this 'shut up and do' mentality because that's the way we've always done things. But now I'm at a stage in my life where I want to go further and, respectfully, ask the deeper questions like 'Why?' and 'What is the meaning behind this?'"

She was born Dikeledi Masilo in Soweto, the daughter of Faith (nee Ngene) and James, and raised by her mother, who owns a daycare centre, alongside her older sister, Ntsiki Xoliswa. In a post on her Instagram account, Masilo described how her aunt had given her the nickname Dada after the vocal refrain of the Crystal Waters song Gypsy Woman which they loved to sing.



"I was miserable living in Europe. It was a real culture shock, but the dance classes were incredible

Masilo's first dance classes were with a local group, the Peacemakers, a project started to give girls something to do while their parents were working. The teacher, Mulalo Nemakula, said of Masilo: "She was the best dancer, she never struggled, because I think it was in her blood ... she had a gift."

At 14, Masilo decided she wanted to make dance her life after seeing the Belgian company Rosas. Her family did not think it a viable career, but in the end her mother gave up trying to convince her otherwise, so single-minded - and clearly talented - was Dada.

She studied at the Dance Factory and the National School of the Arts in Johannesburg, then in 2003 went to train with Alfred Hinkel at Jazzart Dance Theatre in Cape Town. She was then accepted, out of hundreds of applicants, at the prestigious Parts school in Brussels (directed by the Rosas founder Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker).

Masilo did not love Belgium. "I was miserable in Europe. It was a real culture shock, and living there was really hard," she said in 2023. "But the dance classes were incredible." And it was the making of her as an artist, when she had to make her first choreography, a piece about her grief over her aunt's death from Aids, set to The Swan by Saint-Saëns.

All Masilo's dance experiences, especially her love of ballet, fed into her approach. "I wanted to know what was the problem between African dance and classical ballet not coexisting. So I gave myself the challenge of fusing them to see how the body reacts to that kind of fusion," she said.

Masilo was fuelled by artistic investigation but also raw emotion and social justice. Of returning to South Africa in late 2006 after her studies, she said: "It was always my intention to go back home. I need that rage and anger of my own country to feed my creation process." There she was commissioned by the National Arts festival in Grahamstown (now Makhanda), and created her first reinterpretations of classical ballets, Romeo and Juliet in 2008 and Carmen in 2009.

Most of all, Masilo wanted her audience to feel something in response to her work. "Dance is not worth doing if it doesn't have a visceral impact," she posited, and on stage she was putting herself on the line to make that happen. "I want to tell my story with honesty," she told the writer Shirley Ahura. "If I'm not able to be vulnerable on stage, then it just won't translate to the audience. I want the viewer to feel everything - the joy, the pain, the sadness, the grief."

Masilo is survived by her mother and sister.

Lyndsey Winship

Dada (Dikeledi) Masilo, dancer and choreographer, born 21 February 1985; died 29 December 2024

Other lives



Simon Benscher

Ardent advocate for the formation of one united progressive Judaism movement in the UK

My friend Simon Benscher, who has died aged 69 of sepsis, was an important figure in the Liberal Judaism group (now part of Progressive Judaism) in the UK, and an exemplary civil society leader.

A former chair of the organisation, he had an unstinting passion for building connections with more than 40 Liberal Jewish communities and members across Britain, contributing to the development of Progressive Judaism in the country.

Simon played a vital role in strategic discussions between Liberal Judaism (LJ) and the Movement for Reform Judaism in the 2010s, when I was then chair of LJ, that led to an alliance in 2014. He took over from me a year later as chair, and, with characteristic resolve and down-to-earth conviction, became an ardent advocate for the formation of one united progressive Judaism movement for the UK. This goal was achieved in April 2023.

Born in London, Simon was the son of Betty (nee Levy) and Peter Benscher, who were shopkeepers. He went to Sir John Cass primary school (now the Aldgate school), then the secondary school of the same name (now Stepney All Saints). He attended Woodford Liberal (now part of East London and Essex Liberal) synagogue with his family from the age of nine, and became bar mitzvah and was confirmed there.

While still at school, he started working in his parents' shop and business, City Lock and Safe. He joined it after leaving school and took it on with his brother, Paul, after his parents decided to retire, while giving much of his free time to serving the synagogue and the Liberal Judaism movement.

He was chair of council of his synagogue on two separate occasions in the 1990s, and in the mid-2000s was given the honorary role of life president. In 2009 he joined the Liberal Judaism board of national officers, becoming deputy chair from 2011.

Simon stood down as LJ chair in 2020. He continued to visit different Liberal communities, sharing his passion for embedding Judaism in the contemporary world.

In 1976 he married Lois Adams. She survives him, as does his son, Marc, and brother, Paul.

Lucian Hudson

Vallabh Kaviraj

Founder in 1973 of the Asian Express newspaper who withstood racist attacks on his London presses

My father, Vallabh Kaviraj, who has died aged 92, was a pioneering journalist and founder of the Asian Express, one of the first Asian newspapers in English, in 1973. Vallabh was dedicated to serving the growing community in Britain by giving a voice to this often marginalised group.

From the early 1970s he worked hard, publishing his newspaper seven days a week, raising awareness about equality. He was also heavily involved with the Commission for Racial Equality. Even when his printing press in east London was firebombed and subjected to repeated racist attacks from rightwing gangs in the 70s, he remained steadfast in his efforts. The Asian Express, which began in print, moved online in 1999.

Vallabh was born in Bilimora, in India, the son of Bhagwan and Bekhi, who ran their own business trading in building materials. He moved in 1956 to the UK, where he took up business studies at the University of London.

In 1969, during a visit to Bombay (Mumbai), he married Maniben, a teacher, who supported Vallabh as he launched his publishing endeavour - Adarsh Printing Press - while raising two daughters - my sister, Chandrika, and me. In the early 70s the first issues of the Asian Express were produced using metal blocks and an old printing press.

Vallabh was committed to serving the Asian community



in the UK. He was always the first to ask questions at press conferences, seeking answers about uncomfortable issues that would otherwise be swept aside. He supported the Commonwealth Institute and India House and firmly believed in collaboration to address problems of social inequality and injustice.

In 2019 he was awarded the British Empire Medal for his contribution to South Asian media in the UK.

Vallabh cared for Maniben, a stroke survivor, until her death last year. He is survived by Chandrika and me.

Sudha Kaviraj

Christine O'Sullivan

Designer of clothing, especially nightwear, for high street stores including M&S and Topshop

My wife, Christine O'Sullivan, who has died aged 72, was a pattern cutter and designer whose creations were sold by many of the top high street stores, including Marks & Spencer, Topshop, Debenhams and John Lewis, in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

Her main speciality was nightwear for women and children, and she designed the dressing gowns worn on stage by Ian Dury and Jane Horrocks in the 1987 production of the play Road, at the Royal Court theatre in London.

Chris was born in Peckham, south London, to Rene (nee Mapley), a secretary and mental health nurse, and Nick Hilton, a plumber. She went to Thomas More secondary school in Purley, Surrey, before studying design at Croydon College of Art (1969-73).

From there she worked in London for a firm called Saracen as a designer and pattern cutter of ladies' and children's blouses and nightwear, supplying M&S, before moving in 1977 to Banbury in Oxfordshire to perform a similar role for Golden Charm, which supplied other high street stores.

After a year in 1982-83 at Jean Lee, designing and cutting ladies nightwear for Etam, Topshop, Debenhams and John Lewis, she worked for eight years at Courtaulds in London as senior designer for one of their M&S nightwear manufacturers. It was during that time she was asked to design for Road, a commission that came about through a friend who worked with Horrocks.

In 1990 Chris went freelance, mainly working for companies supplying M&S. But as she moved into her 40s she found that companies were favouring younger designers, and by 1995 she was working as a sales assistant at the Banbury branch of M&S, where she was amused to serve customers who were buying her red check pyjama designs.

Outside work, Chris pursued her interest in art and specialised in abstract paintings in acrylic. After gaining a master's degree in fine art at Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education in 2000, she had solo exhibitions at the O3 Gallery in Oxford (2007) and in Bicester (2013), and in 2009 she won the Oxfordshire ArtWeeks ArtWine competition, which led to her entry being displayed on 600 bottles of wine. In 2015 she co-curated a Terry Frost exhibition at Banbury Museum.

Chris lived next-door-but-one to me in Banbury and that is how we first met in 1980. She and I were married in 1987.



She enjoyed yoga and went on a number of retreats abroad, including in India and Crete. Having trained as a yoga teacher, she enjoyed introducing others to the practice she loved.

Despite being extremely fit and a non-smoker, Chris contracted lung cancer. She volunteered to be featured in the All You Need is Lungs campaign to encourage non-smokers and health professionals to develop greater awareness of the symptoms of the disease.

She is survived by me, her father, and her siblings, Tony and Jay.

Sean O'Sullivan



James McMahon

Charismatic journalist whose writing enriched the pages of NME, Gamesmaster and Kerrang!

Music journalism is full of passionate characters, but my friend and former colleague James McMahon, who has died aged 44 after being diagnosed with soft tissue sarcoma (a rare form of cancer), could give them all a run for their money.

He was passionate about the bands he liked - often scrappy, DIY ones with a fanbase you could count on two hands. And he was passionate about how the press should cover them. But he was also passionate about much more than music: Doncaster Rovers FC, zombie movies, Wrestlemania, true crime stories, UFOs, comic books ... the list was long.

James was born in Doncaster to Sue (nee Bowes) and Bill McMahon, an engineer. He went to Armthorpe comprehensive school, then Sunderland University for a media and cultural studies degree in the late 1990s. He stayed there to do a master's (2002), and became heavily involved in the thriving indie scene - his band, Mavis, even earned the honour of being played on John Peel's Radio 1 show.

When NME began to refresh its stable of writers in the early 2000s, James, with his fanzine background, fitted the bill perfectly. His writing, filed under the pen name James Jam, was funny and energetic - and his championing of new, local artists was exactly what the magazine needed.

Some of these bands were clearly never destined for stardom, but others were: James helped his friends the Futureheads break into the mainstream and encouraged a focus on the north-east music scene from which Maxïmo Park and Field Music emerged.

He and I became friends and allies at the magazine - neither of us could quite believe anyone was paying us to do this. After I left, James was put in charge of breaking new bands as "radar editor" and then became the features editor, memorably interviewing the Gossip's Beth Ditto when she appeared naked on the cover. He left the NME in 2011 to work at Gamesmaster magazine for a short while before becoming editor of Kerrang! magazine (2011-17).

James was undoubtedly a complex character. As well as being charismatic, funny and thoughtful, he was useless at timekeeping and could be infuriating. He struggled with his mental health and in 2019 received a diagnosis of obsessive compulsive disorder that helped him understand some of the forces that were holding him back. He credited the community around the disorder with changing his life - and was working on a book about the condition. His wife, Kat Kennedy, an artist manager whom he married in 2018, was another source of much-needed stability.

At the start of the 2010s, at James's behest, I started following Leyton Orient. We bought season tickets and shared one particularly thrilling FA Cup run together. A friend commented how amusing it was that James would seem unfazed meeting musicians riding high in the charts, yet became starstruck in the presence of some journeyman right-back playing in the third tier of the English football league. But that was James.

James's father died in 2022. He is survived by Kat, Sue and his brother, Andrew.

Tim Jonze

Birthdays

Prof Edward Acton, historian, 76; **Jerry Adler**, director and actor, 96; **Peter Allen**, broadcaster, 79; **Prof Robert Allison**, geographer, 64; **Gabrielle Anwar**, actor, 55; **Patrick Bergin**, actor, 74; **Tim Booth**, singer, dancer and actor, 65; **Alice Cooper**, singer, 77; **Oscar De La Hoya**, boxer, 52; **Natalie Imbruglia**, singer and actor, 50; **Stephen Lillie**, diplomat, 59; **Dame Irene Lucas-Hays**, chair, Hays Travel, 71; **Dara Ó Briain**, comedian and broadcaster, 53; **Dame Philippa Russell**, former chair, Standing Commission on Carers, 87; **Lord (Richard) Ryder of Wensum**, former chair, Child Bereavement UK, 76; **Dame Jenny Shipley**, former prime minister of New Zealand, 73; **Prof Sir Steve Smith**, former vice-chancellor and chief executive, Exeter University, 73; **The Right Rev Rachel Treweek**, bishop of Gloucester, 62.

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

2	9	1	3	7	5	4	8	6
5	4	8	6	2	1	7	3	9
7	6	3	4	9	8	1	2	5
6	1	2	9	8	4	3	5	7
3	7	9	2	5	6	8	1	4
4	8	5	7	1	3	9	6	2
1	2	4	5	3	7	6	9	8
8	5	7	1	6	9	2	4	3
9	3	6	8	4	2	5	7	1

Medium

5	7	3	1	9	6	4	8	2
8	2	9	4	3	5	7	6	1
6	1	4	7	2	8	3	5	9
3	6	1	8	5	9	2	4	7
2	9	5	6	4	7	8	1	3
4	8	7	3	1	2	5	9	6
9	4	6	5	7	3	1	2	8
7	5	2	9	8	1	6	3	4
1	3	8	2	6	4	9	7	5

Codeword

P	I	L	O	T	■	F	R	A	Z	Z	L	E
L	■	E	■	A	■	A	■	R	■	I	■	X
E	N	T	I	C	E	D	■	T	O	P	I	C
A	■	■	■	T	■	S	■	F	■	■	■	I
D	W	A	R	F	S	■	P	U	P	P	E	T
S	■	R	■	U	■	A	■	L	■	E	■	I
■	E	M	B	L	E	M	S	■	G	R	I	N
M	■	B	■	■	■	B	■	■	■	J	■	G
O	V	A	L	■	G	I	B	B	O	U	S	■
C	■	N	■	G	■	T	■	O	■	R	■	F
C	U	D	G	E	L	■	P	R	A	Y	E	R
A	■	■	■	L	■	M	■	O	■	■	■	I
S	A	L	S	A	■	A	Q	U	E	O	U	S
I	■	E	■	T	■	K	■	G	■	R	■	K
N	O	I	S	O	M	E	■	H	O	B	B	Y

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,608

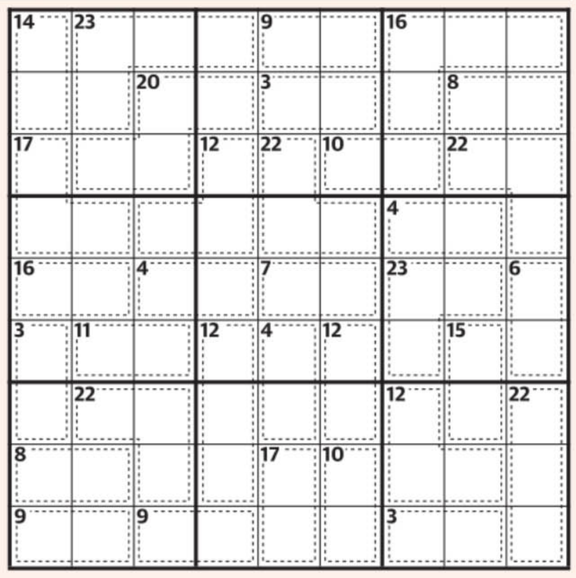
B	O	O	T	L	E	G	■	S	A	T	C	H	M	O
O	■	B	■	I	■	A	■	P	■	E	■	A	■	V
W	A	S	S	A	I	L	■	R	O	M	A	N	C	E
L	■	C	■	N	■	L	■	O	■	P	■	D	■	R
O	P	E	R	A	T	I	N	G	■	T	A	B	L	E
U	■	N	■	■	■	P	■	■	■	F	■	A	■	A
T	W	E	E	D	■	O	F	F	T	A	R	G	E	T
■	■	■	E	■	L	■	A	■	T	■	■	■	■	■
S	U	M	M	A	T	I	O	N	■	E	L	B	O	W
A	■	U	■	T	■	■	■	H	■	■	■	L	■	E
F	I	F	T	H	■	A	M	E	N	D	M	E	N	T
F	■	F	■	W	■	N	■	A	■	R	■	S	■	N
R	O	L	L	I	N	G	■	T	R	I	E	S	T	E
O	■	E	■	S	■	E	■	E	■	E	■	S	■	■
N	A	R	W	H	A	L	■	R	E	R	E	D	O	S

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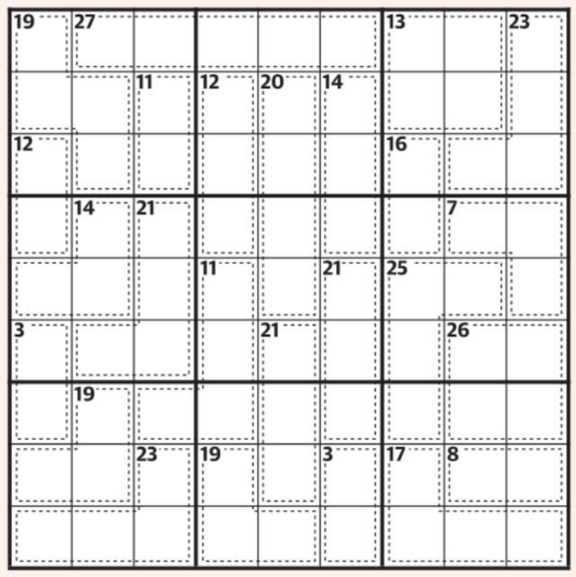
Killer sudoku

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

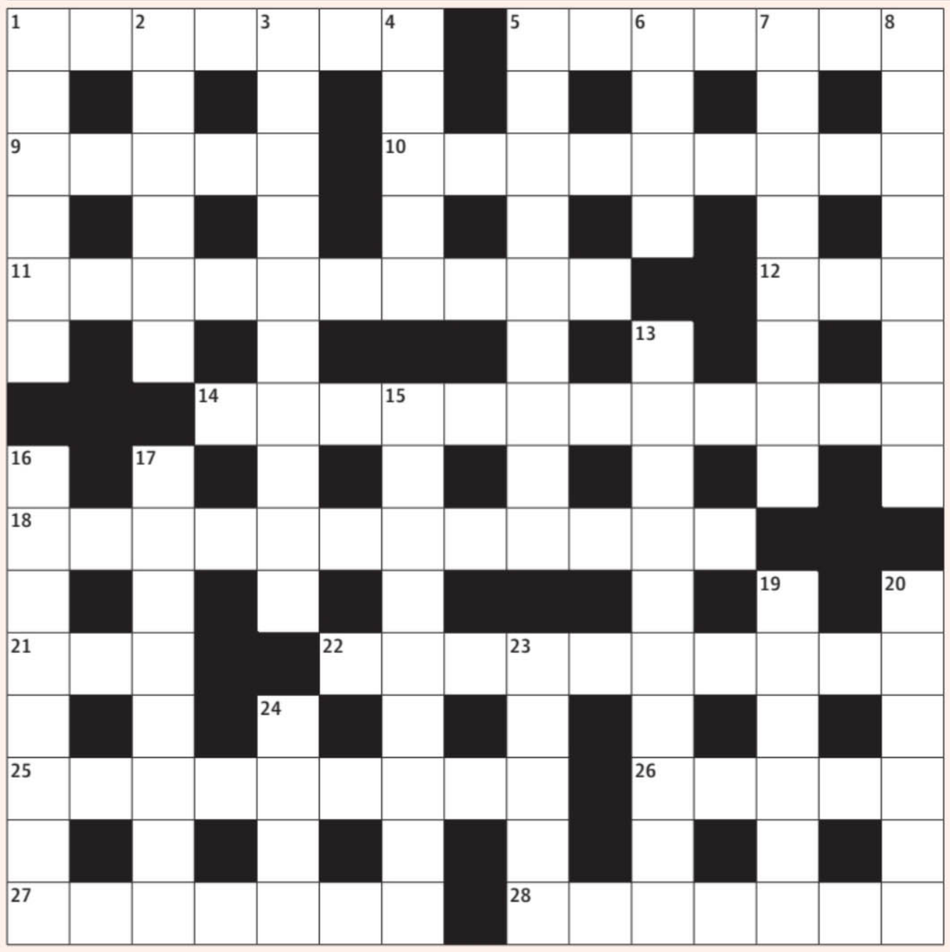
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

19	■	4	■	12	■	12	■	21	■	22	■	19
7	9	2	14	10	■	3	7	15	22	2	8	10
13	■	25	■	20	■	10	■	7	■	20	■	7 A
12	25	25	20	16	8	23	■	5	7	26	8	15
2	■	20	■	■	■	2	■	■	■	12	■	24
23	8	15	8	5 W	8	9	■	8	26	10	23	7
8	■	■	■	8	■	8	■	4	■	20	■	■
9	20	19	4	7	18	■	13	12	20	16	8	19
■	■	15	■	13	■	12	■	6	■	■	■	11
25	14	2	4	8	■	19	10	20	4	2	14	20
23	■	25	■	■	■	17	■	■	■	15	■	17
8	14	25	20	15	■	23	12	19	8	1	20	17
15	■	3	■	12	■	8	■	2	■	12	■	20
24	12	12	14	12	21	18	■	19	1	12	23	15
18	■	26	■	11	■	19	■	19	■	11	■	21

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	5 W	6	7 A	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,609 set by Imogen



Across

1 In the past, cutter put out stern first (4,3)
5 Seeing they help girls, give them a good start (7)
9 Peace and quiet in a number of families (5)
10 Her career progresses by leaps and bounds (9)
11 Cushy number, creating alternative to sauce boat? (5,5)
12 Disgusted expression as one pulls rabbit's head out of sack (3)
14 On march noticing English have left is disheartening (12)
18 About to take pew, shy, after sister's beginning to chant this? (4,8)
21 Secret message doesn't start in verse (3)
22 Value bus lane: travelling regularly eases (10)
25 Soldier near failing, consumed by pity (9)
26 I'm not straight in the feet (5)
27 Bureaucracy offers old advice about where to find water (3,4)
28 One coming from nowhere puts out pictures (7)

Down

1 Out of hospital, clear of depression (6)
2 Some may catch one tampering with fruit tree (6)
3 They may relieve tension, but be sad to do this? (5,5)
4 Shed tears over queen's grave (5)
5 Seek pleasure in a grand house kept up and not empty (9)
6 A city rises - from the ashes? (4)
7 Wrong about a bit of news fodder (8)
8 Time we get off this planet? (5,3)
13 Gloom and doom crushing popular run of programmes (10)
15 Go *en masse* to perform, sticking to the script (2,7)
16 Home-maker and singer (8)
17 Concluded one far-right group was making a mistake (8)
19 Woman's purpose, to pick up dreamy lover (6)
20 Having strong desire, succeeded moving up top (1-5)
23 Marshy land in inlet edges well away from ground (5)
24 Cheese knife takes hearty slice (4)

The Guardian



Broligarchs and bling

Trump 2.0 and our ugly new fashion era

G2

Tuesday 04/02/25

Life & Arts

Zoe Williams
Why Bridget Jones could never be gen Z
page 3



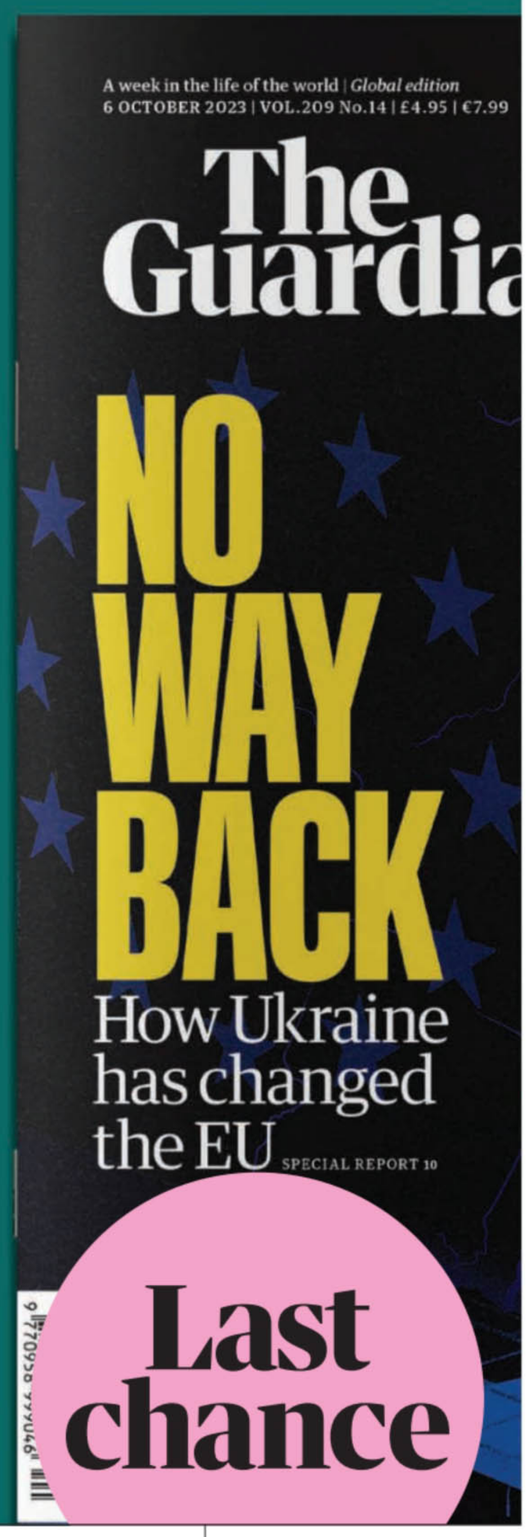
The odd throuple
Nicola Walker and Stephen Mangan on their threesome drama
page 8

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Zoe Williams



Bridget Jones is a welcome reminder of a more optimistic era

It is 29 years since the book Bridget Jones's Diary was published, but the column itself, which ran in the Independent (without a byline for Helen Fielding, although everyone knew it was her) and the Daily Telegraph, is 30 years old this year. That's two years younger than our heroine when she first appears, a patchwork wreck of singleton-anxiety, professional disaster, chardonnay, Silk Cut and weighing scales. And maybe being old enough to remember with clarity anything from 30 years ago predisposes you to think of it affectionately. But, actually, no: some things were better for women, better for young people, better for everyone, in 1995. And some things were worse. To coincide with the fourth film, out on Valentine's Day, here's the audit.

The startling thing about the comic creation was how completely she lacked any kind of self-discipline – always drinking more than she meant to, always weighing more than she intended, always determined not to smoke yet somehow also smoking. At the time, this was a staple for male self-fashioning: lad-mag culture was focused (ironically) on birds, but fuelled by benders. If you woke up somewhere and couldn't remember how you got there, that was social nirvana, the ultimate night out. Ladette culture was built as a mirror to that, though a distorted one, in the sense that you had to be off your head, but you couldn't look sloppy or ill-kempt. You were meant to drink like Johnny Vegas, but look like Kate Moss.

Part of the comedy and originality of Bridget was her honest break with that impossibilism. She was not carefree: she worried about everything, all the time. Although she played hard, she did not work hard. She spoke the language of female emancipation, but it wasn't her mother tongue; she fretted about men, in the romantic sense (why wouldn't they call her?) and the cultural (what is a body-image problem if not the harsh criticism of the patriarchy turned in on oneself?).

> If Bridget messed up at work, then someone would give her a new job

It wasn't so much radical as refreshing, in the way truthfulness always is. But, looking back, Bridget was an optimistic and almost comforting creation, in a way that subsequent similar characters – Fleabag, Charli xcx's Brat – were not. And that was economic: you were confident that Bridget was going to land on her feet, not just romantically, but also professionally. If she messed up at work, they'd either forgive her or someone would give her a new job. She could always make rent. This was slightly before the era of Cool Britannia and Things Can Only Get Better as the anthem of politics, but there was already that confidence that everything was going to be OK. (In hindsight, it was built on debt and end-of-history fantasies.)

When I look at the clean living and self-care for which gen Z is known and compare that with the hedonism and recklessness of Bridget, I can't help but think it's not that they are more risk averse; it's just that the risks are greater. If they fall off the carousel, professionally, there is a chance they might not get back on. Plus, even on the carousel, things are quite tough.

The body image stuff, though, sheesh – Bridget, in the column and the book, gave herself hell. This is your wild and precious life, you want to yell at her, and you're wasting it on the difference between 9 st 10 and 9 st 12. But when Renée Zellweger was cast to play her in the film (the first one was released in 2001), the commentariat uproar validated every moment of anxiety Bridget had ever had: the scrutiny of Zellweger's body was remarkable. What on earth would she have to eat to embody this lovable doughball? Would she ever get her figure back? Was the price too high? On this, society has changed for the better. Few actors in 2025 would take this kind of public policing.

Those aren't reasonable trade-offs, are they? You can be whatever shape you like, but you also have to treat your body like a temple and get used to being precarious. On balance – in shock news from a 51-year-old – 30 years ago, things were better.

Cyclists should steer clear of the culture wars

Last week, I had a surprise coffee with Henk Swarttouw, head of the European Cyclists' Federation. He used to be the Dutch ambassador, and you know what they say about diplomats – lovely manners.

We talked about how cycling had been yoked into the culture wars, totally against the wishes of any cyclist either of us had ever met. Cyclists like me are believed to be implacably against drivers, even though many of us also drive. We've been automatically conscripted into the woke army.

Separately – in London, at least – as cyclists, we're meant to be divided between ourselves: Lycra-clad pedal-pushers ranged against arriviste electric bikers, who wear all the wrong clothes but still manage to be faster. I dug into this not long ago and, for sure, some people occasionally find some other people annoying. But we cannot let the muscle-to-effort ratio blind us to our shared agenda, Swarttouw says, because we all need the same things: safer roads, fewer cars, greener transport networks, fewer emissions, fresher air. He has three bikes: a Brompton, an ebike and a custom-made wooden bike. If anyone could pour oil over troubled waters, it would surely be someone whose stable housed such a variety of machines.

I'm always a fan of looking for the malign agent – who is it, pitting cyclists against other road users and against each other? What dark money has poured into which thinktanks to get this culture war started? Swarttouw is much more emollient (see ex-diplomat, above) and thinks it doesn't matter who started it; we all just have to end it.

Do we really have to learn to love everyone? Even electric scooters? "Oh no," he said. "Those guys are really annoying."



Safer roads benefit everyone, not just cyclists

COVER: BRANDON BELL/REUTERS

Pass notes

3



№ 4,801

Wild hogs

Age: It's been going on for months.
Appearance: Hog wild.
And by wild hogs, you mean …
Ungovernable swine.
As in boorish folk? No, these are actual rogue pigs, doing what rogue pigs do.
Which is what? Rootling up lawns, mostly.
Whereabouts? In and around the village of Garvestone, near Dereham, in Norfolk.
There are wild hogs roaming Norfolk? Not wild in the feral sense. They are thought to be from a nearby pig farm.
That seems less than ideal. The locals would agree. "We just want this to stop," said Colin Williams, a Garvestone resident.
How many hogs are we talking about? The herd has about 100 pigs, but it's only a rowdy subset that escapes and goes about digging up people's lawns.
You mean it's always the same pigs? Hard to say. They don't wear name tags.
Is there a farmer involved? Yes, Trevor Armiger. Villagers think he should be held responsible for the havoc his pigs have wreaked.
He should at least go and round them up. He does, but they just escape again. "What is the point of putting it all back if they're just going to come back again?" says another villager, Gary Law.
What does Armiger say? He says he has kept pigs for 40 years without incident – until someone started cutting his fences in August.
A plot twist! Is there any evidence to support his version of events? His wife, Danielle, claims there is. "We've got proof of someone coming in and letting the pigs out," she says, "but people around here aren't listening to the whole story."
I'm listening to the whole story! Well done for keeping an open mind.
It sounds like a mystery worthy of a tenacious local detective. Are the cops involved? Norfolk police confirmed that they received a report of criminal damage and investigated the fence cutting in January.
So who was it? A scheming land speculator? Saboteurs trying to influence the results of a Norfolk Best Kept Village competition? "All lines of inquiry have been exhausted and the case has been closed," said police.
That's not the outcome I was hoping for. There are a few loose ends to be tied up, admittedly.
Loose ends? The plot is as untidy as a rootled Garvestone garden. The authorities, it must be said, are sty-mied.
Do say: "Someone from the local truffle-hunting club was seen leaving the pub at midnight with wire cutters."
Don't say: "A well-rootled lawn can actually be very attractive."



Esme during the 2020 lockdown

Trapped in Dad's house, I finally got to know him

I went to Shetland for my father's funeral – then the world shut down. Stuck in his past, I began to see our relationship in a completely new light. By **Marianne Brown**

I wanted to reach out and feel the weight of the speckled eggs in my palm. Guillemot eggs: longer than a chicken's and slightly pear-like in form, so that when they roll, they do so in a tight arc, rather than towards the cliff edge. There are plenty of cliffs to roll off in Shetland, a group of wind-scalped islands where the North Atlantic and the North Sea crash together, as well as other wild delights, like the precious mosses and orchids threading through the craggy peat bogs. Just over the hill, a low orange glow served as a reminder of a very different island treasure: Sullom Voe, one of the largest oil and gas terminals in Europe.

I stood by the trestle table staring at the strangely static greenish-blue eggs. A closer look revealed they were not what they seemed; in fact, they were not eggs at all. They were ceramic plates so cleverly designed that the slightly concave base appeared to curve outwards. It took a moment to re-adjust my focus.

The plates were among a small exhibition celebrating the life of my father, the acclaimed potter and proud Shetlander Bill Brown. It was February 2020 and he had died a few weeks before. From cake stands designed like Tunnock's teacake wrappers to a butter dish decorated with the words "I can't believe it's not plastic", each piece brought a bit of his talent and humour into the village hall. While the wind and ice-edged rain slapped the hills around us, safely inside we listened to his favourite fiddle music, shared funny stories and looked at photographs of the man we all knew in different ways. I learned a lot about Dad that day as artists, neighbours, childhood friends and family members mourned his loss.

I had travelled from Devon with my partner, Josh, and four-year-old daughter, Esme, to attend the funeral. It was a journey I hadn't made often; Dad had only returned to the isles of his birth a few years before, following his retirement as head of ceramic design at the Glasgow School of Art. Our physical distance matched an emotional one. My parents split when I was very young and my dad and I were never close. I was raised by my mother in Edinburgh and saw Dad only on weekends and some school holidays. I didn't remember him attending birthdays or many special occasions. Later, I moved abroad and saw him just once a year. There was affection and a distant sense of pride, but no strong sense of attachment.

Shetland was ingrained in Dad's being, from his dialect woven with Scots and Norwegian influences to his fiddle-playing and taste for salty foods. After retiring, he built a house and a pottery on the land once worked by his forebears. He reforested the slopes of the croft with native trees – hazel and blackthorn – and hacked a tattie patch out of the dull green hillside.

But to me Shetland had remained a distant place of school holidays and quick trips to catch up with relatives. I didn't know that, as I stood squinting at the egg plates in the village hall, a novel coronavirus was spreading across

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARIANNE BROWN

the world, which would change the way I viewed the isles for ever.

It was the day after the funeral that Josh and I began to realise how serious the situation was. Italy had just imposed a lockdown and people in Britain were starting to die. We had packed enough in our suitcases to last just a few weeks. Could we risk taking our daughter back to Devon: 14 hours on the ferry and 10 more on the train? We decided just in time.

"Let me be blunt," Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said on the radio. "The stringent restrictions on our normal day-to-day lives that I'm about to set out are difficult and they are unprecedented. They amount effectively to what has been described as a lockdown."

We would face Britain's first lockdown in Kirkhouse, the home Dad had built overlooking the ruins of his grandparents' croft, across the road from his childhood house, which his father had built. At mealtimes, we would look out at the inlet and see the graveyard where his body lay. We would cook in his kitchen, sleep in his bedroom, wash in his shower, water his houseplants and never get around to tiling his bathroom.

It took a while for the reality of our situation to settle in. All around me were Dad's things: books, ornaments, bills and receipts stretching back decades. Even the cup in my hands, spun on a wheel maybe 30 years before, had the imprint of his fingertips on the base. As I turned my head to view the four walls around me, I found myself asking: where, among all this Dad, am I?

Josh and I alternated work and childcare, each taking a stint at the desk in Dad's study or, on the days the weather did not hold us captive indoors, coaxing Esme outside to play in the fields and along the shoreline. Some days, we played in the ruins of the two-roomed house where my great-grandparents had raised their many children. Now, it was a rectangle of loose stones and a weather-worn lintel, a shelter from the scything wind, within which Dad had grown kale, rhubarb and strawberries.

It seemed to me a mirror of his craft, as if he were paying homage to his ancestors, generations of crofters, by remembering their way of life. It was another reminder of his presence: his body and spirit mingled with the soil that nourished the plants at our feet.


Esme and Marianne in 2019

Sometimes Esme was on a mission to find the "bones of her ancestors" in the soil while I fretted about her proximity to the shoogly wall. Mostly, she was content with the shards of pottery she unearthed. The blue and white patterns fitted together, but there weren't enough pieces to guess what it had once been: a plate, a saucer, the rim of a large bowl. Too old to be "Granpa Bill's", these went further back in time. Esme placed them with other items of interest – plastic beads, dried seaweed, a fragment of blue eggshell – in a set of tiny drawers gifted by a relative.

The drawers were among many acts of kindness that sustained us during the months of lockdown. As our days of isolation extended, neighbours and relatives dropped off books, games and toys to keep our daughter entertained, mindful of the fact we had arrived with just two rucksacks between us. In the moments I felt overwhelmed by Dad's presence and absence in the house, it was these small acts of kindness that kept me grounded. Despite our isolation, we had become part of an invisible network holding everyone together.

We unearthed treasures inside the house, too. I found an old cushion cover I had made in primary school and a tape recording of me playing the piano. It was a surprise to find them here among Dad's things, traces of myself that I had forgotten but he had kept tight. A clay dragon, about a foot long, sat among papers and books on a shelf in his study. Every time I took a seat on the swivel chair at the desk, I would cast it a glance and it would look straight back at me, a moment of quiet puzzlement. I was sure we knew each other, but I couldn't remember where we had met before. It wasn't until a few months had passed, and we were beginning to feel like Kirkhouse was our home, that I remembered: long ago, in the ceramics department where Dad worked, I had stood at a stained workbench rolling shapes out of clay – a tail and thumb-printed scales. I had made this dragon and here, next to his desk, Dad had kept it.


Marianne, then six, with her dad

The toys for Esme, the carefully tended plants in the ruined croft house and my childhood offerings to Dad now all appeared twisted together, forming a tapestry of care, past and present. In it, he and I were woven together.

Throughout my life, I had only heard one side of the story and seen Dad as a distant figure. But while I had believed in a story of rejection, I was learning that he had kept parts of me close to him.

The house had two rhythms: one set by the unpredictable energy of a small child; the other by her resting state. It was during the latter that I would find myself, suddenly caught in the stillness, gazing at the spines of the books on Dad's shelves: encyclopedias; dictionaries; books on economics, language, natural history, ancient history, Scottish history; and one that I had given him on the history of the AK-47. I would open them, imagining Dad's hands on the covers, his large, rough fingers teasing apart the thin pages. I felt as if I was inside his mind, pulling out his thoughts and interests, trying to understand.

I flicked through one book on Shetland and Orkney folklore, wondering if there would be anything to share with Esme. Inside were pony-shaped monsters, ghosts and trows, Shetland descendants of the Norse troll. The printed words also conjured a scene from my own past: Dad sitting at my bedside during one of my weekend visits, haltingly translating a book of Norwegian folk tales. Every now and then, he would pause for a few moments over a tricky sentence or two while I waited, tense and impatient, to find out what would happen next.

Standing in his living room decades later, the folklore book in my hand, more memories came back to me: the family sharing trow stories as we picked our way between the hills on a twilight walk – tales of creatures that shrank in size to fit the moulds and cairns of the low islands of Shetland.

Being held captive among Dad's belongings had nurtured in me a new closeness with him and, for the first time, I was able to bring the stories of my childhood to life with Esme. Her favourite, a trow called Rose, became a mentor to her in this new world of peat bogs, tides and cliffs. In our stories, Rose would call on Esme to help her solve the mystery of a poisoned stream, or help defeat an evil oil spill that was spreading towards an eider duck colony. "We must save them!" we cried as we bounced down the steep slope outside the house. Rose became a tool through which to introduce an awareness of the looming catastrophes that could define Esme's life – climate breakdown, species extinction – without causing her to feel overwhelmed. She was our bridge between imagination and reality, a way to navigate this new territory while rooted in a sense of belonging.

We looked out at the view: the ruined crofts, the singular cries of once plentiful birds, the simmering of the grey sea in the bay. Esme reached for my hand and I felt the soft cushion of her palm against my skin, delicate as a guillemot egg. I remembered, long before, the feeling of clutching a large calloused finger in mine.

The Shetland Way by Marianne Brown is published by Borough Press (£16.99). To buy a copy for £15.29, go to guardianbookshop.com

"Shetland was ingrained in Dad's being, from his dialect to his fiddle-playing


Bill Brown, Marianne's father, with Esme in 2019

"I'd seen Dad as a distant figure, but I learned he kept parts of me close to him

Money does not whisper – it shouts

In Trump's second term, it's out with the quiet decorum of the Bidens and in with loud American bling. **Jess Cartner-Morley** explains why we should all be listening

The age of Donald Trump is an assault on the senses. There is a brutish grandeur to a president who, in his heavy, shoulder-padded Brioni suits, looks like a buffalo painted by Holbein. Geopolitics has been warped into a Lord of the Flies fever dream, presided over by a bronze face-painted playground bully. Bedazzled cowboy hats and Maga caps, YMCA and raised fists, speak of a culture with the volume dial turned up. Just as power has been cut free from responsibility, so has prestige been unchained from taste. Trump 2.0 feels like a Space Mountain ride with no safety bar – and it is just getting started.

Fashion speaks loudly in this new world. Two weeks into the second Trump term, power dressing already has a new look. Out with the careful patrician decorum of the Bidens, in with a novel era of American bling. The cultured metropolitan allure of the Obamas is a distant memory, overlaid with bright lights, big hair, vulgar slogans and expensive logos. Elon Musk's preposterous flight jacket. Melania Trump's strange hat. Lauren Sánchez's inauguration-day lingerie. It is, as the kids say, a lot.

It is very easy to trash-talk the Trump look. Easy, but simplistic – and also dangerous. Simplistic, because his image has an undeniable blockbuster appeal. A lot of people – 77,284,118 voters, to be precise – like what they see. Dangerous, because to sneer and sniff at an aesthetic that rips up the establishment rulebook plays directly into Trump's hands.

The Trump look has had a glow-up for its second term. In contrast to the cheerless tone set by a carnage-themed inauguration speech eight years ago, Trump 2.0 arrived in Washington DC setting a newly merry tone. There were more smiles, more celebrities, more beautiful people on board. The messaging was simple, but effective. Big parties with hamburgers and fireworks are fun. Having lots of money is fun. Winning is fun. A century of Hollywood history proves that audiences love men with big muscles and women with bouncy blond hair. At a party packed with wealthy young Trump supporters in Butterworth's restaurant in Washington on the weekend of the swearing in, a 28-year-old conservative influencer, Xaviaer DuRousseau, told New York magazine: "It's Republican Coachella and Donald Trump is our Beyoncé."

The first rule of storytelling is to show, not tell, and that is how Trump and his circle get dressed. In Trump's world, men are men and women are women. Even before he signed an executive order proclaiming that the US government will recognise only two sexes, male and female, his entourage were making this point.

Trump's suits are square and oversized, no dandyish touches of silk pocket squares or discreetly nipped waists, certainly no modish short trouser hems. The broligarchy of Musk, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg are gym-pumped and wear just-jumped-off-the-helicopter aviator shades. The Fox News contributor Kellyanne Conway and Megyn Kelly, the conservative podcaster who described Trump's return to the White House as "an instant utopia", are the frontwomen for a vision of femininity rooted in the California blondes of



(Clockwise from top) Donald Trump, Usha Vance, Ivanka Trump, Melania Trump, Mark Zuckerberg and Lauren Sánchez

The one person who does not jump to Trump's beat is the first lady



Sweet Valley High teen fiction.

There has also been increased demand for the big blowout: scaled up to TV studio proportions, it is bigger and bouncier than the understated sleek bobs of the Democratic era. This is a world in which women never get wrinkles, never go grey and fit into their wedding dresses for ever. One glance at his entourage shows that Trump's anti-woke policy waits for no legislation: it is already strictly enforced.

Zuckerberg calls it "masculine energy", but we can keep calling it the patriarchy. The women in Trump's camp have two dominant looks. There is very demure, ultra-ladylike tailoring with an emphasis on the waist for the daytime and bare-shouldered ballgowns for evening. The duality comes with an unspoken pressure to prioritise getting home to get changed and put hot rollers in your hair over anything else on your to-do list. Both looks have a mid-century, retro flavour.

For the inauguration, Ivanka Trump, the most fluent fashion speaker of the tribe, wore a forest-green skirt suit inspired by a 1950 Dior collection, followed by an evening gown modelled on one made by Hubert de Givenchy for Audrey Hepburn in the 1954 film Sabrina. She even carbon-dated the look with full-length opera gloves. Usha Vance, who after the inauguration ceremony swapped a very covered coquette-pink coat for a strapless dress, followed suit. The rise of the tradwife



aesthetic – a gen Z social media trend for young women to play idealised housewives, cooking elaborate meals for broods of adorable children without ever chipping a nail, getting jam on a white poplin prairie dress or letting a smile drop – suggests this retrograde cosplay may have cross-generational appeal.

Dressing in the age of Trump is also about money. Here, the golden rule is simple: whoever has the gold makes the rules. The billionaires are in charge, so if you want your voice to be heard, you need to *look* rich. Zuckerberg has taken to wearing a $900,000 (£730,000) Greubel Forsey watch. Melania has never made any attempt to tone down her expensive tastes, which include a preference for Christian Louboutin stilettos and a substantial collection of Hermès Birkin bags, which sell for between $30,000 and $90,000.

Such is the power of money that when money goes head to head with ideas about gender, money wins. Sánchez defied every feminine dress code at the inauguration by wearing a lace bra exposed under her Alexander McQueen jacket. The vibe seemed to be: when your fiance is Bezos, you do what you like. No shade on Sánchez, who is entitled to wear what she chooses. But it is interesting to observe the power of money to abruptly shunt the Overton window of what is and isn't acceptable at a state occasion.



The broligarchy … Trump with Elon Musk



Trolling fashionistas … Ivanka in mismatched earrings

Elite dressing has always been about looking rich, but this is a different kind of rich. In Trump's court, money does not whisper in the cashmere soft tones of quiet luxury – it shouts. Old money talks in code, in classy under-the-radar brands such as the Italian houses of Loro Piana and Brunello Cucinelli. In an establishment where power is handed down through generations, it is helpful to look as if you have grown up rich. But Trump's origin story of being a self-made man – fake news, but whatever – is cannily reflected in the clumsiness of his look: too-wide ties, too-dark tan. It is an outsider's idea of how rich men dress. To reinforce this, he has been known to swap the suit for a rubbish collector's hi-vis vest, or a McDonald's apron, both of which he wore on the campaign trail last year.

The one person in Trump's orbit who does not jump to his beat is the first lady, who has confounded expectations with her reluctance to play the trophy wife. Her new official portrait, which shows her in a trouser suit – a bold move in itself – has strong LinkedIn energy, with an enigmatic Melania in power pose behind a mirror-polished desk. (Jill Biden wore a pink dress and smiled in the Rose Garden in hers.) Melania makes no pretence of playing nice. From the "I Really Don't Care, Do U?" jacket to the hat that concealed her face at the inauguration, her clothes are dismissive of, if not openly hostile to, other people.

But what could be more Trumpian than a first lady who tramples all over the accepted wardrobe rules of Washington? Like her husband, Melania sees her position not as one of service, but in terms of what it can do for her. Yet, perhaps accidentally, Melania's blatant disregard for the rules fulfils one of the unofficial functions of first lady, which is to humanise the president. Who can forget the image of Trump gamely attempting to greet his wife in the Capitol and being thwarted by the brim of a hat that made it impossible for him to land a kiss. A hat can assert boundaries as effectively as any fence. Trump never seems more vulnerable than in the presence of Melania.

Ivanka is unique in her ability to shapeshift between Trump's world and that of the liberal elite. She can do GOP Barbie, but she can also fit in at Frieze art fair. In 2017, she effectively trolled the fashion community by wearing a mismatched pair of earrings, as though she was trying to say she was just like them. It has been reported that the symbolism of her Dior inauguration suit, nodding to Paris's postwar New Look, a moment in which a country on the verge of change reached for a nostalgic vision of femininity, was not lost on Ivanka. Her fashion agenda is not to be underestimated.

There is one more style reference to mention here. Trump claims that divine intervention saved him from assassination in Pennsylvania in July. He believes he has been anointed a king by God. His first lady, meanwhile, has made hats a signature look, which is hard to miss as an allusion to royalty, in particular to the long reign of Queen Elizabeth II. The Trumps, who would like this second term to lay the groundwork for a new American dynasty, with their children following them into the Oval Office, are moving toward framing themselves as a royal family. Ivanka's costuming of her family on inauguration day, with her monocolour outfit echoed in the camel outfit of her daughter, had unmistakable overtones of the Cambridges, with 13-year-old Arabella Kushner's caped coat reminiscent of the cape and dress worn by Princess Charlotte at King Charles III's coronation. Fashion speaks loud and clear in the court of Trump. None of us can afford not to be listening.



A self-made man? Trump in a hi-vis vest

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES; BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES; KENNY HOLSTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES; BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL LE BRECHT/ABC; ABACA/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; CARLOS BARRÍA/REUTERS



'If it's the right three people, it can work' ... Doherty, Mangan and Walker in rehearsals

Throuples therapy

Nicola Walker, Stephen Mangan and Erin Doherty are starring in an 'explicit' play about a menage a trois – and they're hoping it will give audiences a few ideas. By **Ryan Gilbey**

Before Nicola Walker and Stephen Mangan appeared on The One Show last year to promote the Christmas special of their BBC divorce drama The Split, they were warned not to go into too much detail about their next project: Mike Bartlett's three-hander Unicorn, in which they play Polly and Nick, a married couple who bring a younger woman called Kate into their relationship.

Walker, joined by her co-stars in an empty London theatre bar, sets the scene: "We were told: 'This is a tea-time show, so don't say anything about the, um, sexual nature of the play.'" The three actors are seated today in a row behind a table, rather as if they are interviewing me for a job. Sandwiched between Walker and Mangan, suitably enough, is Erin Doherty, who starred as Princess Anne in The Crown and will complete the on-stage throuple.

Walker looked unimpressed when The One Show's hosts referred to Unicorn as "racy". What would be a better description? "Provocative," says Mangan. "Or explicit." Precisely *how* explicit remains to be seen. The sex in Cock, Bartlett's 2009 play about a different kind of love triangle, was expressed verbally rather than physically, whereas one stage direction in Unicorn reads: "They have sex." Is it a coincidence that this occurs on page 69 of the script? "I didn't notice that!" shrieks Doherty. Mangan raises an eyebrow. "You've unlocked something there," he says.

Theatre audiences may be reassured, initially, to see Mangan and Walker happily married in the play, after all the turmoil they've gone through together on TV. "No one should expect The Split on stage," Mangan says. "But the fact that Nicola and I are so comfortable together has been helpful. When you're acting with someone new, it can often be like: 'Meet Sue. You two have been married for 25 years. And – *action!*'"

It suits the dynamic of Unicorn that Doherty, who is 32, should feel like an interloper joining this long-established fictional couple in their mid-50s. "I don't have to imagine that situation," she says. "Most of the time in rehearsals, it does feel – not in a horrible way – as if I'm watching something from the outside." Walker adds: "Kate is waiting for Polly and Nick to make up their minds about what they want."

Doherty was familiar with her co-stars, having watching The Split long before she was cast in Unicorn, an admission that causes Walker to turn suddenly in her seat: "You watched The Split?" she asks. Doherty replies: "It's not like I was going to talk to you about it! I don't want to be that guy." Walker shoots back: "Well, I told *you* I'd watched The Crown."

Both shows have huge fanbases, although Doherty tends not to get bothered much in public, perhaps because she looks and sounds nothing like she did while portraying Princess Anne. "And maybe," suggests Walker, "you're not so approachable if you're playing a royal." Mangan, however, has found himself upbraided by fans of The Split. "I get told off a lot for cheating on Nicola Walker," he says. "Well, I did cheat on you," she reminds him. "That's what I always tell them," he replies.



'You're not so approachable' ... Doherty as Princess Anne in The Crown

One difference with Polly and Nick – and it's a crucial element in Unicorn – is that they are still deeply in love after all these years. For them, polyamory is not a sticking plaster but rather a pleasure-seeking mission, as well as an insurance policy against future stasis. The hazards of embarking on their sexual adventure with Kate are weighed up endlessly by the couple, but Unicorn is clear that there can be just as much danger in staying put, closing off options, risking stagnation. "The play isn't saying that the way forward necessarily lies in three people," Mangan explains. "But sometimes, if it's the *right* three people, it can work."

Perhaps there will be a quantifiable Unicorn effect on the audience, with relationships branching out, or breaking up, after exposure to all the ideas in the play. "I'm curious about the reaction," says Mangan. "It's not the usual boy meets girl story." He looks around the empty bar. "I expect this will be quite a lively place in the interval. People will have strong opinions about what they've seen."

Walker remembers that kind of atmosphere at the original London production of David Mamet's male v female campus drama Oleanna at the Royal Court in 1993. "There was that charged feeling in the

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARC BRENNER; BBC/SISTER PICTURES; AP

We don't know if people are going to laugh, be appalled, get angry – or turned on

auditorium," she marvels. "Couples disagreeing about what was going on. It would be interesting if Unicorn turned out to be provocative in that way." Mangan adds: "I have no idea whether people are going to laugh, be appalled or be angry." Walker offers another option: "Or be turned on."

She argues that the play's message reaches far beyond the concept of polyamory: it's about remaining open to new ideas, embracing change rather than clinging to the past. "Nick has this speech about how things can't be different if you lose the capacity to imagine them differently," she says. "I see the play as a love letter to the human imagination: you've got to be able to imagine another world first …"

Mangan takes up the idea: "Then you might be able to achieve the impossible." In Unicorn, that translates not just into sexual and emotional idealism but also the environmental sort. Surprisingly, perhaps, for so lively and funny a piece of writing, the prospect of global catastrophe will be strongly felt on stage – as it was in Bartlett's 2010 play Earthquakes in London, which addressed the climate emergency in a narrative stretching from 1968 to 2525.

But back to the domestic. What has Mangan done to keep things fresh in middle age? "What, in *my* marriage?" he says, looking horrified. Then he ducks the question. "We're lucky as actors because you start again every time you begin a new job. It's like the first day of school when you walk into rehearsals: you're back to that nervous, frightened feeling, wondering if you can do it. You're always taking that exhilarating leap into the dark."

So he doesn't need to seek adventure, like Polly and Nick do, because he finds it at work? "No, I just know it's a luxury for your job to involve exploring relationships and risk-taking and how to not let yourself atrophy. Then you can go away privately and think about what you might do differently in your life."

His character proposes a "truth buffet" but it sounds as if the cast are pigging out on a whole banquet of Bartlett's ideas. "There are days when we've spent hours picking away at one scene, bringing our own experiences to the conversation," says Doherty, practically licking her lips. "That's the nature of brilliant writing: it can be pulled apart and still maintain its genius and integrity. This play is indestructible! You could set it alight, rip it up. You can keep trying to find all the answers but, wonderfully, you'll never get them because it's never one thing. It keeps shifting."

Walker cites one of Polly's misty-eyed speeches, in which she appears to be trundling complacently down memory lane before a hairpin bend brings us up sharp. From big-age-gap relationships in movies to the lot of the straight male in modern society, Bartlett's speciality, says Walker, is "throwing these massive idea-bombs into the audience".

In 2022, Doherty starred in the National Theatre's rain-soaked production of Arthur Miller's The Crucible, her performance "staunch and febrile" according to Variety magazine. Can she see Unicorn's truth buffets and idea-bombs enduring in the way that Miller's have? "Yeah! This play is gonna get done and done and done. People will bring so many different angles, 'What if we do it this way, or flip it that way?'"

Then she stops abruptly, palms flat on the table. "Genuinely, this thought just came into my mind," she says, glancing at her co-stars. "Wouldn't it be amazing to see *other people* do it?"

"Ooh," Walker gasps. "I like that."

"I'd love to see three other actors do this play," Doherty continues.

A pause.

"I mean – not, like, *this week*," says Walker.

"Or even this decade," Mangan adds.

"No," Doherty reassures them. "But one day."

Unicorn is at the Garrick theatre, London, until 26 April



'Well, I did cheat on you' … Mangan and Walker in The Split

Dumb and Dumber

'Jim Carrey advised me to "go all the way" in the toilet scene. Then I sat with my parents at a preview and my dad had his head in his hands – saying, "No, Jeffrey …"'



Bad hair rivals … Jim Carrey, left, and Jeff Daniels in the 1994 comedy

Jeff Daniels
Played Harry

I was bored with drama and wanted to explore comedy, but my agents didn't want me to do the film. They said: "There's a chance Jim Carrey will wipe you off the screen." I said: "Maybe – but not if I work *with* him." And that's what I did. I remember thinking: "It's either going to be such a bad career move I'll never work again, or it just might be funny."

One day Jim came into rehearsals having put a bowl on his head and cut his hair, because that's how his character Lloyd would do it. I thought: "I gotta come up with something." We were staying at a Holiday Inn and I started using the shampoo but with no conditioner. Then I'd towel my hair dry and not comb it. And that was it. I came in and said: "Maybe this is Harry's look?" Everyone agreed. After a couple of months, you could almost break my hair off.

The first morning of shooting had me and Jim up against each other on a little scooter going down mountains. We had helmets on but I had no idea whether Jim could even drive a scooter – and then he started weaving! The scene where I got my tongue stuck to the icy chairlift was bumpy, too. It's one of the few times where you can see me break into laughter because I just knew it was funny.

I was stretching myself comedically. I remember getting ready to shoot the toilet scene, after my character unknowingly drinks laxative-laden tea. Jim asked me: "Hey man, you OK?" I said: "Just cold feet. This is either the beginning of my career or the end of it." He said: "You've gotta go all in man. Go all the way!" He couldn't have been a better cheerleader. Me on that toilet will be the image on my tombstone.

I have a theatre company in Michigan so I put on a preview. I was sat next to my parents and when we got to the toilet scene, my father hung his head in his hands and said: "No, Jeffrey …" Meanwhile 5,000 people fell out of their chairs laughing. The reviews were horrible, though. I still have a scrapbook of 200 newspapers panning the movie and wishing it never existed. Then we were the box office No 1 for six straight weeks. That's when it hit me that we'd done the impossible.

Peter and Bobby Farrelly
Directors

The idea came from John Hughes. He was planning a movie called Ski Nuts about two dumb guys in Aspen. That's all he had. Our agent asked if we wanted to work with him. We pitched the first act of Dumb and Dumber and he literally fell off his chair laughing. "This is it," he said. "And you're directing it."

We wrote the script in three weeks but the studio didn't get back to us. Then John left Universal so the project just sat there for a couple of years until I wrote to John asking if he could ask Universal to give us the rights back. He did but said we could never use his name when selling it. If we did, it was a million-dollar fine. When promoting the movie, we wanted to say it was John Hughes's idea but we didn't have a million dollars. Now, though, we think he'd be happy for people to know the truth.

The movie wouldn't have got made without Jim Carrey. Everybody shot it down. Then someone called and said: "Jim Carrey wants to do it." His career was just taking off. Ace Ventura was a surprise hit and to have him attached to our low-budget movie catapulted us into a higher stratosphere.

We knew Jeff Daniels had a comedic sensibility but the studio didn't see it. Jim read with him and said: "That guy scared the shit out of me. I was on my heels the whole time. That's got to be the guy." We said: "Great. Tell the studio." Jim called and said he wanted Jeff.

Jim relished the fact that these characters were incorrigibly dumb and pushed to make them even dumber. We showed up at his house before shooting and he had that haircut. We were hysterical. He said it was the haircut he had when he was a kid. He'd chipped his tooth as a kid, too. So he had been to the dentist and had them chip the tooth cap.

In the final scene, a bus-full of girls on a national bikini tour offer Harry and Lloyd jobs as oil boys. The studio absolutely wanted them to get on the bus, but Jeff and Jim both said: "We're not getting on that bus. Lloyd and Harry are too dumb. These guys are dumb and they remain dumb." We agreed. It was a risky move. The studio was upset – but the audience loved it.

Interviews by Simon Bland

PHOTOGRAPH: NEW LINE CINEMA/ALLSTAR



Mathilda, Jess and Nathan in Go Back to Where You Came From

Review Go Back to Where You Came From, Channel 4

Rightwing and liberal Britons face a reality-TV migrant journey

★★★☆☆

Lucy Mangan



I'm afraid it's time for another of Channel 4's "social experiments". That's publicly-owned-channel-still-expected-to-resist-rush-to-lowest-common-denominator-TV-speak for what would elsewhere be known as "a new reality show".

Go Back to Where You Came From takes six "opinionated Brits" – "people with strong opinions about immigration" or "racists", depending on whom you listen to out of the cacophony of criticism with which this programme has been greeted – and sends half of them to Syria and the rest to Somalia to experience what people there are fleeing from when they come to Britain, and the perilous journeys they undertake to get here. You can probably intuit that there is much to unpack and query.

But first, let's meet the contestants, which is what they are in all but name – competing, in effect, to undergo the most satisfying emotional and ideological overhaul by the end of the series.

Dave is a chef, lives in Nottingham and suggests lining the coast with landmines to stop small boats crossing. "It's like rats – leave food out, they'll keep coming." Jess, a sports coach from Wales and self-described "only gay in the village", thinks "the people coming over here are rapists, paedophiles … I know my opinion is right and I know people will agree with me." Nathan, a haulage contractor in Barnsley, reckons his children "will be going to work on a fucking camel" if the government doesn't get a grip on immigration. Chloe, a Conservative pundit who has frequently appeared on GB News, knows that "my views are just common sense. In 10 years, Britain's going to be full of people wearing burqas. Islam will have taken over."

Mathilda, a humanitarian podcaster with experience of working in refugee camps, thinks people have been manipulated by rightwing politicians and media and hopes to challenge Dave et al's perceptions. Bushra, a Muslim woman and small-business owner from Surrey, thinks "a large portion of British people are as thick as shit. They are ignorant and … I am not the person you want to be having those ridiculous racist and Islamophobic conversations with." Channel 4 is distancing itself from recent tweets by Bushra calling European Jews "lying scumbags" and asking: "Anyone else questioning everything you were told about Jewish history?" and other similar sentiments.

Life is complicated, isn't it? Can it be simplified – and people educated – by sending contestants to Raqqa and Mogadishu for a few days, then back to Britain via traditional migrant routes? Let's see.

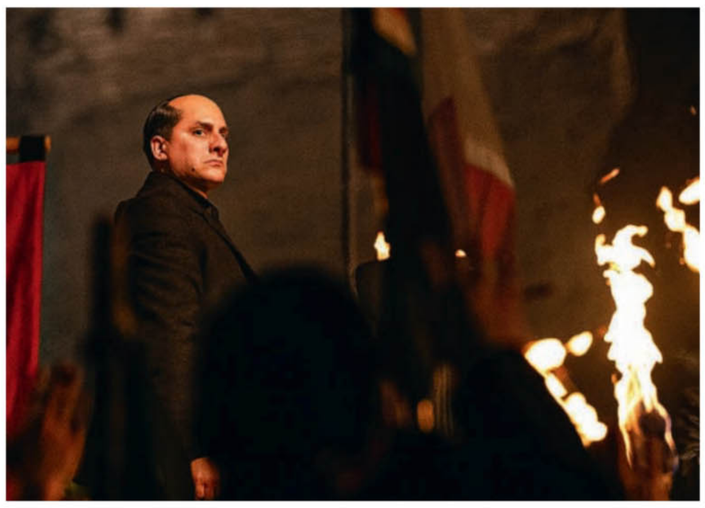
While Nathan foghorns his way round a local marketplace, wondering why a small African country devastated by decades of civil war doesn't have the wherewithal to keep things tidy, we will discuss the two major questions that have arisen so far. One – is Channel 4 empowering racists by giving them a platform? Two, is watching six people playing at being refugees likely to bring enlightenment to them, and to viewers, that counteracts the distastefulness and hint of white-saviourism of it all?

My own feeling, after watching the single episode available for review, is that allowing people to be honest about their opinions in public is better than pretending they don't exist or requiring them to euphemise ridiculously. Anyone who does not live with their head up their arse will have heard rat-type comments and it is stupid and cowardly not to engage with them. There is no point preaching to the choir. If the series comprised six Mathildas, no Daves or Nathans would watch. This way, they might. If they do, they might see something that makes them think anew. If they remain unmoved (Dave does not, by the way) – well, no further harm, no further foul, I guess.

I am less sure about whether a reality show is the best way to attempt any of this. The show depends on the kindness of suffering people to dispel the ignorance and encourage the emotional growth of a handful of westerners whose experiences may or may not have a wider impact. Yet we do not live in a world where rigorous discussion of facts and figures with that same handful would ever occur or have any likely impact.

Complicated indeed. I do long for the clarity of Chloe, who can look at children scavenging rubbish in Raqqa and suggest they are getting "an entrepreneurial kick out of it". That must be nice.

Mussolini: Son of the Century
9pm, Sky Atlantic



Joe Wright (Atonement, Darkest Hour) directs this intriguing fourth-wall-breaking drama about the early years of Benito Mussolini, based on Antonio Scurati's bestselling book. "Follow me, you'll love me, too – you'll become fascists, too," Mussolini (Luca Marinelli, *above*) says to camera, opening the eight-part story of a country surrendering to dictatorship – starting with the birth of fascism in Italy and the former socialist politician, journalist and newspaper founder's rise to power.
Hollie Richardson

The Fear Clinic: Face Your Phobia
8pm, Channel 4
He's back! Devereaux, that is, the guy from last week who was afraid of sausage dogs. As this brutal reality experiment has another go at curing Devereaux's terror of sentient draught excluders, new patients seek to get rid of their aversions to moths and sheep. **Jack Seale**

David Mitchell's Outsiders
9pm, BBC Two
The return of the comedian's fun camping-trip challenge show, with a new intake of happy campers: Maisie Adam, Fatiha El-Ghorri, Darren Harriott, Jessica Hynes, Phil Wang and Joe Wilkinson. First tasks include bug racing and holistic treatments. **HR**

Top Guns: Inside the RAF
9pm, Channel 4
As series two of the high-altitude, high-stakes documentary series opens, an RAF pilot is tasked with escorting a top-secret British spy plane on an intelligence-gathering mission over the Black Sea. That means there's a tense wait for "Vladdie the Baddie's" next move. Plus, squint and you might just mistake the pilot for a young Tom Cruise. **Ellen E Jones**

From
9pm, Sky Max
What is up with Fatima's pregnancy? Her cravings are as monstrous as you'd expect from this puzzle box of a town, while the ultrasound poses more questions than it answers, leaving Ellis (Corteon Moore) unsure whether to protect her or run. Meanwhile, Victor (Scott McCord) has become obsessed with a mute ventriloquist's dummy. **EEJ**

Life and Death Row
9pm, BBC Three
"This is my last interview … Before I came out here, I had to sign paperwork on who gets my body." In 2006, Ramiro Gonzales received the death penalty for kidnapping, raping and murdering his classmate, 18-year-old Bridget Townsend. This is the final part of a series on the run-up to his execution, which his legal team have been appealing against. **HR**

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** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Expert Witness (T) (R) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** The Big Idea Works (T) **2.30** Rick Stein's Food Stories (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** The Travelling Auctioneers (T) **4.30** The Repair Shop on the Road (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Inside the Factory** (T) Paddy McGuinness visits a factory that produces half a million sausage rolls every day.
9.0 **Silent Witness** (T) Nikki and Harriet make an interesting discovery while examining Doug's brain and another gruesome murder leads the team closer to discovering the identity of the shooter.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Boarders** (T) (R) Carol announces she's stopping two of the five scholarships.
11.30 **Boarders** (T) (R) Jaheim tries to make money.
12.15 **The Traitors US** (T) (R) **1.20** Pointless Celebrities (T) (R) **2.05** Weather for the Week Ahead (T) **2.10** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **The Travelling Auctioneers** (T) (R) **7.15** The Repair Shop on the Road (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Digging for Britain (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** The Edge (T) (R) **2.30** The Boss (T) (R) **3.15** Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise (T) (R) **4.15** World's Weirdest Events (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) **6.30** Alison Hammond's Florida Unpacked (T) **7.0** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) **7.30** Nadiya's Fast Flavours (T) (R)

8.0 **Great British Menu** (T) Four chefs from the south-west compete.
9.0 **David Mitchell's Outsiders** (T) With Maisie Adam, Fatiha El-Ghorri, Darren Harriott, Jessica Hynes, Phil Wang and Joe Wilkinson.
9.45 **Live at the Apollo** (T) With Tim Renkow, Janine Harouni and Stuart Goldsmith.

10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **Murder Trial: Girl in the River** (T) (R) Part one of two. The 1996 murder of Caroline Glachan. Three suspects stood accused of killing the 14-year-old, whose body was found in the River Leven.
12.05 **Sign Zone** Dragons' Den (T) (R) **1.05** This Farming Life (T) (R) **2.05** 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 (T) **1.55** Local News (T) **2.0** Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals (T) (R) **2.30** Pictionary (T) **3.0** Lingo (T) **4.0** Deal Or No Deal (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.0** Emmerdale (T) **7.30** Tonight: Supermarkets – How to Save on Your Shop (T)

8.0 **Coronation Street** (T) Max and Toyah's lives hang in the balance.
9.0 **True Crime Presents: Tracking a Serial Killer** (T) A dangerous killer is on the loose and detectives need to act fast when the bodies of two men are found stabbed to death in neighbouring flats in Derby.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **The 1% Club** (T) (R) Quiz gameshow hosted by Lee Mack.
11.45 **Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Celebrity Special** (T) (R)
12.35 **Shop on TV 3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Deal Or No Deal (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.25 **Cheers** (T) (R) **7.45** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) **11.10** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) **5.0** Four in a Bed (T) **5.30** Come Dine With Me (T) **6.0** A Place in the Sun (T) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Fear Clinic: Face Your Phobia** (T) Eighteen-year-old Miriam, factory worker Dave and mathematician Devereaux check into the clinic to treat their phobias.
9.0 **Top Guns: Inside the RAF** (T) New series. Following key characters in the air and on the ground at the RAF's busiest operational airbases.

10.0 **Alone USA** (T) New series.
11.25 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown** (T) (R)
12.25 **Ramsay's Hotel Hell** (T) (R) **1.15** The Last Leg (T) (R) **2.10** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Malmo (T) (R) **2.35** The Great Pottery Throw Down (T) (R) **3.45** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **4.05** Frasier (T) (R) **5.45** Countdown (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.30** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Mystery Island (Nicholas Humphries, 2023) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Our Great Yorkshire Life (T) (R) **7.0** Alan Titchmarsh's Underdog to Superdog (T)

8.0 **Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly** (T) Graeme Hall meets jealous Frenchie Bingo, who is working hard to stop owner Alan from making progress with his love life.
9.0 **Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild** (T) Ben ventures deep into the Sturt Desert to meet one of the most remote families he's ever met.

10.0 **A Killer Makes a Call** (T)
11.30 **Killer at the Crime Scene** (T)
12.30 **Car Pound Cops** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Hotel Chocolat: Unwrapped (T) (R) **3.50** Happy Campers: The Caravan Park (T) (R) **4.40** House Busters (T) (R) **5.05** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.35** Entertainment News on 5 (T) **5.40** Paw Patrol (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **The Architecture the Railways Built** (T) (R) Disused Tube station Down Street in Mayfair. **7.45** The Flying Gardener (T) (R) The Cotswolds.

8.0 **Going Straight** (T) (R) Fletcher gets to know his family.
8.30 **As Time Goes By** (T) (R) Lionel becomes suspicious of Alistair.
9.0 **Charles I: Downfall of a King** (T) (R) How Charles I plotted to arrest John Pym and his colleagues, accusing them of high treason.

10.0 FILM **Storyville: Black Box Diaries** (T) Journalist Shiori Ito investigates her own sexual assault.
11.30 **The Cult Next Door** (T) (R)
12.30 **70 Million Animal Mummies: Egypt's Dark Secret** (T) (R) **1.30** Tutankhamun's Egypt (T) (R) **2.30** The Flying Gardener (T) (R) **2.45** Charles I: Downfall of a King (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Celebrity Race Across the World **9.0** Life and Death Row **9.50** Body on the Beach: What Happened to Annie? **10.20** Body on the Beach: What Happened to Annie? **10.50** Man Like Mobeen **12.0** Such Brave Girls **12.50** Life and Death Row **1.40** Squad Goals: Dorking 'Til I Die **2.40** My Mate's a Bad Date **3.05** Life and Death Row

U&Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.15** Total Wipeout: Freddie & Paddy Takeover **8.0** Special Ops: To Catch a Criminal **9.0** Cop Car Workshop **10.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **11.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **12.0** American Pickers: Best Of **1.0** American Pickers **2.0** Guy's Garage **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein's Secret France **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** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Would I Lie to You? **11.40** Would I Lie to You? **12.20** Mock the Week **1.0** 8 Out of 10 Cats Best Bits **2.0** Jamali Maddix: Follow the Leader **2.45** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **3.30** Meet the Richardsons **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **6.55** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **8.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.0** Young Sheldon **9.30** Young Sheldon **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** Modern Family **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** Young Sheldon **2.30** Young Sheldon **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** The Simpsons **4.30** The Simpsons **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Simpsons **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Modern Family **8.0** The Simpsons **8.30** The Simpsons **9.0** Celebrity Gogglebox **10.0** Gogglebox **11.05** First Dates **12.10** Naked Attraction **1.15** Celebrity Gogglebox **2.20** Gogglebox **3.15** Teen First Dates **4.10** The Simpsons **4.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA

Film4

11.0am FILM 7th Cavalry (1956) **12.35** FILM The Quiet Man (1952) **3.10** FILM Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956) **4.50** FILM 40 Guns to Apache Pass (1967) **6.40** FILM A Good Year (2006) **9.0** FILM Transporter 2 (2005) **10.45** FILM AI: Artificial Intelligence (2001) **1.35** FILM Stage Mother (2020)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.25** World's Funniest Videos **9.55** Secret Crush **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Supermarket Sweep **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Charmed **4.0** Gilmore Girls **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Family Fortunes **8.0** Gordon Ramsay's Food Stars USA **9.0** Love Island: All Stars **10.05** The Sex Lives of College Girls **11.40** Family Guy **12.35** American Dad! **1.05** American Dad! **1.30** Bob's Burgers **2.0** Bob's Burgers **2.25** The Stand Up Sketch Show **2.55** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

6.0am S.W.A.T **8.0** Supergirl **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Manifest **12.0** Supergirl **1.0** S.W.A.T **3.0** NCIS: New Orleans **4.0** MacGyver **5.0** Manifest **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Rob & Romesh Vs Andy Murray **9.0** From **10.0** From **11.0** Brassic **12.0** A League of Their Own **1.0** Brit Cops: Law & Disorder **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** NCIS: New Orleans **4.0** MacGyver **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Anne-Sophie Mutter, John Williams & Friends: A Celebration **8.10** The Joy of Painting **9.10** Tales of the Unexpected **9.35** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Ryan Gosling **12.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2020 **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Landscape Artist of the Year 2025 **3.0** Discovering: John Mills **4.0** Classic Albums **5.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2020 **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **8.0** The Michelangelo Code: Secrets of the Sistine Chapel **10.15** A Midsummer Night's Dream **12.25** Les Misérables and Victor Hugo **1.35** Inside Art: Van Gogh at the Courtauld Gallery **2.0** Landscape Artist of the Year **3.0** Miyazaki: Spirit of Nature **4.35** The Art of Australia **5.50** Sky Arts Ambassador Bursary Shorts

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Fish Town **8.0** The Sopranos **10.10** Billions **12.20** Game of Thrones **1.25** Big Love **3.35** The Sopranos **5.45** Billions **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** Mussolini: Son of the Century **10.15** Lockerbie: A Search for Truth **11.15** Riviera **1.0** The Wire **2.0** Game of Thrones **3.05** Gomorrah **4.0** Fish Town


Black Box Diaries, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. Tom McKinney introduces a Radio 3 New Generation Artist recital from Birmingham and a live concert with the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Corinna Niemeyer. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Giacomo Meyerbeer (2/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape (R) **7.30** Radio 3 in Concert. The BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jakub Hrůša in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Jonathan Biss. Plus, Shostakovich's Symphony No 11, 'The Year 1905'. **9.45** The Essay: Musicians on the Couch (2/5) **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight: BBC Introducing Track from Karma Quartet (R) **12.30** Through the Night: Shostakovich and Mahler from the Lucerne festival.

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** Young Again: Adam Buxton (6/6) **9.30** Inside Health (4/11) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Screenshot: Hitmen (R) **11.45** Book of the Week: Maurice and Maralyn. By Sophie Elmhirst. (2/5) **12.0** News **12.04** Call You and Yours: **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** At Your Own Peril. Lucy Easthope explores the history of risk. (2/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** This Thing of Darkness. By Frances Poet. Drama about Dr Alex Bridges, asking how convicted perpetrators come to terms with their own capacity for violence. Starring Lolita Chakrabarti and Lorn Macdonald. (R) **3.0** The Gift: Taboo (R) **3.30** Thinking Allowed: Touch. How the meaning of touch has changed over the centuries. (3/10) **4.0** Moving Pictures: The War of Troy Tapestry. Cathy FitzGerald takes a detailed look at the War of Troy tapestry. (2/3) **4.30** When It Hits the Fan (19/26) **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather: **6.0** Six O'Clock News **6.30** Alexei Sayle's Imaginary Sandwich Bar: A Monopoly of Violence (R) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Today Debate **8.40** In Touch **9.0** World of Secrets: The Bad Guru. Cat McShane continues her conversations with Miranda who explains how she found herself at a yoga festival in Romania, a two-week-long holiday where food and accommodation is free. (2/8) **9.30** The Bottom Line (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Raiders of the Lost Cask. By Abir Mukherjee. (2/5) **11.0** Uncanny. My Best Friend's Ghost (R) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week Maurice and Maralyn (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As BBC 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 Paul Temple and the Madison Mystery (7/8) **6.30** The Rivals (2/4) **7.0** Spangles 'n' Tights (1/5) **7.30** The Goon Show (4/25) **8.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (4/4) **8.30** Ripley's Game (7/10) **8.45** Eleanor Rising (2/5) **9.0** Jeremy Vine **9.30** A History of the Infinite (7/10) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** A Good Read **10.30** Fantasy Festival (2/3) **11.0** Paul Temple and the Madison Mystery (7/8) **11.30** The Rivals (2/4) **12.0** Spangles 'n' Tights (1/5) **12.30** The Goon Show (4/25) **1.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (4/4) **1.30** Ripley's Game (7/10) **1.45** Eleanor Rising (2/5) **2.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **2.30** Cabin Pressure (5/6) **3.0** The Performer (1/2) **3.45** Solitaire **4.0** A Good Read **4.30** Fantasy Festival (2/3) **5.0** Paul Temple and the Madison Mystery (7/8) **5.30** The Rivals (2/4) **6.0** Spangles 'n' Tights (1/5) **6.30** The Goon Show (4/25) **7.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (4/4) **7.30** Ripley's Game (7/10) **7.45** Eleanor Rising (2/5) **8.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **8.30** Cabin Pressure (5/6) **9.0** The Performer (1/2) **9.45** Solitaire **10.0** Alison Spittle: Petty Please (3/4) **10.30** The Consultants (2/6) **11.0** Clare in the Community (3/6) **11.30** The Curried Goat Show (3/8) **12.0** A Good Read **12.30** Fantasy Festival (2/3) **1.0** Paul Temple and the Madison Mystery (7/8) **1.30** The Rivals (2/4) **2.0** Spangles 'n' Tights (1/5) **2.30** The Goon Show (4/25) **3.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (4/4) **3.30** Ripley's Game (7/10) **3.45** Eleanor Rising (2/5) **4.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **4.30** Cabin Pressure (5/6) **5.0** The Performer (1/2) **5.45** Solitaire

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch



Solution no 17,081

S	T	E	P	P	I	N	G	S	T	O	N	E
	E		R		S		U		R		O	
T	R	I	O		S	T	A	K	E	O	U	T
	M		S		U		N		A		S	
L	I	K	E	L	I	H	O	O	D			
	N				N				L		V	
B	A	D	E	G	G		W	E	E	P	I	E
	L		N				R				R	
			D	I	F	F	I	C	U	L	T	Y
	B		G		O		T		N		U	
C	A	T	A	L	Y	S	T		C	L	O	Y
	R		M		E		E		U		S	
P	E	R	E	G	R	I	N	A	T	I	O	N

Sudoku no 6,781

8	6	2	7	1	9	5	4	3
3	1	4	6	5	2	7	9	8
7	9	5	3	4	8	6	2	1
2	4	1	8	7	5	3	6	9
5	7	8	9	6	3	4	1	2
9	3	6	1	2	4	8	7	5
1	8	3	4	9	7	2	5	6
4	2	9	5	8	6	1	3	7
6	5	7	2	3	1	9	8	4

Word wheel

CONDEMNED

Suguru

4	2	3	1	2	1
3	1	4	5	3	4
2	5	2	1	2	1
1	4	3	5	4	3
2	5	1	2	1	5
1	3	4	3	4	2

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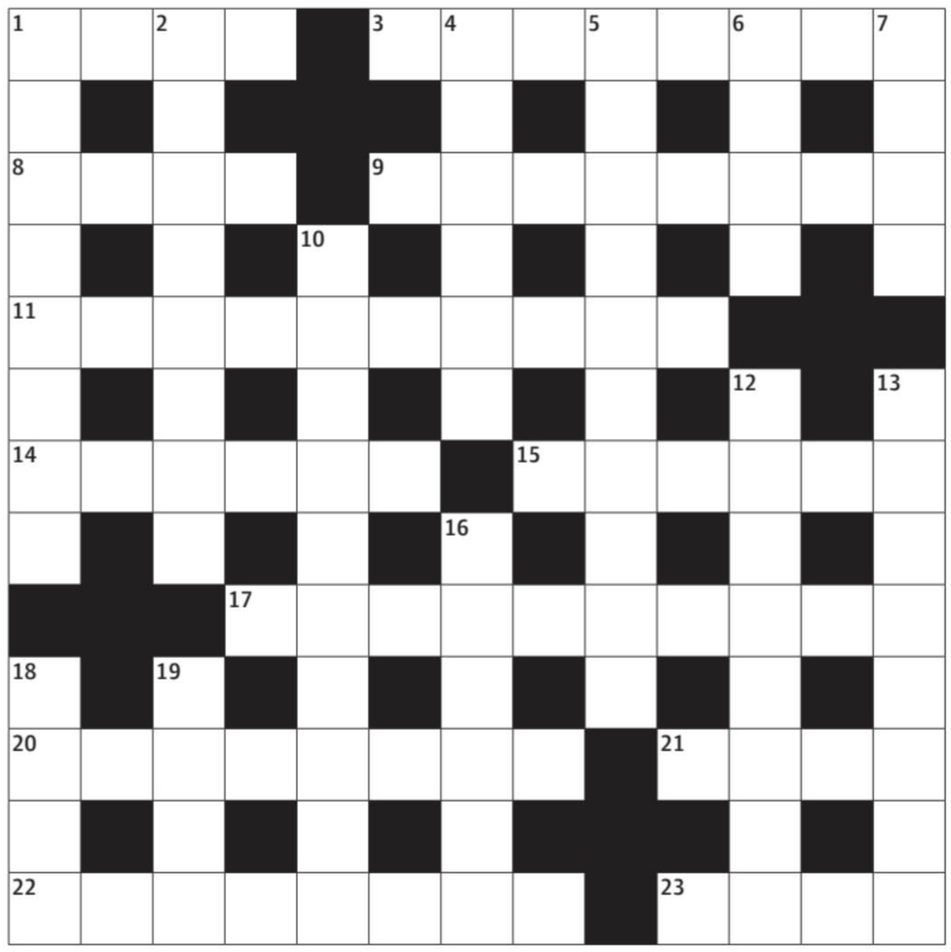
Quick crossword no 17,082

Across

1 Sloped access (4)
3 Fast and furious (8)
8 Say it when you've had enough? (4)
9 Woolf or Wade (8)
11 Mollify (10)
14 One and only (6)
15 (On) tick (6)
17 Grim (10)
20 Judge (8)
21 Uneaten bits of apple (4)
22 Place in society (8)
23 Windsor, for example (4)

Down

1 Screwholder (8)
2 Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, say (8)
4 Rum accompaniment? (6)
5 What to wear in retirement? (10)
6 Manner of speaking (or writing) (4)
7 Government policy adviser (4)
10 Pinkerton or Columbo (10)
12 Extra feature (8)
13 Background to the drama (5,3)
16 Wall painting (6)
18 Door fastening (4)
19 Creative work (4)



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Sudoku no 6,782

Medium. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

9		5	4			1	
	8			2	6		4
1				4		3	
					2	6	
8	2	4					7
		8	9				3
	7		2			9	
			8		7		1

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.

	3		2		
4				4	
			2	5	3
	5	1			

Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words in the grid that start with "up"? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

N	U	P	B	R	A	I	D	M
B	P	E	D	L	O	H	P	U
U	S	E	D	K	N	N	T	P
P	E	D	A	A	E	I	S	L
S	T	I	U	U	R	N	O	O
H	P	S	P	P	N	G	M	A
O	E	P	Q	R	R	Q	P	D
T	E	U	U	I	A	O	U	U
R	K	T	S	G	E	R	O	I
A	P	U	P	H	I	L	L	T
U	U	E	E	T	A	D	P	U

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-38. Good-32. Average-23.



Trivia corner

The New England Patriots jointly hold the record for the most Super Bowl titles – with which team?
a. New York Giants
b. Green Bay Packers
c. Dallas Cowboys
d. Pittsburgh Steelers
Answer top right

