We will end threat of no-deal Brexit, cross-party alliance of MPs tells May

Theresa May faces a concerted campaign of parliamentary warfare from a powerful cross-party alliance of MPs determined to use every lever at their disposal to prevent Britain leaving the EU without a deal in March.

Sir Oliver Letwin, a former loyalist, signalled that he and other senior Tories would defy party whips, repeatedly if necessary, to avoid no deal, as the government faced a humiliating defeat on the finance bill last night. Letwin and 16 other former government ministers were among 20 Conservatives who joined with the home affairs select committee chair, Labour’s Yvette Cooper, and the Labour leadership to pass an anti-no-deal amendment to the finance bill. They defeated the government by 303 votes to 296 – a majority of seven.

The move came after May conceded to senior ministers she was on course to lose next Tuesday’s Brexit vote, as the first cabinet meeting of the new year exposed deep divisions about the best way out of the deadlock. May told her cabinet she would respond swiftly with a statement to the Commons if she failed to win the vote for her deal. But cabinet sources said it was unclear what course she planned to take – and the general mood was of how “boxed in” the government is.

Several pro-remain ministers – including David Gauke, Amber Rudd and Greg Clark – used the meeting to stress the importance of avoiding a no-deal Brexit – with Rudd saying that would have to mean reaching out across the Commons.

Rudd told her colleagues: “More than ever we need to find the centre, reach across the house and find a majority for what will be agreed. Anything will need legislation.”

However, opponents of a softer Brexit, including the leader of the House of Commons, Andrea Leadsom, played down the risks of no deal – and joined May in strongly rejecting the idea that has gained traction in Westminster in recent days of extending the Article 50 process. Leadsom has told friends she would refuse to table the legislation necessary to extend Article 50 – so May would have to sack her if she wished to pursue such a policy.

The comment drew widespread speculation that the singer was a Conservative party supporter. But in a statement yesterday Bush said she felt the need to address the story as it had frequently resurfaced.

Kate Bush has issued a statement clarifying her political beliefs, saying a magazine interview from 2016 “made it seem like I am a Tory supporter, which I want to make clear I am not”.

In the interview with the Canadian magazine Maclean’s, Bush was reported as voicing support for the prime minister, Theresa May, replying to a question about Hillary Clinton and “the fear of women’s power”, the singer had said: “We have a female prime minister here in the UK. I actually really like her and think she’s wonderful. I think it’s the best thing that’s happened to us in a long time.

“She’s a very intelligent woman but I don’t see much to fear. I will say it is great to have a woman in charge of the country. She’s very sensible and I think that’s a good thing at this point.”

The comment drew widespread speculation that the singer was a Conservative party supporter. But in a statement yesterday Bush said she felt the need to address the story as it had frequently resurfaced.

Writing on her website, Bush said the quote was “out of context … it seemed as if the focus went on to the quote rather than the work. It was deeply frustrating.”

She said she had decided not to clarify her words at
The Guardian  Wednesday 9 January 2019

No-deal Brexit would have global impact, warns bank

News

Philip Inman

A no-deal Brexit would have a negative economic impact from Morocco to Morocco, as the shockwaves swept eastwards across Europe and through trade links to north Africa, the World Bank has warned.

In its report – differing from previous studies that have focused on the UK and the 27 other EU member countries – the Washington-based organisation said nations including Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova in the east, and around the Mediterranean from Turkey to Egypt and Morocco would suffer should Britain and the EU fail to agree a deal.

Franziska Ohnsorge, the author of the report, said: “Brexit without a deal is a risk to the UK and to Europe and any region that trades heavily with them. It means that we could see the fall in global growth across Europe that is as far away as Georgia and those in north Africa will be affected.”

The report was the latest in a bank forecast that does not accurately predict economic growth.

The report found that Brexit could lead to a drop in global economic growth in 2019 and 2020, largely in response to slowing growth across the developed world. It said global average growth would fall to 2.9% last year and 2.8% in 2020, after having slipped to 3% in 2018, down from a forecast of 3.1% made in June last year.

The bank warned, in its latest health check on the global economy, of “darker prospecting”, not just from a no-deal Brexit, but from a more aggressive trade war between the US and China and growing political tensions.

Kristalina Georgieva, chief executive of the World Bank, said: “At the beginning of 2018 the global economy was firing on all cylinders, but it lost speed during the year and the ride could get even bumpier in the year ahead. As economic and financial headwinds intensify for emerging and developing countries the world’s progress in reducing extreme poverty could be jeopardised. To keep the momentum, countries need to invest in people, foster inclusive growth and build resilient societies.”

In its forecast the bank urged the US president, Donald Trump, and China’s leader, Xi Jinping, to resolve their trade disputes and avoid a risk of an economic crash equivalent to the 2008 financial crisis.

Ohnsorge said that due to trading uncertainties and volatile commodity markets, with oil prices plummeting since last summer, this year would be the first since 2008 when large parts of the developing world would fail to generate the income needed to reduce poverty rates.
‘Huge resonance today’: Scream print is centrepiece of major Munch exhibition

Haroon Siddique

A rare lithograph of Edvard Munch’s most famous work, The Scream, will feature in the biggest UK exhibition of the artist’s prints in 45 years.

Edvard Munch: Love and Angst, at the British Museum From April, will explore the Norwegian’s expression of complex, often fraught, emotions. At a time when Monet was painting landscapes, Munch was depicting love and desire as well as jealousy, loneliness, anxiety, grief and mental instability — most memorably in The Scream.

The exhibition, which will feature in the show, “drew out his feelings of emotion at the moment that his sister died”, Bartrum said.

She said the painting caused a scandal when it was exhibited in Berlin in 1892, because people were unused to attempts to recreate the pain of the moment of death. The exhibition closed within a week, while at the same time proving popular with the avant-garde.

The British Museum exhibition also includes matrices used to transfer ink on to paper, never before seen in Britain, which will be displayed alongside the corresponding prints.

Bartrum said Munch’s artwork served as a substitute for children — he never had any, partly because he feared they would suffer illness.

Unusually, Munch sought to collect the stones and wooden blocks, usually held by publishers, she said. “Certainly, where these matrices were concerned, he behaved as if they were his family. He wrote anxious letters about them, always trying to track them down.”

While the themes of Munch’s art resonate because of their timeless relevance, Bartrum, with an unsubtle nod to Brexit, said the artist served as an invaluable lesson in the modern age to attempts to recreate the pain of the moment of death. The exhibition closed within a week, while at the same time proving popular with the avant-garde.

The exhibition’s curator, Giulia Bartrum, describing the timeless relevance of The Scream, said: “The emotional impact is incredibly important. Munch was deeply, deeply aware of mental instability, mental illness — a huge subject at the time — and that’s what he was trying to portray. Anything which tries to express the inner workings of the mind … has huge resonance today.”

The Scream will be shown in the Anxiety and Separation section of the exhibition, which will also include a drawing, Despair, itself associated with Munch’s most famous work. Despair shows a figure turned away to look down into the fjords, which Bartrum said showed “perhaps the moment just before [he] felt he heard the scream pass through nature”.

In accompanying text, Munch wrote of the blood red sky, also depicted in The Scream, and how the feeling of the moment resonated around the valley and in his head.

The same section includes two versions of Angst, showing blank white faces streaming down Karl Johans street, Oslo’s busiest street, images Bartrum said would resonate with anyone who has felt lonely in London.

In all, the exhibition features 83 artworks, including 50 prints from Oslo’s Munch museum. Other themes include women, with whom Munch had a series of disastrous relationships, and sickness.

Jealousy depicts the Polish author Stanislaw Przybyszewski in the foreground with a woman, presumed to be the Norwegian writer Dagny Juel, and a man with his back turned behind Przybyszewski, Juel is believed to have had a relationship with Munch before her brief marriage to Przybyszewski.

The artist’s mother died from tuberculosis when he was young and his sister also succumbed to the disease. She said: “He was a really cosmopolitan European figure and I think, in this day and age, that is an important message to convey.”

Edvard Munch: Love and Angst is at the British Museum from 11 April - 21 July
Kim visits Beijing for talks ahead of likely US summit

Kim Jong-un has arrived in Beijing at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, seemingly to coordinate their countries’ approach for a summit with Donald Trump.

The visit by the North Korean ruler, which state media said would last four days, is his fourth time in China in the past year. It comes amid reports of advanced negotiations over a second summit between the North Korean leader and the US president early this year.

Denuclearisation talks between the North and the US have stalled after last year’s landmark meeting in Singapore, but speculation has mounted of a potential second summit between the North Korean leader and the US president early this year.

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Football coach dies in crash on day one of trial for sexual abuse of boys

Steven Morris

A youth football coach and scout has died in a car crash on the day his trial for sexual offences against 11 boys was due to start.

Kit Carson, 75, may have been on his way to Peterborough crown court when his car left the road and crashed into a tree. His body was identified by his wife, Pauline.

Police are examining the circumstances of the crash, which took place on a straight stretch of road about six miles from Caron's home in Cambridge. His trial, which could have lasted up to eight weeks, has been formally discontinued.

Detectives had been investigating Carson since the Guardian broke the football child-abuse scandal in 2016. Carson worked with boys at Peterborough United and Cambridge City and Cambridge United and was credited with launching the careers of a string of star players.

He was arrested in January 2017 and accused of 12 counts of indecent assault and one of causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity. The offences, which he denied, were alleged to have happened between 1978 and 2009. The alleged victims were all under 16.

According to the particulars of the offences, the first assault happened at a hotel in the north of England, while most of the others took place in and around Peterborough.

The incitement offence was said to have happened between February 2008 and February 2009 in Cambridge and involved Carson showing the complainant images of scantily clad women while the boy exercised.

During an investigation by the Guardian before his arrest, former players said that they were touched intimately by Carson; routinely made to strip and exercise so their muscular development could be examined; instructed to wrestle in muddy puddles just in underwear, or to swim naked or massage each other with oil.

One former player, who made complaints about Carson to the police, said: “It was a gateway to success. You did what you were told. If you questioned anything you were unprofessional. He used to say, ‘do you trust me?’

“Only on reflection you see it was wrong. I looked up to him as a role model. You felt if you complained, if you went to your parents, you would be released for being unprofessional.”

Another ex-player who said Carson ordered him to drop his shorts so he could check how he was developing, said his former coach’s death did not give him closure. “This is another sad day in the fight for justice in historical child sexual-abuse cases. It is so difficult to disclose abuse of a sexual nature to start with, and the worry of your account not being believed.

“I get no closure from this now, knowing Kit Carson has not been held accountable for his actions and the impact those actions had throughout the lives of many boys.

“The positive to be taken is that people stood up and were counted, and said yes, this happened to me and it was wrong. I feel that admitting is step one, disclosing is step two, then healing is step three. Once survivors get their head around this news, they can start to heal.”

Carson’s trial had been due to begin on Monday morning but the prosecution asked for it to be adjourned for 24 hours. Yesterday, Jeremy Benson QC, prosecuting, informed the court Carson had died following a crash at about 9.45am on Monday, 15 minutes before the case was listed to begin.

Police said the crash took place at Bottisham, near Cambridge, 40 miles from the court. One theory police were investigating to explain why he was so far from court was that he was confused over the start date of his trial.

A police spokesman said: “Michael Carson [his real name], 75, of Cambridge, is believed to have had a single vehicle collision on the A414 near Bottisham at about 9.45am when it left the road and crashed into a tree. Emergency services attempted to save Mr Carson’s life but he was declared dead at the scene. No other vehicle or person was involved in the collision.”

Carson was the academy director at Peterborough United Football Club from 1993 until 2001 and a number of players he coached there went on to have careers in the Premier League.

He was at Norwich City from 1983 and had connections with other junior teams. Carson was an Irish citizen but had lived in England for many years.

He claimed to have formed the first football school in the country and once said he had gained particular satisfaction from helping develop the skills of boys of Irish background.

Nasa planet-hunting system Tess finds three new planets and six supernovae

Lucy Campbell

Three new planets and six supernovae outside our solar system have been observed by Nasa’s planet-hunting Tess mission in its first three months.

Since it started surveying the sky in July, the MIT-led Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite project has identified 100 candidates, a “super-Earth” that travels around its star every six days, and LHS 544b, a rocky world with an orbit of only 11 hours.

The most recent discovery, an exoplanet named HD 21749b, has the longest orbital period, at 36 days. It orbits a bright, nearby dwarf star about 3,000 light years away in the Reticulum constellation, and is thought to have happened between February 2018 and early 2019.

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Court victory for Salmond as sexual harassment inquiry ruled unlawful

Severin Carroll
Scotland editor

Nicola Sturgeon has defended her government's handling of sexual harassment claims against Alex Salmond after its investigation was thrown out of court.

In a humiliating climbdown, the Scottish government admitted in court yesterday that an inquiry it launched last January into harassment allegations against the former Scottish first minister was unlawful and "tainted by apparent bias."

Lord Pentland, a judge sitting at the specially convened hearing in the court of session in Edinburgh, struck down the government's findings and ordered ministers to pay Salmond's costs.

It emerged in August that senior Scottish government officials had investigated allegations against Salmond by two female civil servants and had then passed on its dossier to Police Scotland, which then launched a separate criminal inquiry into the allegations. Salmond quickly launched a legal challenge. In an unexpected admission yesterday the Scottish government accepted that a key part of the process was mishandled, invalidating its entire investigation.

It had breached its own procedures by appointing an official, Judith MacKinnon, to conduct an apparently independent investigation even though she had already met and counselled both complainants.

Salmond said he had been vindicated by the admission and called for the permanent secretary, Leslie Evans, Scotland's chief civil servant, to resign.

The Scottish government's admission of fault was "an abject surrender," Salmond said. Evans, he added, was responsible for that failure and "should consider her position."

In a statement at Holyrood, Sturgeon rejected Salmond's demands for Evans to stand down. The first minister denied claims from Salmond's lawyers that MacKinnon was guilty of coaching the complainants.

Sturgeon told MSPs that Salmond had lobbied her five times last year over the case, three times in person and twice by telephone. Each time she had said she was unable to intervene.

She said Evans had apologised to both women. They had been badly let down by the outcome of the case, Sturgeon said, which was deeply regrettable. It was essential, she added, that the complaints procedure should be seen to be independent and robust even when powerful people were accused.

Earlier, the court had heard a detailed attack on the Scottish government's handling of the complaints at the very start of the process by Salmond's lawyer, Ronnie Clancy QC.

The government claimed in August that the complaints were first made in January 2018. But Clancy said MacKinnon and three other civil servants, including Evans, had become aware of the allegations from Miss A and Miss B in November 2017, two months before their formal complaints were lodged.

Clancy said MacKinnon had met the two women at the same time as she had been copied into a series of draft versions of the Scottish government's new ministerial complaints code in November 2017, as had Evans and MacKinnon's boss, the Scottish government's director of people, Nicola Richards.

He said those contacts were clear evidence that the process had not been fair or independent.

"Today's settlement has no implications one way or the other for the substance of the complaints."

Nicola Sturgeon
First minister
Rise of children in care pushes 88% of English councils into overspend

Almost nine in 10 local authorities in England overspent on children’s social care in the last financial year as the rising number of children taken into care put extra pressure on budgets.

Analysis by the Guardian and the Local Government Association (LGA) found 93% (388) out of 420 councils responsible for children’s services overspent in 2017-18. Authorities went over budget on child social care by an estimated £807m, by far the highest area of overspend in council budgets. The number of children being taken into care is at a 10-year high. Government data published in November found there were 75,420 looked-after children in England at the end of March 2018, up 4% on the previous year. The number has risen every year since 2008, when it was about 60,000.

The LGA said the support necessary to keep children safe from immediate risk of harm could be extremely expensive, forcing councils to cut or end vital early intervention services that helped to prevent children from entering care in the first place.

The organisation calculated that local authorities faced a £3bn funding gap by 2025 just to maintain current levels of service. It costs about £56,000 a year to look after a child in care.

Stuart Gallimore, the president of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services, said councils had entered a “vicious spiral” as they struggled to fund the increase in children entering the care system amid budget cuts.

“Local authorities didn’t have that £807m just kicking around at the bottom of the money pot, so they’ve either had to go into their reserves to pay for that or they’ve had to take it from other local government services,” he said.

While education suffered the largest decrease in local authority expenditure in the 2017-18 financial year (6.1%, 3.5% lower than in 2016-17), children’s social care had the highest proportional increase, up 4.2% from 2016-17 to £8.8bn.

According to the Office for Budget Responsibility, children’s social care was the single highest area of overspending by local authorities, rising from a total of £60bn in 2011-12 to about £80bn in 2017-18. Other than children’s services, only the categories of “central and cultural related services” and “housing and planning and development” showed overspending in 2017-18, at about £10bn each.

Antoinette Bramble, the chair of the LGA’s children and young people board, said the figures should act as a wake-up call to “the country-wide crisis we are facing in funding services to protect vulnerable children and young people. The fact that the overwhelming majority of councils are now being forced to spend more than they had planned to on children’s social care highlights the urgent need for the government to provide new and long-term significant funding for children’s services.”

Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, said: “Local government budgets have been cut in half, meaning vital early intervention services are lost and support is often only available when a child reaches a point of crisis. The sheer scale of overspending on these statutory services should make it clear to ministers in Whitehall that their funding cuts are simply unsustainable.”

In May, Tory-run Somerset council warned it was at risk of following Northamptonshire council into bankruptcy after large overspends on children’s services. A report found Somerset overspent by about £22m on child protection in the previous two years and was not meeting agreed savings targets.

Another of the many local authorities to have overspent on children’s social care in the last financial year was Rotherham council. The authority overspent on children’s services by £8.3bn in 2017-18 and is projected to do so by £72m in 2018-19.

The number of children in care in the borough has increased from 407 in March 2015 to 662 in November 2018. The children and families minister, Nadhim Zahawi, said: “We want every child to have the best start in life, with the opportunities and the stability to fulfil their potential, which is why we have committed to providing councils up to 2020 for local services including those for children and young people.”

Miliband urges Corbyn to take radical stance on housing crisis

Ed Miliband has called on Jeremy Corbyn to adopt a more radical plan to solve the housing crisis as the former Labour leader launched a national campaign to win backing for a vision of social housing in English history.

Miliband is calling on the public and party leaders to rally behind a national campaign to win backing for a vision of social housing in English history.

Miliband said of Corbyn, the Labour party leader, and the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell: “They need to do more. We want these proposals to be adopted.” Labour responded that its plans were just as ambitious, at least over the next decade.

The campaign, launched yesterday in London, is also being backed by the former Conservative party chair Sayeeda Warsi. Lady Warsi called on the chancellor, Philip Hammond, to consider their argument that the negative impact on people’s lives of the housing crisis warranted spending £225bn on social housing, which they estimated would pay for itself in reduced housing benefit payments, and other economic benefits, within 40 years.

Sofar, the government has responded that it is spending £40bn over the next decade on affordable homes, although this includes more expensive homes than social housing.

Giant ‘fatberg’ discovered in sewers of Devon seaside town

A block of hardened fat, oil and wet wipes longer than six double-decker buses has been discovered in a sewer metres from the sea in a Devon resort town.

It will take eight weeks to cut up and remove the 64-metre “fatberg” from beneath The Esplanade in Sidmouth, according to the local water company.

South West Water is also planning to open a pop-up shop in the town to inform people about the unwanted visitor and to urge them not to “feed” fatbergs by putting fat, oil, grease and wet wipes into the system.

The company’s director of wastewater, Andrew Roantree, said: “It shows how this key environmental issue is not just facing the UK’s cities, but right here in our coastal towns.”

He highlighted the unenviable task facing sewer workers, adding: “It is the largest discovered in our service history and it will take our sewer team around eight weeks to dissect this monster in exceptionally challenging working conditions.”

“Thankfully it has been identified in good time with no risk to bathing waters. If you keep just one new year’s resolution this year, let it be to not pour fats, oil or grease down the drain, or flush wet wipes down the loo. It’s not your pipes on a diet and don’t feed the fatberg.”

South West Water says a fatberg forms when food waste, fat, oil and wet wipes flushed down toilets congeal with fats, oil and grease, gradually forming a hard mass.

The removal, which will be carried out by workers in full breathing apparatus, is to begin next month but could be delayed if there is heavy rain. Nearby businesses will not be affected by the removal and The Esplanade will remain fully accessible.

The fatberg was discovered during routine checks.
We will end the threat of no deal, says cross-party alliance of MPs

underlined parliament’s determination to take control of the next steps in the Brexit process.

Letwin, who gave an emotional speech saying he had almost never rebelled against his party, made it clear that Tuesday’s vote was the first step in a concerted effort by parliament to bind the government’s hands in the run-up to Brexit day. “We will not allow a no-deal exit to occur at the end of March,” he said.

The Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, who had addressed a packed room of MPs, said there is no majority in parliament for crashing out of the EU without an agreement.

The government also confirmed yesterday that there would be five more days of debate on the Brexit deal, starting today, with the Brexit secretary, Steve Barclay, opening the debate. However, the business motion tabled by the government suggested it would in effect be a resumption of the debate that was unexpectedly paused on 10 December, when May conceded the vote at the crunch and parliament will not have the power to stop no deal happening. I think we have a responsibility not to just stand by,”

The cabinet or the country for crashing out of the EU without an agreement. “This is the latest pathetic attempt by pro-EU campaigners,” and “the only one”.

Tory MPs were whipped to vote against the no-deal amendment last night, despite rumours that the government would concede.

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Continued from page 1

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Explained

The final debate and the vote on the deal

What will happen in parliament?

The debate is scheduled to last for five more days, with a final vote on 15 January. The Brexit secretary, Steve Barclay, will open the debate today and the prime minister will close it on the final day, just before the vote. Previously, the government had “themes” for different days, including the economy and the union, but there is no word on whether that will be the case. More than 100 MPs spoke before the vote was pulled last month and many were concerned they would not be permitted to speak again. The government has said it intends MPs to be able to contribute again.

What has changed since the vote was pulled?

Nothing, though Downing Street says negotiations are continuing with the EU. MPs are in the situation of having a new debate while they are unclear about the outcome of those talks. No 10 said restarting the debate before a conclusion had been reached was because of a commitment to hold the vote before 21 January. May told Andrew Marr on Sunday that MPs could expect reassurances on Northern Ireland, the role of parliament in future negotiations; and from the EU “to address the issues that have been raised”.

The prime minister is seeking legally binding reassurances on the backstop, to ensure those customs arrangements to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland would be temporary. It is still unclear what form that assurance could take - EU sources have suggested an “exchange of letters” - or whether that will be enough to reassure hardline Brexeters and her centre-left supply partners, the DUP.

Number 10 has said the sought-after clarification will only be published just before next week’s final vote, and would not emerge before the long-awaited five-day Brexit debate begins today.

Brussels is willing to repeat that the target for achieving a free-trade deal is the end of 2020, which, if achieved, would avoid the need for the unpopular Irish backstop to come into force, but Britain is sceptical that this deadline can be met. The EU will not give ground on any adjustment to the withdrawal agreement itself.

Britain wants the EU to commit to a legally binding target to finalise trade talks by the end of 2021. Britain believes this would allow a realistic amount of time to conclude the free-trade deal and that it would limit the Irish backstop to a year.

The question is whether that coalition is fracturing amid Labour’s reluctance to articulate a position that is clearly anti-Brexit.

A group of students sitting in a Clifton cafe insist they would not vote Labour if there were a general election tomorrow, irritated, they claim, by the party’s equivocations on the issue.

Nicky Tarran, a first-year undergraduate studying French and German, is frustrated that he had been too young to vote in the 2016 referendum. “Everyone in my year group had a political consciousness but we did not have a voice.” While the 18-year-old says British politics is ultimately a choice between the Conservatives and Labour, he cannot bring himself to say he’d vote for the latter at the moment. “I agree that the Labour leadership needs to be more pro-European.” He wants Labour to come out in support of a second referendum.

Not everyone in the group is a Labour supporter, but they are all voters on the left. Amy Heley, a fourth-year undergraduate, says she is active in the pressure group Our Future Our Choice, which supports a second UK referendum on the EU. She says she was “activated by Brexit”. Her arguments are rooted in a sense of disenfranchisement that would be familiar to many older Eurosceptics. “A lot of us can agree that a lot of people are angry about it. We feel the establishment is totally against us.”

Heley, a Green party member, is standing for the party in her home town of Brighton in the local council elections; and that it would be better than no deal. Debbonaire describes Heley as one of Corbyn’s “job-first Brexit is a non-starter – be considered.”

She says she has been more strongly pro Brexit over now but she is uncertain that a second referendum is the answer. “I’ve not seen any signs of a campaign that would win a referendum convincingly, which is what would be required to put the argument to bed.”

Others also wonder if a second referendum is too complex an answer when what they would like is to see Britain remain in the European Union. Means, a former chair of Bristol Labour party, asks whether it would be better to simply revoke article 50 “while we come to terms with it.”

Sam Hickmott, a self-employed gardener who chairs Bristol for Europe, complains that Corbyn’s “job-first Brexit is a non-thing” arguing that you are “either in the EU or out of it and if on the compromise boat as Theresa May or David Davis.”

But Phil Jardine, 31, also in Bristol for Europe, and a member too of the local Labour party, emphasises the party’s leadership dilemma, saying there is “no option which is a good option” because there are so many people elsewhere in Britain who are Labour voters who want out.

Despite the range of views, Debbonaire remains popular in the constituency. Among the students in Clifton and St Paul’s, the equality, liberation and access officer at the university’s students’ union, describes Debbonaire as one of her personal role models and “a listening MP”.

Although a Labour member, 23-year-old Amy Heley answers point-blank refuses to say she would vote for the party tomorrow - the reason she says she is “totally against us”. She attributes the uneasiness with the party’s equivocation over Brexit. “I think what’s going on right now with the Labour leadership is dangerous,” she said. “This is not the party I signed up to, where the people would be listened to.”

Jessica Elgot
Political correspondent

Losing like minds?

Labour puts votes at risk over its Brexit dithering

Dan Sabbath

Bristol West has become, in two short elections, one of Labour’s safest seats in the country. Held by the Liberal Democrats until 2015, its population, with its many students, turned decisively to Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour in 2017, a year after registering the highest anti-Brexit votes for any seat outside London. The MP Thangam Debbonaire represents the constituency with an extraordinary 77.36% majority. Yet she concedes that her margin could “just as easily disappear” since she says she was “activated by Brexit”. Her arguments are rooted in the referendum – be considered. She says she was “activated by Brexit”. Her arguments are rooted in the referendum – be considered.

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Facebook ban on protester in row over harassing of MPs and reporters

Peter Walker
Matthew Weaver

Facebook has deleted the homepage of the most prominent member of a group of “yellow vest” protesters who have harassed and abused MPs who oppose Brexit and journalists in Westminster, as police began a more concerted response to their activities.

After the House of Commons Speaker, John Bercow, wrote to the head of the Metropolitan police to urge action when the Conservative MP Anna Soubry was barracked returning from a television interview on Monday, police greatly outnumbered protesters on Tuesday.

James Goddard, the most prominent of the activists, who model themselves on the French gilets jaunes movement, has livestreamed such confrontations on video as a way of boosting attention for the movement.

However, both his Facebook pages were removed yesterday afternoon, with the company saying it “will not tolerate hate speech on Facebook which creates an environment of intimidation and which may provoke real-world violence”. A Paypal page via which he solicited donations was also taken down.

The Met promised a more robust approach to the group following weeks of action in which they have harassed MPs and reporters around College Green, SW1.

Officers greatly outnumbered protesters on Tuesday.

Bercow wrote to the Met commissioner, Cressida Dick, after the latest abuse of Soubry, asking her to address “as a matter of urgency, a number of incidents of aggressive, threatening and intimidating behaviour towards MPs and journalists” around Westminster.

Speaking to ITV’s Good Morning Britain, Soubry said there was a small group of people “roaming around Westminster intimidating people going about their lawful business”.

She added that she expected a level of criticism and abuse as a member of parliament, but wanted authorities to act when it “crossed the line”.

The Met said: “Police received a third-party report of a public order offence on Monday 7 January, in the area of College Green, SW1. Officers are assessing if any crimes have been committed. There has been no arrest at this stage.”

Goddard yesterday promised to continue the protests. Before the page was deleted, he wrote on Facebook: “If the political class weren’t trying to thwart Brexit, then I wouldn’t have to approach these treacherous MPs. A message to Bercow and his crew: you will never stop me, I’m not afraid of you.”

However, he was not seen outside parliament all day. One of the small group of protesters who were outside said they had been gifted Goddard feared arrest if he arrived.

Separately, the widow of the murdered Labour MP Jo Cox said threats of similar violence were being used to try to “intimidate, coerce and threaten MPs”. Writing for the Guardian, Brendan Cox said: “Newspapers were fueling the ‘tsunami of rage’ that could follow if Brexit was frustrated.”

“MPs are told by national commentators to remember before voting for or against a deal, or for or against a referendum, to remember what happened to Jo. Even some MPs and government ministers were to be using the threat of violence as a warning to others to do their will,” he wrote, adding that MPs and others “should not be cowed by what happened to Jo”.

The Guardian Wednesday 9 January 2019

Yellow vests
Activists tone down protests after outcry

Peter Walker
Political correspondent

So intense was the official reaction after “yellow vest” protesters harassed and verbally abused Conservative MP Anna Soubry outside parliament on Monday, that a day later the few activists who had turned up again were being so low-key they had not even donned their trademark garments.

“They’re in that bag,” said one man, who, like all those present, declined to be identified. “We’ll put them on when there’s more of us.”

The police are after all of us, so we’ve got to be careful.”

With police having promised to respond to any future incidents, six police vans were parked opposite parliament, and officers greatly outnumbered the men, some of whom identified themselves instead with union jack bobble hats.

The outcry has followed weeks of intermittent action by a small, varying and semi-organised group, primarily men, who have borrowed the outfit and tactics of France’s much larger gilets jaunes movement to barrack MPs and journalists seen as opposing Brexit.

In recent weeks they have also blocked Westminster Bridge, shouted sometimes sexist and racist abuse at TV crews, stormed into the offices of a radio station and the Labour party, and held small demonstrations in a series of cities.

Most visible has been James Goddard, a self-styled “activist” with far-right links and a background in anti-Muslim comments.

Goddard, who filmed an incident in December in which he and a group of men called Soubry a traitor and “the side of Adolf Hitler”, has promoted himself by livestreaming his confrontations on Facebook.

However both of his Facebook pages disappeared yesterday, with Goddard tweeting that the company had “silenced” him, and a link to his Paypal donations page also stopped working. He did not appear outside parliament, with one fellow protester saying he feared arrest.

The man said of Goddard: “He turned up about nine months ago. He’s a new kid in town, a normal, working-class boy. Passionate. They claim he’s our leader. But he’s not our leader. There’s no leader.”

According to the man, Goddard started his protests, like some other yellow vest members, in response to a conspiracy theory popular with anti-Muslim activists, linked to a case in which a speeding driver under the influence of drink and drugs killed three teenage boys in west London last January. Jaynes Chudasama was jailed for 11 years.

However, Goddard and other activists have claimed, without evidence, that the deaths were a terrorist attack covered up by police. Like their French counterparts, they have insisted their protest is not violent.

The British far right are attempting to copy the French protests to stir up trouble and harass their opponents

Nick Lowles
Hope Not Hate
the UK yellow vests are opaque about their aims beyond Brexit. “I’ve never been a member of any political party, it’s about justice,” one said.

Another said he was uneasy about Monday’s Soubury incident. “It was a bit over the top,” he said. “All her, ‘I was being prevented from entering parliament’ isn’t true. But if I was there, I wouldn’t be happy with that sort of treatment.”

The group Hope Not Hate said activists were planning protests in Cardiff, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds this weekend, and thinking about targeting pro-remain Labour MPs.

Hope Not Hate’s leader, Nick Griffin linked to a far-right group supported by former BNP leader Nick Griffin called the Liberty Defenders. The group Hope Not Hate said activists had not thought through this no-deal Brexit scenario, Vince Cable has been told.

Portsmouth is preparing to act as a relief port to Dover in the event of serious delays in Calais, but like the Kent town, it cannot accommodate queuing lorries.

The “worst-case scenario” was revealed to Cable, leader of the Liberal Democrats, as he visited Portsmouth to learn of preparations for the UK’s departure from the EU.

He said: “What I am very concerned about is that the government simply hasn’t thought through this no-deal Brexit that they talk about. It is a very amateurish, Dad’s Army approach.”

He told ITV Meridan: “Portsmouth will have to take considerably more lorries. They have to get through quickly, there will be customs checks, there is nowhere to store the lorries, the government is taking no interest in demands that there is additional lorry space. There are plans to close the M3 to use as storage – extreme solutions of that kind.”

The port handles 500 lorries a day compared with the 10,000 that go through Dover.

Mike Sellars, the port’s director, told an ITV reporter that the distance between the freight gates and the motorway network was only 13-lorry lengths and there would no option but to queue trucks on public roads.

He said plans to use nearby land had been jettisoned because the owner, the Ministry of Defence, had refused. “There is an awful lot of infrastructure that needs to be put in place, and the cost, and whether that will be in place by the end of March is another question, and who is going to pay for it,” said Sellars. He said if the main connection between the motorway network and the city was used for queuing it would cause major disruption. “If the M275 motorway is blocked with lorries, this is the main route into the city. It does impact on people getting in and out of the city. It would very quickly impact on the whole of the Portsmouth area.”

Sketch

John Crace

Grayling is the perfect failure, a method loser who should have won countless Oscars

Here’s a thought. If Chris Grayling didn’t exist, would you be able to create him? Would you dare imagine a government minister who was quite that dim and so obviously out of his depth? Or would you fear that if you did, then no one would believe you?

When Theresa May appointed Grayling as transport secretary, she did so in the belief that he was sideling him into a job in which he could do little damage. Put him in charge of the NHS and half the country might have died within a matter of months, but surely the worst he could do at transport was to make a few trains run late or fail to build the odd roundabout outside Kettering.

Wrong. Like all of us, she severely underestimated Grayling’s capacity for failure. He treats falling as a serious piece of living theatre. There are no half measures. He is a method loser. A perfectionist who should have won countless Oscars by now.

From the second he wakes up to the final moments before he falls asleep at night, he dedicates himself to doing everything badly. Not just a bit badly, but completely and utterly uselessly.

He has long since lost the capacity for coherent thought and the only outward sign of sentience is a twitch in his left cheek, and this nervous tic was in evidence well before he was called upon to answer an urgent question into his decision to award a £13.8m contract to a ferry company with no ferries.

The cheek is Grayling’s last remaining centre of intelligent life: when it wobbles, it’s a sure sign he’s in danger. Even though he isn’t aware of it himself.

He expressed surprise that anyone should doubt his ability to plan for a no-deal Brexit. The fact that everything was taking place at the last minute was an indication of just how advanced his preparations were. He even cited the previous day’s abject failure to create a pretend lorry jam as evidence of his success. It’s one thing to humiliate yourself. It’s quite another not to even realise you are doing it.

The shadow transport secretary, Andy McDonald, looked vaguely bemused. What bit of Seaborne Ferries having no ferries, no money and no one other than a pizza menu didn’t Failing Grayling understand? Even the mayor of Ostend had already said the ferry service wouldn’t be allowed into his port. Why had no one ever thought of it?

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Military to dismantle Skripal house as part of nerve agent cleanup

Tracy Daszkiewicz, it told residents that contractors would spend the first month erecting scaffolding to cover the property with a “sealed frame”.

A specialist team will then dismantle and remove the roofs on the house and garage over two weeks. Everything will be wrapped and sealed before being removed from the site, and then the roofs will be replaced, Daszkiewicz said.

It said: “This phase includes the removal of the house roof and garage roof … All materials will be wrapped and sealed on site before being removed safely from the premises.

“Once the covered frame is in place, the deconstruction work is expected to take around two weeks. This specialist work will be carried out by the military team. When that work is completed, contractors will move on site to build a replacement roof for the house and adjoining garage.”

Daszkiewicz said the risk to public health remained low, adding: “The priority is to make sure that the two remaining sites affected by the 2018 incidents are thoroughly cleaned and returned to normal use as soon as possible.”

Sergei Skripal, 67, and his 34-year-old daughter survived the attack, which Theresa May said had “almost certainly” been approved by the Russian state.

DS Nick Bailey, of Wiltshire police, is thought to have come into contact with the toxin in a search of the house.

Dawn Sturgess, 44, fell ill in Amesbury months after the incident and died in hospital in July after coming into contact with a perfume bottle that is believed to have been used in the attack on the Skripals and then discarded.

Her partner, Charlie Rowley, 45, was exposed to the same nerve agent but was treated and discharged.

Two Russian nationals have been accused of travelling to Britain to try to murder Sergei Skripal with novichok. Evidence gathered by intelligence agencies led the government to conclude that the men were officers from the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU.

The two suspects – known by their aliases Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov – were caught on CCTV in Salisbury the day before the attack.

A counterfeit Nina Ricci perfume bottle – which Sturgess handled – is thought to have contained the nerve agent.

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Stansted 15 protesters launch appeal against their terrorism convictions

**Damien Gayle**

Fifteen immigration activists found guilty of a terrorism offence for blocking off a deportation flight from Stansted airport have launched an appeal against their convictions.

After a nine-week trial, the protesters were convicted last month of endangering the safety of an aeroplane, an offence under the 1990 Aviation and Maritime Security Act which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. The verdict – which Amnesty International called a "crushing blow for human rights in the UK" – came after the judge told the jury he had jurisdiction over all evidence put forward by the defendants in support of the defence they acted to stop human rights abuses.

Yesterday, lawyers representing all 15 defendants lodged submissions amounting to around 100 pages in the court of appeal in London. They are arguing that the judge was biased in his summing up of the case, that he should have allowed the defendants to make the defence of necessity, and that he got the law wrong about what the offence means.

They also claim the court did not properly check the attorney general had properly given consent for the terrorism charge to be used against peaceful protesters, and that the judge should have ordered the disclosure of the materials sent to the attorney general when deciding whether to sign it off.

Raj Chada, a partner at Hodge Jones & Allen, who represents the activists, said: "The conviction of the Stansted 15 was a travesty of justice that needs correcting in the appeal courts."

He added: "It is inexplicable how these protesters were charged with this legislation, and even more so that they were found guilty. It is our strongly held belief that charging them with this offence was an abuse of power by the attorney general and the CPS. It is only right and fitting that this wrongful conviction is overturned."

Prosecutors had tried to argue that the charge did not amount to a terrorism offence since it was not detailed in any of the terrorism acts which set out the framework for such crimes. However, research by the defendants has found that it is included as a “convention offence” in the 2006 Terrorism Act. As such, it was a crime to "encourage or glorify" the protest by the 15 defendants, Chada said.

During the trial, the defendants had sought to make the case that the charge had been inappropriately brought, but were again denied the opportunity by Judge Christopher Morgan. In a last-ditch move, their legal team called for the jury to be dismissed after Morgan gave a summing up that they said amounted to a direction to convict.

Helen Brewer, one of the 15, said: “Justice will only be done when we are able to display ‘Justice will be done … when the Home Office is held to account for the danger it puts people in every day’

**Justice will be done … when the Home Office is held to account for the danger it puts people in every day’**

Helen Brewer

One of the 15 protesters

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Bath Abbey to use hot water from Roman baths for green heating system

**Steven Morris**

Work to install eco-friendly heating in Bath Abbey using water originally channelled to the city’s baths by the Romans is beginning.

Contractors are surveying the great Roman drain, which carries steaming water from Bath’s hot springs to the River Avon, as part of a project to use the springs to warm the nearby abbey, which started yesterday.

Every day, 1.1m litres (250,000 gallons) of hot water flow through the Roman baths from the thermal spring located at the heart of the site. A large quantity of this hot water ends up as the Avon via the great Roman drain. When harnessed and converted, the abbey says it could produce 1.5MW of continuous energy to support a 200kW ground-source heat pump system.

Isoenergy, a renewable energy company, will be exploring the great Roman drain to plan how to install heat exchangers as part of the abbey’s £19.3m Footprint refurbishment.

Alix Gilmer, Footprint's project director, said: “The Abbey’s Victorian heating system is sadly outdated, inefficient and expensive to maintain.

“This, combined with the work we’re doing as part of our Footprint project to repair the abbey’s collapsing floor, makes this the ideal time for us to install a new underfloor heating system, and it is a truly exciting way of using Bath’s most famous resource to create sustainable energy.”

Edward Levien, commercial director of Isoenergy, added: “The drain survey marks the first practical step in installing what is one of the world’s first hot spring heating systems. “Our engineers will be taking measurements and planning how the heat exchangers will be installed in the great Roman drain beneath York Street so work can be carried out with minimal disruption to the drain and the road above.”

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Scrap dealer denies knowing gems in ceiling had been stolen

**Press Association**

A wealthy scrap-metal dealer who hid diamonds and other precious gems in his office ceiling has denied handling stolen goods, telling a court he was storing them for an acquaintance and was unaware of their origin.

Charles Matthews, 55, of Virginia Water, Surrey, said he had no idea the haul, which included 50 diamonds and carved emeralds and was worth tens of thousands of pounds, had been stolen. Southwark crown court heard yesterday.

The gems were discovered at London City Metals in east London during a police search in August 2015. They had been stolen from a London jewellers several years previously, the court heard.

The diamonds alone were valued at about £31,000; a sapphire, ruby and diamond-encrusted bracelet was valued at £7,200, while a pair of emerald earrings was estimated at £26,000; the prosecutor, Philip Evans QC, said.

Matthews, known as “Chick”, told jurors he had been given a wooden box in December 2014 for safekeeping by a man called James Tibbs, but was unaware of what was inside. He said he had known Tibbs for more than 15 years and knew he traded in jewels.

Matthews said his company’s safe had broken in January, so he transferred the jewellery into a bag and stashed it in his office ceiling.
Dismay as burglars steal donations and equipment in food bank raid

Amy Walker

Oldham food bank has launched a fundraising campaign to replace goods, including cash donations, food and volunteers’ electronic equipment, stolen in a burglary at its premises. The gofundme page, set up by one of the volunteers, raised more than £1,400 in seven hours through online donations. Money came from people as far away as Switzerland.

David Jones, co-manager at the Trussell Trust-run food bank, said: “I feel aggrieved that somebody targeted a charity, especially one that is part of the community. “This is an Oldham charity – all the volunteers are from Oldham, doing this for Oldham people.”

Two iPads, used to register people in need of fuel vouchers, and a password-protected hard drive containing clients’ data, had been stolen. Tins of chocolates like those given to vulnerable families in Greater Manchester over the Christmas period, jars of coffee, and £200 in cash donations were taken as well. Volunteers discovered the break-in, which happened over the weekend, on Monday. They found paperwork thrown across the floor of the food bank’s office after the raid.

All of the charity’s computers, including those that could be accessed by clients to sign up to universal credit, were left untouched in the break-in. Another two iPads stolen were being used to do a survey with Edinburgh University on the effect of food banks.

The food opened as usual yesterday. On a usual day volunteers give out food parcels, toiletries and clothing to between 10 and 20 clients. The Friday before Christmas the centre gave 74 food vouchers.

Oldham, among the most deprived areas in the UK, was a pilot area for the rollout of universal credit.

Jones said: “Over the last 12 months we’ve seen a massive increase in the number of people we are supporting. It’s not just unemployed universal credit claimants, we’re seeing a lot more people who are in work.”

A spokeswoman for Trussell Trust said break-ins at their food banks did occur but not regularly.

The advertising watchdog has criticised two retailers for “misleading” consumers by describing fashion items made from real animal fur as fake or “faux”.

In two rulings published today, the Advertising Standards Authority said a listing for a pom-pom jumper by online retailer Boohoo and another for a pom-pom headband sold on Amazon by Zacharia Jewellers – both advertised as “faux fur” – had broken rules set by the Committee of Advertising Practice.

The animal welfare charity Humane Society International (HSI) spotted the items in September.

The charity, which wants the sale of fur banned in Britain, sent samples of the products to an independent laboratory, where both were confirmed to be real fur, most likely rabbit.

Consumers should be able to trust the ads they see and hear and they certainly shouldn’t be misled into buying a faux fur product in good conscience only for it to turn out to be from a real animal,” said Miles Lockwood, the ASA’s director of complaints.

“That’s not just misleading, it can also be deeply upsetting. Our rulings serve as an important notice to retailers and the clothing and textile industry about the need for truthfulness … and to get their house in order or face further action.”

The executive director of HSI UK, Claire Bass, added: “These two examples are the latest in a long list of ‘fake faux fur’ items we’ve found for sale, so we hope that the ASA’s rulings will send a strong message to the industry.”

Boohoo said: “We have a strong commitment against the sale of real fur in any of our products. We have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that we are able to adhere to this.” It said the product had been removed from sale and it was investigating the matter internally and with the supplier, “as a matter of priority.”

Zacharia jewellers said it was told when it bought the products in China that they were faux fur. It has taken down the Amazon listing and removed the product from its own website.
Labour MP calls for reforms to bailiff complaints system

Peter Walker
Political correspondent

A Labour MP has urged the government to crack down on rogue bailiffs after a report found few people made formal complaints despite many saying rules had been broken.

Woman who alleges rape by cricketer breaks down during trial

Steven Morris and agency

A woman who was allegedly raped by a professional cricketer broke down in court yesterday after being cross-examined about how she acted during the alleged attack.

Woman who alleges rape by cricketer breaks down during trial

During her evidence, the woman denied that she had felt Hepburn get into bed, woken up, opened her eyes, begun to kiss him and then performed a sex act on him.

The complainant replied: “I was tipsy but well aware of what I was doing.”

After the woman told the court some of the details of what happened on the night were “a bit hazy,” Heeley asked her whether she had remained still during sex with Hepburn.

The woman, giving evidence from behind a curtain, began sobbing and accepted the judge’s offer of a break in the proceedings.

During her evidence, the woman denied that she had felt Hepburn get into bed, woken up, opened her eyes, begun to kiss him and then performed a sex act on him.

Hepburn, of Worcester, denies two counts of rape. The trial continues.

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Open and shut case shows how oysters respond to different phases of the moon

Nicola Davis

The gentle glow of moonlight on water has moved musicians, poets and painters – and molluscs, it turns out. Researchers have discovered the opening and shutting of oysters’ shells appears to be tied to the lunar cycle.

Experts say they have found evidence that oysters not only have a circadian clock and a tidal clock, but are attuned to lunar rhythms.

“It was a surprise to see that there is such an effect of the moonlight,” said Dr Laura Payton, co-author of the research from the University of Oldenburg in Germany, writing in the journal Biology Letters.

Researchers studied 12 Pacific oysters off France over three and a half lunar cycles from the end of 2014. They found the oysters were most open in the buildup to – and presence of - a new moon, and less open as it entered the first quarter and full moon phases. The team said that suggested oysters could sense moonlight, even though it is far less intense than the sun’s rays.

Payton said it was complex, noting that the molluscs appeared to be able to tell whether the moon was waxing or waning; they were generally more open during the third-quarter moon than the first-quarter moon.

However, since the process was introduced as part of changes to the sector in 2014, there have been only 56 complaints made this way, the CA report found, saying the route was “highly inaccessible” and seen as expensive.

People can also complain directly to the debt collection companies involved, or the two trade associations representing the sector, the Civil Enforcement Association and the High Court Enforcement Officers Association.

However, the CAB report cites worries from people involved in such processes that since these are representative organisations, they are not independent.

In extracts of her speech to the debate in Westminster Hall, Reynolds noted the difficulties of this system.

“The police are the only other profession permitted by law to enter your property and seize possessions,” she said. “If you have a complaint against a bailiff, short of taking them to court, there is no meaningful way to seek redress.”
Suspended vice-chancellor launches formal grievance

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

The vice-chancellor of the University of Swansea, who was suspended from his job last November pending an internal inquiry, has launched a formal grievance, complaining he was the victim of “a negligently flawed investigation”.

Prof Richard Davies, in a 10-page grievance letter seen by the Guardian, said he “profundly” denied the allegations against him and intended to fight to clear his name. He also described the devastating impact his suspension – and the way it was conducted – had had on his mental health and wellbeing, and that of his family.

Davies led the university for 15 years during a time when student numbers doubled and the institution moved up the league tables. He was one of four claims of being banned from his family home, the university said Davies had indicated he and his family had moved out of it in the summer of 2018.

In his letter, the vice-chancellor called for his suspension to be withdrawn and the disciplinary process to be postponed pending the outcome of his grievance.

He said he had been “treated appallingly and outrageously” and claimed he was facing “unfounded and disingenuous allegations” and had been suspended “illegitimately and dishonestly”, causing irreversible damage to his reputation and health. A spokesperson for the university, responding to Davies’s allegations, insisted the correct procedures had been followed throughout the investigation and said that appropriate support had been offered to him.

In the letter, Davies said he was given no warning that he was to be suspended. He claimed he was escorted off the campus by the head of security and left “entirely socially isolated”.

Davies said the conditions of his suspension meant he was also banned from unaccompanied access to the university-owned house that had been his family home for 15 years – a move he described as “punitive” and “malicious”. “Being excluded from my own home at the incredibly difficult time immediately after my suspension had a huge effect on my mental health and wellbeing,” he said in the letter.

But the personal consequences for him, he said, were “dwarved” by the potential damage to the institution.

The university has not confirmed the reason for the suspensions, but Davies’s letter detailed an allegation of gross misconduct and an accusation of “having failed to assure appropriate due diligence, governance and systems of control around major projects and the commercial activities of the university”.

Asked about the vice-chancellor’s claims of being banned from his family home, the university said Davies had indicated he and his family had moved out of it in the summer of 2018.

Parents of James Bulger devastated by film sympathetic to toddler’s killers

Andrew Pulver

The parents of James Bulger, the two-year-old boy murdered in Liverpool in 1993, have criticized the makers of a film about the case, which has been shortlisted for an Oscar nomination. Detainment, written and directed by the Irish film-maker Vincent Lambe, is based on transcripts of the police interrogation of Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, who were 10 years old at the time and were subsequently convicted of the murder. It won best short film and special jury award at the Cannes Lions festival in June 2018, and went on to win the grand prize at the Odense film festival in Denmark.

Speaking to the Daily Mirror, Bulger’s father, Ralph, said: “Not once has the maker of this film contacted me or any of James’s family about this film. It has been 26 years since my son was taken and murdered and so I have seen many documentaries and news stories about him. But I have never been so cut up and offended by something that shows so little compassion to James and his family... to make a film so sympathetic to James’s killers is devastating.”

Bulger’s mother, Denise Fergus, in an appearance on the ITV chatshow Loose Women, called for the Oscars to drop the film from its shortlist. She also accused Lambe of exploiting the tragedy. “In my... opinion I think he’s just trying to big his career up. And to do that under someone else’s grief is just unbelievable and unbearable.”

Lambe had previously defended his film during an interview on Good Morning Britain. He said the film “can’t mean to bring any further anguish” to the family. In a statement released in response to Fergus’s appearance on Loose Women, Lambe said the film “had not been made for financial gain”, but defended it as “in no way sympathetic to the killers and does not attempt to make excuses for them”.

The Oscar nominations will be announced on 22 January.

In a second crash so soon after, three people were also seriously injured. Dangerous driving. Several other people were also seriously injured.
Carlos Ghosn has proclaimed his innocence in his first public appearance since the former Nissan chairman was arrested in Japan in November for alleged financial misconduct.

Ghosn, who appeared to have lost weight during his 50 days in detention, told the Tokyo district court in a special hearing yesterday that he had been wrongly accused of underreporting his salary for several years. The 64-year-old was led into court in handcuffs, which were later removed.

“I have always acted with integrity and have never been accused of any wrongdoing in my several-decade professional career. I have been wrongly accused and unfairly detained based on meritless and unsubstantiated accusations,” he told the court.

He added: “Contrary to the accusations made by the prosecutors, I never received any compensation from Nissan that was not disclosed, nor did I ever enter into any binding contract with Nissan to be paid a fixed amount that was not disclosed.”

His lawyer had demanded the court justify his client’s continued detention over a case that has shaken the Japanese carmaker’s alliance with Renault and prompted criticism of Japan’s treatment of suspects.

Ghosn was first arrested on 19 November and later charged on suspicion of underreporting his salary by 5bn yen (£34.5m) over five years until 2016 — allegedly to avoid accusations from Nissan staff that he was overpaid. He denies the allegations.

He has since been rearrested twice — but not charged — over allegations that he continued to file false pay reports and had transferred personal investment losses of ¥1.85bn to Nissan.

Yesterday’s hearing does not mark the start of Ghosn’s trial nor will it have an impact on his case, legal experts say.

His long stay in a tiny, freezing cell at a Tokyo detention centre has drawn international criticism of Japan’s “hostage justice”, which allows prosecutors to rearrest suspects several times over different allegations and to question them for up to eight hours a day without a lawyer present. His latest detention expires on Friday.

Ghosn’s court appearance attracted huge media attention, with cameras ranged along the streets outside. More than 1,000 people had queued to draw lots for the 14 public gallery seats.

The Frenchman was sacked as Nissan’s chairman soon after his arrest but kept on as head of Renault. The scandal has exposed differences between the French carmaker and its partners in Japan over Ghosn’s alleged conduct that some industry observers say could threaten the alliance.

Nissan executives were said to be unhappy about his plans to strengthen the firm’s ties with Renault.
A new report from Oxfam titled Vulnerable and Abandoned highlights the failure of the authorities at the Moria camp, where nearly 5,000 people live, to identify vulnerable refugees who are eligible for help.

Since the resignation in November of the last government-appointed doctor designated to make assessments of asylum seekers’ wellbeing, Oxfam claims they failed to take place for “at least a month” at Moria, which was home to three times the number of people it was designed to house at some stages last year.

Oxfam warns that “vulnerable people including survivors of torture and sexual violence are being housed in unsafe areas … pregnant women and mothers with newborns are left sleeping in tents and unaccompanied children, wrongly registered as adults, have been placed in detention.”

Mothers are said to have been sent away from hospital to live in a tent as Oxfam condemns EU as refugees face ‘inhumane’ treatment at Lesbos camp

Daniel Boffey Brussels
Helena Smith Athens

The EU has been condemned over the conditions in Greece’s largest refugee camp, where Oxfam reports women are having to wear nappies at night for fear of leaving their tents.

The British-based NGO details what it describes as the increasingly dangerous state of the EU-sponsored Moria camp on the island of Lesbos, where a 24-year-old man from Cameroon was found dead yesterday as temperatures plunged below zero.

Under a deal agreed between the EU and Turkey in March 2016 to stem the influx of people into the continent, refugees seeking asylum on the Greek islands have been forbidden from leaving “hotspot” camps to travel to the mainland.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European commission, has hailed the deal as a success for thwarting smuggling gangs and reducing migratory flows. But, as a result, about 15,000 men, women and children are stranded on Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Samos and Leros, the islands closest to Turkey’s shores.
Erdogan insists bases be handed over as US rows back on Syria pull-out

Martin Chulov
Middle East correspondent

Turkey has asked Washington to hand over US bases in Syria as the Trump administration appeared to reverse plans to withdraw from the country’s north-east yesterday, jeopardising Ankara’s plans to launch a military operation targeting Kurdish groups. The fresh row between the two NATO allies broke out as the US national security adviser, John Bolton, visited Ankara to row back on a surprise announcement by Donald Trump in December that US forces would leave Syria imminently, abandoning Kurdish proxies who had led its ground war against Islamic State. Turkey views those Kurdish groups as mortal foes fighting for autonomy.

Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a scathing speech to parliament delivered while Bolton was still in the Turkish capital, said the US envoy had “made a serious mistake” and that Turkey would never agree to a compromise that protected the Kurdish militia, the YPG, whose members helped a US-led coalition push Isis out of Syria.

Due to a lack of staff, many people, who arrive now in Lesvos have their first asylum interview scheduled for 2020,” Oxfam reports.

For some, open fires are reportedly the only way to keep warm in the winter. The burning of plastic bags and bottles is said to create a “dangerous, smoky, acidic atmosphere”. Three asylum seekers died of carbon monoxide poisoning in the camp in January 2017 while using makeshift stoves.

Since September, around 11,000 asylum seekers have been transferred to hotels and apartments on the mainland in an EU-funded scheme overseen by UNHCR.

“The efforts have been intensified to transfer people and Moria’s population has fallen below 5,000 for the first time since April last year, it is still twice over capacity,” said Stella Nanou, a spokesperson for the agency in Athens. “There are more people, vulnerable people, families and children, living in totally unsuitable conditions in the camp.”

A commission spokesman said it had made €289m (£260m) available to Greece to “support migration management” and was “following the situation on the Greek islands closely” as the weather deteriorated.

Child detainees ‘tortured in Iraq to confess to Isis links’

Peter Beaumont

Kurdish security forces in Erbil, in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, are continuing to torture children to make them confess to alleged affiliation with Isis. The boys interviewed by HRW allege the torture went on for years on the camps, where people live in tents without hot water and electricity even in the harsh winters.

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Far-right German MP badly beaten by group of masked attackers

Kate Connolly
Berlin

A leading politician from Germany’s far-right populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has been seriously injured by masked assailants, who beat him unconscious.

Police have described the attack on Frank Magnitz, 66, leader of the AfD in the northern German city of Bremen, as politically motivated.

Magnitz was almost beaten to death, according to the party’s federal chairman, Jörg Meuthen, who tweeted a photograph of the unconscious MP with what appeared to be a deep gash to the head and a bruised face.

Alexander Gauland, a co-leader of the AfD, condemned the attack, which took place on Monday evening, as a “cowardly, bloody deed”.

Alice Weidel, the party’s leader in Berlin, who was reportedly injured by masked assailants, who beat her unconscious.

Police are looking for three people suspected of having carried out the attack and have appealed for witnesses. They said they had little doubt towards the far-rightwing party “on a daily basis”.

Police are looking for three people suspected of having carried out the attack and have appealed for witnesses. They said they had little doubt.

Man admits to huge data hack that broke into Merkel account

Kate Connolly
Berlin

A 20-year-old man has admitted to police that he was behind one of Germany’s biggest data breaches, in which the private details of almost 1,000 public figures were leaked.

The man, who lives with his parents in the central state of Hesse and is still in the education system, told police he had acted alone and was not politically motivated.

The breach came to light on Thursday last week, although the leaked data had been released in the style of an advent calendar on Twitter between 1 and 24 December. Details from the private accounts of TV stars and politicians including the chancellor, Angela Merkel, were released.

The interior minister, Horst Seehofer, hit back at widespread criticism that his department had only just begun.

“We assume that the perpetrator would have kept going and been prepared to dig out and release more information,” Münch said. He said his perpetrator profile was typical of that of a “growing generation of adolescents … who don’t have to step out of the door to carry out their deeds.”

“Their point of view, one needs to assume that young people in their bedrooms are not necessarily just playing,” he said.

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A former French boxing champion who is being questioned by police after he was filmed punching officers during a gilets jaunes protest yesterday. Leetchi received the sum for a gilet jaune. I have the anger of the people in me … it’s always the little people who pay. “I reacted badly. Yes, I reacted badly,” he said, adding he had seen a gilet jaune. I have the anger of the people in me … it’s always the little people who pay.

Marlene Schiappa, the junior minister for equality, said giving funds to someone who attacked an officer was “tantamount to being an accomplice to these grave acts of violence.”

The complaint echoed a broadside last year made by party leaders of Abbey Theatre, demanding more opportunities for homegrown performers. Founded in 1904 by WB Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory, the Abbey is a cultural powerhouse that has nurtured some of Ireland’s greatest plays, but this fell to only 56 in 2016 the Abbey directly employed 123 actors, but this fell to only 56 in 2017 on a street close to the Dutch parliament, Stef Blok, the country’s foreign minister, said intelligence services had found “strong indications that Iran was involved in the assassinations of two nationals of Iranian origin”. Blok added that the government believed such “hostile actions” violated Dutch sovereignty.

The two murders are alleged to have taken place in broad daylight in 2015 in Almere, a city east of Amsterdam, and in 2017 on a street close to the Dutch foreign ministry in The Hague.

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Netherlands accuses Iran of directing two political assassinations

Daniel Boffey

Brussels

Iran has been accused by the Dutch government of directing two political assassinations in the Netherlands, triggering EU sanctions against Tehran’s military intelligence service.

The Labour minister, Muriel Pénicaud, called the fundraising campaign “incomprehensible”. How can these people tell their children, the young, that violence is the answer? she told CNews television.

Police unions warned the fundraising legitimised violence against police. Sébastien Chenu, an MP for the right National Rally party, said the funds were “a barometer of the hatred for the government”, before adding that he condemned all violence.

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Eyewitness
Sarıkaya, Turkey
People dive into the steaming waters of the Basilica Therma, an ancient Roman bath, for a warm winter swim.

PHOTOGRAPH: SERCAN KÜÇÜKŞAHİN / GETTY
Trump takes his plan for a border wall to the country in Oval Office speech

Lauren Gambino
Sabrina Siddiqui Washington Agencies

Donald Trump was last night due to use the first Oval Office address of his presidency to argue that an immigration crisis at the US-Mexico border means that funding for his border wall project must be made available.

Trump spoke as the partial shutdown of the US federal government was stretching into a third week with virtually no end in sight. It is now the second-longest shutdown in US history. The closures are affecting about 800,000 federal workers, many of whom will not receive paycheques for the first time since the stand-off began just before Christmas.

In numbers

$5.7bn
Funding Donald Trump says should be made available for his border wall project

800,000
Number of federal employees affected by the impasse. Their salaries depend on the budget being passed

17
The number of days the federal shutdown has lasted so far – the second longest in US history

The impact of the shutdown will worsen the longer it lasts. The nation’s food assistance programme only has funding until the end of January and it might not meet demand in February. Meanwhile, federal workers appear to be growing frustrated. Transportation Security Administration employees have been increasingly calling in sick at airports, while at the Environmental Protection Agency they are planning a “national sick day” to protest against the shutdown.

Who is to blame?

Public polling suggests that Americans believe Republicans, and specifically the president, are to blame for the shutdown. Meanwhile, a majority of Americans oppose the wall, while a larger share say it should not be the priority. In December, Trump said he would be proud to take responsibility for shutting down the government in the face of Democratic opposition to funding his wall project.

How can it be resolved?

Negotiations between congressional leaders and the White House are at a virtual standstill. That’s despite tense meetings and the president meeting the Christmas and New Year holiday season at the White House, instead of going to his club, Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, alternating between threats and pleading to Democrats via Twitter.

As the repercussions of the shutdown further ripple across the country, members of Congress – including a small but vocal group of Republicans - are demanding the Senate take up legislation to end the shutdown and allow the debate over border security to resume. Trump was set to address the nation yesterday, possibly to declare a “national emergency” that would allow him to build a wall without congressional approval, a move fraught with legal obstacles and political peril.

Shutdown

Why did it begin and when will it end?

Lauren Gambino

A partial shutdown of the US federal government has stretched into a third week with virtually no end in sight. It is now the second-longest shutdown in US history. The closures are affecting about 800,000 federal workers, many of whom will not receive paycheques for the first time since the stand-off began just before Christmas.

In the way of a resolution is Donald Trump’s demand for a wall on the US-Mexico border, a central promise of his presidential campaign. Despite repeatedly vowing that Mexico would pay for it, the president is now demanding $5.7bn (£4.5bn) in taxpayer money to proceed with construction. Democrats are standing firm against the proposal, while Trump has threatened that the shutdown, which he already said he would be proud to take responsibility for, could last for “months or even years”.

What is a government shutdown?

During a government shutdown, federal agencies must cease all operations and services deemed non-essential, while essential functions such as airport security and law enforcement continue. Laid-off workers are sent home without pay, while other employees must work without being paid.

The shutdown lasts until new funding is approved by Congress and signed into law by the president. On 21 December at midnight, funding expired and work ceased across nine federal departments. Many national parks are closed, immigration courts suspended and scientific research has stalled.

How does a shutdown come about?

The sprawling federal bureaucracy that keeps many aspects of American life humming is funded by an annual budget set and approved by Congress. The president must sign - or veto - the 12 so-called appropriations bills, which lay out how federal agencies may spend their money in the next fiscal year. Appropriations bills need 60 votes in the Senate, a requirement that often forces bipartisanship depending on the party breakdown in the chamber. When Congress fails to pass - or the president refuses to sign - budget legislation before a spending deadline, whatever portion of government lacks funding “shuts down”.

This process has become increasingly political in recent years and has been used by both parties as a way to extract concessions on legislative priorities. In October 2013, Republicans shut down the government for 16 days in an unsuccessful bid to strip funding from Barack Obama’s healthcare legislation. In January 2018, Democrats briefly shut down the government over an impasse on immigration legislation, as a way to demand Congress enact protections for undocumented immigrants who came to the country as children.

How bad is this one?

If the shutdown continues through the weekend, it will be the longest on record.

The White House on Monday directed the Internal Revenue Service to pay tax refunds.

The Democrats’ Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House of Representatives, and Chuck Schumer, Senate minority leader, were granted the same amount of air time as the president to rebut the speech. The White House counsel is considering it, “The administration would prefer to secure the funding for border security from an agreement with Congress. What I’m aware of is that they’re looking at it and the president is considering it,” Pence said during the briefing alongside Kirstjen Nielsen, homeland security secretary, and Russell Vought, acting director of the Office of Management and Budget in Washington.

But asked if Trump had made up his mind on declaring a national emergency as a way to bypass congressional refusal of his requested wall funding, as he has threatened in recent days, Pence replied: “He’s made no decision on that.”

Some saw it as “no doubt” he had the legal authority to declare a national emergency but said: “Let’s get our deal done in Congress.”

The shutdown, which has lasted 17 days, is already the second longest in US history and would become the longest if it stretches into this weekend.

Negotiations between Democratic congressional leaders and the White House are at a stalemate. Both sides have dug in over the wall after fraught meetings last week. Pelosi has called the wall “immoral” and refuses to budge on providing taxpayers’ funding to build it.

As a first act, the newly empowered Democrats in the House of Representatives passed legislation last week to re-open the government while congressional leaders and the administration continued to debate border security. But the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, said he would not take up legislation Trump did not support.

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Economy Energy becomes latest small supplier to fail

However, customers’ energy costs could change, depending on which provider takes over. As recently as last month, Economy had said it had "no intention of closing [its] doors".

Dozens of customers have taken to review websites recently to complain that the company owes them hundreds of pounds in unreturned credit.

More than 1,300 complaints about the supplier were being investigated by the Energy Ombudsman. The collapse matters to more than just the firm’s customers, as all households bear the cost for moving consumers from failed companies to other suppliers.

A Guardian analysis found that, before Economy’s collapse, customers already faced a bill of at least £180m from other failed gas and electricity suppliers. Economy’s demise will add to that tally in two ways. All billpayers will have to pay for the costs incurred by the new supplier that takes on its customers, a process known as “supplier of last resort”. And the firm leaves an outstanding bill of about £13m in renewable energy subsidy payments, which will now need to be spread across all suppliers.

The former chief energy regulator Stephen Littlechild recently questioned the oversight of that scheme. “Prudent suppliers, and ultimately customers, will have to bail out customers,” he said.

Observers had speculated that Economy was on the rocks after it missed a payment deadline for the subsidies and closed all its social media accounts without explanation. But it is far from the only troubled firm among challengers taking on the big six.

Rising wholesale prices over the past year have put pressure on smaller firms, some of which do not buy energy as far in advance as the big players. Large suppliers will hedge more than a year in advance in some cases.

Economy Energy had ceased trading, and urged its 235,000 customers to take meter readings and wait for a new supplier to be appointed. The firm is the ninth liquidators.

The announcement was expected after Ofgem banned Economy from taking on new customers last week. The company entered credit default readings and wait for a new supplier to be appointed. The firm is the ninth liquidators.

Concerns over the financial sustainability and customer service of some new players has prompted Ofgem to consider tougher rules and checks for new entrants. Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizens Advice, said: “The continued failure of suppliers shows there are firms operating that require the regulator’s urgent attention.”

Joules joins the Christmas winners’ circle with Next and John Lewis

Joules, the clothing chain known for its bright peacock print and pink wellies, has become the latest retailer to defy the high street gloom with strong Christmas figures.

Last week’s results from Next and John Lewis indicated it had been a poor but not disastrous festive season for retailers as shoppers saved a burst of spending until a few days before 25 December or for the post-Christmas sales.

Joules chalked up sales growth of 11.7% over the seven weeks to 6 January, putting it firmly in the winners’ enclosure, and sending its shares up more than 4%.

Morrisons, the first of the supermarket chains listed on the stock market to update investors, revealed a slowing sales picture as revenues at its established retail business rose 0.6% – a figure that included a 0.4% contribution from online – in the nine weeks to 6 January.

The figures were slightly behind some City expectations and the shares closed down just over 3% at 231p.

David Potts, the Morrisons chief executive, said: “Going into November there was a sense that customers were a bit more cautious, a bit more careful with their spending, and there was a feeling of uncertainty in the country that may have led to that (cautiousness).”

However, new industry data has highlighted the growing success of the discounters, as two-thirds of UK households shopped with one over Christmas, handing Aldi and Lidl their biggest ever slice of grocery spending.

Against this shift in shopper behaviour, all the major supermarket chains lost market share in the 12 weeks to 30 December, according to the grocery market analyst Kantar Worldpanel. John Lewis said in its latest update that sales were up 11.2% last week as shoppers hunted for bargains in the final days of its end-of-season sale.

The employee-owned retailer experienced big swings in trade during November and December but enjoyed a strong finish to the year with four weeks of sales that were ahead of Christmas 2017 levels.

Jon Williams, John Lewis’s director of merchandising operations, said fashion sales had surged by a fifth last week. Within that, menswear sales were up 34.3% on last year as Britons snapped up cut-price coats and knitwear. Womenswear and accessories were also up, by nearly 20% and 25% respectively.
MP hits out at payday lender over ‘cynical’ Christmas ads

Miles Brignall

The chair of a Commons select committee has demanded the financial regulator act against a payday loan firm after it “cynically” advertised 535% APR loans over the Christmas period.

A mail shot by Provident in the run-up to the festive season featured photographs of a small girl smiling and wearing a Christmas cracker hat. The direct marketing literature said it would not be Christmas without “the look on her face”.

Other images included two girls laughing as they hung tinsel around their grandfather. The leaflet offered loans of between £100 and £1,000 at a “representative” interest rate of 535%.

Rachel Reeves, the Labour MP who chairs the business, energy and industrial strategy committee, said the leaflet had clearly been designed to pull at the heart strings of the vulnerable, and was a new low for the payday lending industry.

On Monday she wrote to the head of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), Andrew Bailey, asking what action it could take against Provident to stop such adverts appearing again.

“I believe this was a cynical tactic to exploit vulnerable people who struggle financially at the best of times, let alone over the festive season. Provident tried to use a deliberately, emotionally loaded message to urge them to take out a loan at a rip-off rate of interest,” she said.

Last week the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ruled the advert had been irresponsible and had targeted vulnerable consumers. The ASA said it must not be used again.

Reeves said she believed the ASA’s action did not go far enough in tackling Provident’s behaviour, which is why she was writing to the FCA.

Providence did not reply to a request for comment. It previously told the ASA credit was only issued following a “face-to-face meeting in a customer’s home, where their needs were discussed” and “after checks on affordability, suitability and sustainability”.

In 2017 Provident Financial, as it was then called, lost two-thirds of its stock market value in a day, after it parted with its chief executive and revealed it was facing an FCA investigation into its credit card business.

Germany, Europe’s locomotive economy, at risk of coming off the rails as headwinds worsen

Larry Elliott

Europe’s three biggest economies and list them in order of the likelihood of being in recession in the second half of 2018. Chances are Brexit-bound Britain would come first followed by France after its gilets jaunes protests. Germany would probably come last.

In fact, it is the eurozone’s locomotive economy that is at biggest risk of fulfilling the technical definition of recession – two consecutive quarters of falling output. After contracting by 0.2% in the third quarter, the latest news from Germany suggests it might struggle to grow in the fourth quarter as well.

News that German industrial production fell by 1.9% in November came as a nasty shock. The stock response to the contraction in the third quarter was that it was due to the tightening up of European Union lending standards which led to one-off problems for car makers that would quickly be overcome.

While the bounce back has been delayed rather than cancelled, Europe’s biggest economy faces significant headwinds. The growth spurt generated by monetary stimulus from the European Central Bank has run its course.

The European commission’s economic sentiment indicator fell in every single month of 2018 and December declines in all four of the eurozone’s big four economies – Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

Andrew Kenningham of Capital Economics noted, the weakness cannot be put down to country-specific issues such as the gilets jaunes in France or sector-specific issues such as the disruption of the auto sector.

To make matters worse for Germany, the global economy is also slowing, making it harder for companies to pick up new export orders. Protectionism is not helping, either. Donald Trump sees China as his number one trade target, but Germany comes a close second.

All of which brings a slightly different perspective to Britain’s debate about Brexit, which currently seems to be based on three key propositions: that continental Europe is thriving, that Europe’s politicians will come under no pressure to cut a deal from their big companies, and that Britain is well adrift at the bottom of Europe’s economic league table. All three are false.

Food deliveries stall

It’s a familiar story. Price conscious consumers sit at home and do their shopping remotely, making life increasingly tough for traditional bricks-and-mortar retailers.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday promotions meant that online retail sales accounted for more than 20% of the market for the first time in November.

But, while consumers are increasingly likely to buy a shirt or the latest Booker prize winner online, they are less likely to have their groceries delivered. While it might sometimes seem that the roads are choked with supermarket delivery vans, only 6% of food sales are made online and market penetration has stalled.

Online spending in late 2018 was up by almost 4% on the previous year, but was entirely accounted for by existing rather than new customers.

There are some obvious explanations for this. Many of us like to size up the fruit and veg for chinos and paying a fiver to avoid a supermarket trip may be seen as a good deal. Supermarkets are not immune from the online retail revolution. It will just take longer for food, that’s all.
BT facing battle to keep EU contracts following Brexit

Daniel Boffey

BT is facing a post-Brexit battle to maintain access to multi-million-pound EU contracts and avoid the premature termination of a £2.4bn deal with the European parliament.

The BT Group won a number of contracts with the EU’s institutions in the last 10 years, which were worth more than £150m.

But the potential for Europe to scrap these “sensitive” contracts was raised during a recent meeting of EU officials and senior MEPs discussing Brexit preparations, according to leaked minutes seen by the Guardian.

The question about the EU honouring contracts and letting the BT Group provide telecommunications services when Britain is no longer a member state, was said to require examination.

According to minutes of the meeting, senior MEPs voiced the view that “sensitive services, such as telecommunications, currently provided inter alia by British Telecom, should be given thorough consideration in the framework of procurement by parliament”.

The meeting also discussed creating “a full list of contracts with UK-based companies in force”. The MEPs concluded that “whereas ongoing contracts with British companies would be fulfilled as a general rule … certain particularly sensitive contracts could be terminated prematurely for security reasons”.

The meeting between Klaus Welle, secretary general of the European parliament, and a “Brexit preparedness” working group of MEPs, also heard that the EU bodies, such as the European parliament, would not be able to sign off on future contracts with British firms under its procurement rules. "As of the date on which the UK ceases to be a member state – 29 March 2019 – parliament will no longer be able to conclude contracts with British companies, noting that the UK will also have to notify the forthcoming EU authorities on each lender’s differing mortgage approval figures, can be volatile. Low numbers of property transactions, which have declined amid fears over Brexit, may also have contributed to the discrepancy, they added.

Jeremy Leaf, an estate agent and former chairman of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, said: “At first glance, the Halifax numbers are really positive as they reflect a time of particular political uncertainty and the height of Brexit turmoil. But when taken with the recent fall in transactions, it is clear that the increase has more to do with a short-term of stock rather than a bounce-back in the market generally.”

The average cost of a house in Britain is now £229,725, Halifax said.

Halifax reports fastest house price rise in almost two years

Richard Partington

UK house prices rose at the fastest monthly rate in almost two years in December, according to Halifax, despite warnings over the potential impact of Brexit for the year ahead. Halifax, one of Britain’s biggest mortgage lenders, said the average cost of a house rose by 2.2% compared with November. This outstripped all forecasts in a poll of economists by Reuters, in a surprise sign of strength for the economy with less than 90 days before Brexit.

However, the figures come after a sluggish year for house price inflation. On an annual basis, prices rose by 1.3% in the three months to December, marking the weakest year since 2012.

Analysts warned that house price growth would be restrained in 2019 after a decade of weak wage rises, as well as the risk of a property slump triggered by a no-deal Brexit.

Hansen Li, a property economist at the consultancy Capital Economics, said: “With prices so high relative to incomes, many buyers have been priced out of being able to buy a home.”

The latest snapshot of the property market came as a surprise after a conflicting report from Nationwide, which suggested house price growth was 0.5% in December – the slowest annual rate since February 2013.

Analysts said the two barometers of house price inflation, which are based on each lender’s differing mortgage approval figures, can be volatile. Low numbers of property transactions, which have declined amid fears over Brexit, may also have contributed to the discrepancy, they added.

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Dementia care

‘Making music isn’t a nicety, it’s a necessity’

A new campaign aims to show how listening and playing can help patients be happier, healthier and more harmonious

When Eileen Pegg developed dementia in 2015, she became very anxious and easily agitated. Her carers at MHA Weston and Queensway care home in Stafford were determined to find a way to make her happier, so they decided to see if music would help.

The care home, which is a specialist dementia care unit, has provided music therapy for more than 10 years, and these sessions have made a real difference to Pegg, according to care assistant Chloe Pugh. When Pegg, now 91, attended her first music therapy session in 2016, she was crying and unable to calm down. But immediately afterwards, Pegg was a “completely different person”, smiling and recalling dancing with her husband. “We can’t eliminate her anxiety completely, but we can help to alleviate the symptoms for Eileen, and help her engage more with what’s happening around her,” says Pugh. By singing and clapping along to music or playing instruments at her weekly one-to-one classes, Pegg is calmer, which has encouraged her to participate in other activities, thereby improving her appetite and mood. Pegg is not the only one to benefit from these sessions. More than 2,000 residents across MHA’s 84 care homes take part in regular music therapy groups. And it’s not just clinical music therapy that helps dementia patients: choirs, music groups and specialist apps are all beneficial.

Music uses different parts of the brain from language, so can be used to communicate with people with dementia, even if they no longer speak or seem to understand others’ words. As a result, it can help them express feelings and ideas and interact with others. It also reduces social isolation and encourages more physical activity through dancing or moving to the music.

Research published last year by the International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) and the Utley Foundation found that music has significant physical and mental health benefits for those with dementia and helps them retain their speech and language skills longer.

“Analysis showed that music helps to significantly minimise some of the symptoms of dementia, such as agitation, and can help to tackle anxiety and depression,” says Sally Greengross, chief executive of the ILC.

Little wonder then, that the government wants to expand the use of music for dementia patients, as part of its drive to expand “social prescribing”. The NHS long-term plan, published this week, promised to roll out social prescribing, including music and the arts. By April 2021, there will be over 1,000 trained social prescribing link workers and more in place by April 2024, with the aim that over 900,000 people are able to be referred to social prescribing schemes by then, the plan says. These link workers will connect patients to local groups and support services.

“Research suggests music can help people with dementia reduce the need for medication or restraints, address agitation and help people and their families cope better with symptoms,” says the Department of Health and Social Care. The Department of Health and Social Care wants to expand social prescribing in the arts. And there are many museums, theatres and galleries already doing local outreach work that could be harnessed by government and commissioners.

Colchester Castle hosts monthly Dancing with Parkinson's sessions, run by the Dance Network Association. Participants are taken to see different artefacts and then use stories behind the artefacts in the dance class. “Lots of the movements we use are specifically designed to target their [Parkinson's patients'] areas of need, such as loosening the spine and muscles and encouraging the use of the voice,” says Emma Meek, dance development manager at the Dance Network.

Tyne & Wear Archives and Museum runs three outreach programmes for health and wellbeing: one for those with mental health issues, another for supporting recovering addicts and those involved in the criminal justice system, and a third for those aged over 55.

The Holburne Museum in Bath runs a dedicated programme for those with mental health difficulties and homeless people. Participants, many of whom are referred from Avon and Wiltshire mental health partnership NHS trust, take part in professional artist-led classes in areas such as oil painting and ceramics, and can progress to becoming volunteer museum guides too.

Music for people living with dementia involves being smart about where we support resources, so we need to know where there’s already good work happening,” says Grace Meadows, the programme director at the Utley Foundation and a senior music therapist at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

Backed with £1m from the Utley Foundation, with additional ongoing annual funding of £500,000, the campaign aims to increase public awareness and backing for music to be an integral part of all dementia care plans. The funding will finance local and national projects, scaling them up, helping to introduce music where there is currently little or no existing provision as well as training the workforce. “We want everyone in the UK living with dementia to have access to the music that means most to them and for it to be accessible in the most appropriate and effective ways,” says Meadows.

“For some this will mean ensuring they have the right technology – allowing them to enjoy their favourite music wherever and whenever they want. For others it may mean being able to attend music groups and participate in music-making. For some, it may mean working with a music therapist. Music for people living with dementia isn’t a nicety, it’s a necessity.’’

Back in Stafford, Pugh is clear about the importance of music to the lives of those she looks after. “Music is and will continue to be the heartbeat of care for our residents,” she says.

Social Prescribing

Where next?

The government wants to expand the use of music to help ease the symptoms of people with dementia.

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The Guardian Wednesday 9 January 2019
Interview
The NHS must stop relying on pen and paper

Joe Harrison, head of Milton Keynes hospital trust, says technology can save lives and money

Denis Campbell

Parts of the NHS are still in the dark ages, technologically speaking,” says Professor Joe Harrison, chief executive of Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS foundation trust. “There are still sites across the NHS that don’t even have wifi. In certain parts of the NHS we still believe that paper and pen are the way to capture data,” he adds with barely concealed contempt. Harrison worries that the service’s workforce agenda is now one of the NHS’s most technologically advanced hospitals. It is as close as any NHS trust to becoming what Matt Hancock, the health and social care secretary and fellow digital evangelist, wants the entire service to be – “an ecosystem for the best technology available”. It integrates technology into much of what the hospital does, from giving patients wearable technology to monitor their clinical symptoms to booking appointments. Since last year, 300 patients with heart problems wear a wristband that automatically uploads their temperature and blood pressure, into their electronic patient record. In April last year Milton Keynes became the first hospital to let patients book their own outpatient appointments online, something that patient to look at their medical record on their phone, thereby making it transportable, and enabling them to go and see any healthcare professional, with their own medical record.” It would mean that any member of staff in the UK could see a patient’s medical record at the push of a button. But, given the NHS’s failure to introduce electronic records before, Harrison comes across as over-optimistic and overambitious. However, within his own organisation, Harrison has started this process. A&E staff sing his praises over e-Care, an electronic patient records system that replaced the paper-based system last May. Until the electronic system was introduced, A&E staff had to track down patients’ paper notes. Now, staff can instantly identify any patient who arrives at the emergency department and see what stage they are at in their treatment. And when an A&E arrival is transferred to a specialist ward, their notes go with them – electronically. But tech isn’t cheap. NHS England’s own estimates put the cost of implementing its digital plans at as much as £13bn. Harrison says that’s a price worth paying and will even help solve the NHS’s biggest problem - understaffing.

“Tech can support the improvement of the NHS. [But] it can’t solve our workforce problem. We can concentrate on the workforce agenda at the expense of developing tech? Definitely not. We need to do both.”

One in 10 mental health posts remain unfilled - 2,000 nurses quit every month and plans to hire more haven’t worked

Dr. Harrison unsurprisingly welcomes the NHS long-term plan, launched this week, which spelled out a much more central role for technology in the health service over the next decade. Headline initiatives include rolling out online GP appointments to millions of patients and more people using approved health apps to manage their physical and mental health symptoms. “I am really pleased to see technology and digital innovation feature so prominently,” Harrison says. “It is not a panacea for all things, but there is certainly much more technology can offer us as patients and professionals.”

Milton Keynes, an acute hospital with more than 4,000 staff, serving one of the fastest-growing populations in the country, is now one of the NHS’s most technologically advanced hospitals. It is as close as any NHS trust to becoming what Matt Hancock, the health and social care secretary and fellow digital evangelist, wants the entire service to be – “an ecosystem for the best technology available”. It integrates technology into much of what the hospital does, from giving patients wearable technology to monitor their clinical symptoms to booking appointments. Since last year, 300 patients with heart problems wear a wristband that automatically uploads their temperature and blood pressure, into their electronic patient record. In April last year Milton Keynes became the first hospital to let patients book their own outpatient appointments online, something that patient to look at their medical record on their phone, thereby making it transportable, and enabling them to go and see any healthcare professional, with their own medical record.” It would mean that any member of staff in the UK could see a patient’s medical record at the push of a button. But, given the NHS’s failure to introduce electronic records before, Harrison comes across as over-optimistic and overambitious. However, within his own organisation, Harrison has started this process. A&E staff sing his praises over e-Care, an electronic patient records system that replaced the paper-based system last May. Until the electronic system was introduced, A&E staff had to track down patients’ paper notes. Now, staff can instantly identify any patient who arrives at the emergency department and see what stage they are at in their treatment. And when an A&E arrival is transferred to a specialist ward, their notes go with them – electronically. But tech isn’t cheap. NHS England’s own estimates put the cost of implementing its digital plans at as much as £13bn. Harrison says that’s a price worth paying and will even help solve the NHS’s biggest problem - understaffing.

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Doctor’s orders

Zara Aziz

Without more staff, this plan cannot succeed.

GPs will be left to pick up the pieces again

This week, the government’s much anticipated NHS long-term plan has finally seen the light of day after months of delay. It talks of investing more in primary, community and mental health care, creating a digital “front door” to the NHS, reducing the burden of many life-limiting conditions and improving the flow of patients through A&E. These are certainly areas that need a fresh focus, given rising demand and slipping waiting times and standards in recent years.

It’s great that the plan will see an extra £2.3bn for mental health. As a GP, around half my consultations are with patients who have mental health problems. Services are at breaking point – with thresholds to accept referrals so high that often only those in crisis (such as being potentially suicidal) are seen, with limited possibilities for GPs to refer for talking therapies. Around 90% of us GPs feel services for these young people with mental health problems are inadequate. Waiting times for adult talking therapies on the NHS can be as long as two years, leaving patients in limbo and in a revolving door system of GPs, A&E or emergency psychiatry services.

The NHS plan promises that 350,000 more children and young people will be treated and similar numbers of adults offered access to talking therapies. But it seems that much of this extra funding will go on services for these in crisis, not ongoing help and support. What patients really need are long-term interventions that the NHS does not have the staff to deliver quickly: one in 10 mental health posts remain unfilled - 2,000 mental health nurses quit every month, and plans to increase numbers have seen little success. My patients Tom, who has anxiety, and Doris, with borderline personality disorder, have tried various medications with little benefit. They attend the practice regularly, often call 112 or the Samaritans, and both have been waiting six months for dialectical behaviour therapy. But our local mental health service does not have the resources to see patients such as these on an ongoing basis – unless they become suicidal or develop acute psychotic conditions.

But are we putting the cart before the horse? Where is the plan to recruit and retain our workforce? This is essential to any long-term plans. Many of us have been drawn to the NHS for its varied roles, sense of purpose and a chance to become experts in our fields. But over years of relentless work, with little personal development or pastoral support, we lose many excellent staff along the way. Yes, I would like to see reduced waiting times in A&E and shorter hospital stays. But this should not be at the cost of “too soon” hospital discharges, which have become so common in recent years, with a backdrop of collapsing social care and no intermediate care provision whether in the form of beds or community geriatricians. General practice – already at capacity - then becomes the inevitable sponge, which is now saturated.

The NHS long-term plan has a lot to deliver, but we need to ensure we are focusing on where the real problems lie within the NHS and how we must resource the solutions. Without this, everything just becomes rhetoric.

Zara Aziz is a GP in inner-city Bristol
The College is seeking an energetic experienced Deputy Development Director to join its dynamic Alumni & Development Office. She/he will play an active role in our pivotal Future Foundations Campaign, be responsible for the College’s Regular Giving Programme, lead the Legacy Programme and deputise for the Development Director.

Educated to degree level, strong experience of fundraising and alumni relations in the Higher Education sector along with knowledge of financial reporting and data management (preferably Raiser’s Edge) as well as management skills are essential. A belief in the power of philanthropy is highly desirable.

This is a full time position, 36.25 hours per week.
Salary £42,000 – £45,000 depending on experience.
33 days holiday including bank holidays.
For further details and an application form, please visit:
hr@magd.cam.ac.uk
director.development@magd.cam.ac.uk
01223 332160

To apply, please send your application form, CV and covering letter to:
hr@magd.cam.ac.uk
Applications close on Wednesday 6 February 2019 at 9am
Interviews will be held on Monday 11 February 2019

Exciting opportunity with a leading healthcare provider
Non-Executive Director

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust is an integral member of the Board of the largest community and mental health trust in England. We have a turnover of £490 million and 7,000 dedicated employees. Rated “Good” by our regulator the Care Quality Commission, CNWL is recognised locally, nationally and internationally for providing high quality, innovative healthcare. We have a stable and long serving management team and continue to invest in supporting a large number of vulnerable people and local communities.

This is a part time position, 22.5 hours per week.
Salary £17,500 - £26,250 depending on experience.
26 days holiday including bank holidays.
For further details/informal discussion contact:
Professor Dorothy Griffiths
Email: dorothygriffiths@nhs.net

Applications close on 5 February 2019 at 9am
Interviews will be held on Monday 11 February 2019

Do you have the experience to join our team? If you have held a similar role, preferably at Board or equivalent level, within a large or complex customer-facing organisation and are able to see the bigger picture, then we would like to hear from you. For one post we would particularly like to hear from individuals with experience of government or public service (outside of the NHS). We are looking for people with HR or organisational development or backgrounds in HR or organisational development or backgrounds in finance or experience of applying IT systems.

Your strategic insight and practical experience of managing complexity, along with your enthusiasm for the challenges of delivering healthcare in a variety of settings are just what we are looking for. Tell us what you can bring to our organisation in exchange for the opportunity to join our team.

We welcome applications from women, black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities. We would welcome applications from senior leaders who can build effective working relationships through a collaborative approach.

For Further details/informal discussion contact Professor Dorothy Griffiths, Chair, on 020 3214 5760 or email dorothygriffiths@nhs.net

The HSE has the following vacancy:

- Consultant Adult Psychiatrist with a special responsibility for the Mental Health of Deaf Adults – Specified Purpose

Ref: MHS/DNCG/0148

Please forward your Curriculum Vitae together with the names and contact details of three referees (one of whom should refer to a recent appointment) to Audrey Lacey, Medical Administration, Connolly Norman House, 224 North Circular Road, Dublin 7, Ireland or Email audrey.lacey@hse.ie

Must have current Irish Medical Council Registration on the Specialist Registrar.

Informal enquiries to: Audrey Lacey on Tel: +353 (0)76 9583913 or Email: audrey.lacey@hse.ie

Closing date for receipt of CVs/application forms is 5pm on 25th January 2019.

For further information please visit www.hse.ie/jobs
South West London and St George’s NHS Mental Health NHS Trust

The Trust is committed to providing high quality integrated health and social care for local people with mental health problems in South West London and more specialist mental health services for people throughout the UK.

Operational Manager

Wandsworth and Sutton Psychological Therapies Services
56 Tooting High Street, Tooting Broadway, London, SW17 0RN
and
6 Stanley Park Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 0EX

37.5 hours per week
£55,905 – £66,627 including inner London hca

South West London & St. George’s Mental Health NHS Trust (SWLSTG) provides mental health services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels to the residents of Sutton, Merton, Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth.

Talk Wandsworth and Sutton Uplift are two psychological therapy services (IAPT – Improving Access to Psychological Therapies), for residents of the boroughs of Wandsworth and Sutton who suffer from common mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety disorders, and eating disorders. The two services receive about 17,000 referrals annually and are expected to treat 12,000 patients per year, and both services are expected to continually help at least 50% of patients achieve a full recovery.

The two services are professionally led by a consultant clinical psychologist, and operationally managed by an operational manager (the post holder). Staff working in the services consist of qualified Clinical and Counselling Psychologists and CBT Therapists, CBT High Intensity Trainees, Graduate Mental Health Workers, Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, and Wellbeing Practitioners (a total of about 80 clinicians across the two services), who provide evidence-based psychological interventions (such as cognitive behavioral therapy - CBT).

Sutton Uplift is a very innovative, inclusive service model, and includes a Single Point of Access which processes all mental health referrals for the borough, and a Primary Care Recovery Team that provides support to people with serious mental illness who require support. The team includes Community Psychiatric Nurses, an Occupational Therapist, and a Consultant Psychiatrist with support from wellbeing practitioners.

Both services are supported by administrative teams, which are led by dedicated admin leads.

We are looking for a dynamic, confident and forward-thinking professional, with a commitment to providing high quality services to take on the role of Operational Manager across the two services. The successful candidate will have proven experience working in operational management, be motivated and have an ability to inspire and lead others. A ‘can do’ attitude is essential.

The post holder will be responsible for the day-to-day operational management across both services, including the line management of the senior clinicians and admin leads working in each service, and he or she will be responsible for supporting the service towards meeting nationally set key performance indicators (KPIs). He or she will require exceptional organisational skills, an ability to filter demands and prioritise effectively, with a good grasp of what can be appropriately delegated. Daily problem-solving whilst maintaining an eye on the strategic direction of the service will be essential.

The post holder will receive regular line management supervision and support from the Trust’s Head of Delivery for Community Services and the Trust Clinical Lead for IAPT Services.

For further information about the post or to arrange an informal visit, please contact, Gillian Moore, Head of Service Delivery on 0203 513 6636 or Dr Hendrik Hinrichsen, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Trust Clinical Lead for IAPT Services on 07736 818 236 or via email: hendrik.hinrichsen@swlstg.nhs.uk

Applications from job seekers who require Tier 2 sponsorship to work in the UK are welcome and will be considered alongside all other applications. However, non-EEA candidates may not be appointed to a post if a suitably qualified, experienced and skilled EEA candidate is available to take up the post as the employing body is unlikely in these circumstances to satisfy the Resident Labour Market Test. The NHS aims to employ a workforce which reflects the diversity of the local community.

Accommodation for employees may be available on some Trust sites. For more information please email recruitment@swlstg-tr.nhs.uk

Closing date: Wednesday 23rd January 2019.

To apply or for further information, please visit www.jobs.nhs.uk or www.swlstg-tr.nhs.uk

We will not accept CVs as a form of application under any circumstances.

The Trust is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from people who have experienced mental health problems. South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust is a smoke-free Trust.

www.swlstg-tr.nhs.uk

GatenbySanderson

Careers at The Guardian

Director of Public Health Services & Government Chief Medical/Health Advisor

St Helena Island, South Atlantic

2 years FTC – £80-£90k pa, depending on experience and qualifications, taxable in St Helena

A tax free International Supplement will also apply

This is a role of complex contemporary challenges. A sub-tropical island of spectacular and beautiful landscapes in the South Atlantic with a warm and friendly population of 4,500, St Helena is a self-governing overseas territory of the UK. With the opening of a new international airport last year there is now a weekly scheduled flight from Johannesburg. The 28-bed General Hospital in the capital, Jamestown, covers all areas of acute medical and surgical care.

Applying strong and enlightened leadership, you will help formulate and deliver strategic plans for the Health Service. Working with wide range of organisations including Education, Safeguarding, private and civil society organisations, you will actively and insightfully contribute to policy development, managing an annual recurrent budget of £15m.

Responsible for the day-to-day overall general management of Health services, you will ensure efficient use of human and financial resources, estate and assets, implementing cost improvement programmes and making sure that all resources are managed and developed to meet service requirements.

You will establish effective links with off island service providers and partners, communicate with, influence and cultivate strong working relationships with all stakeholders. There will be a strong element of PR in your role.

A Master’s or equivalent in Health Services Management or a related field will you have a clinical background and substantial recent experience in hospital and health service management. A skilled leader adept at financial management and in managing health services in the community, you will have highly developed stakeholder management skills. Receptive to and able to lead and manage change, you are a strong communicator, influencer and motivator.

We offer an extensive benefits package with 30 days leave pa, fare paid travel, freight, pension contribution and relocation allowance (see overseas vacancy information).

An application form can be found at www.sthelenajobs.co.uk where further information can also be found, or you may contact Kedell Workboys on 0203 818 7610 or email: shkhrecruitment@stelagov.com. This is where applications must be sent and received by 31 January 2019. Interviews will be held in London.
Weather
Wednesday 9 January 2019

Forecast

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There will be the odd shower across the United Kingdom on Thursday. It will be mainly dry on Friday.

Birdwatch

A new day, a new year, and my traditional early start. Contrary to a rather gloomy weather forecast, it dawns clear, bright and cold, so I head down to the coast with a frisson of anticipation for what is to come. On 1 January, every bird, whether common or rare, feels new - almost as if I am born again, appreciating them all for the very first time.

The robin and wren, singing away as if spring has already begun. A score of little egrets, streaming out of their holm oak roost like giant white handkerchiefs. Two hundred avocets, feeding at low tide, on the far side of the River Parrett. And a young peregrine, which having taken half-hearted aim at a redshank, circles around me in the morning sunshine, before flying away over the river, in search of easier prey.

I end my walk with 55 species - equalising last year's record. But this is not about numbers, but the way in which the birds I’ve encountered in my corner of Somerset grace me with their sheer life force on this, the opening day of the year. Stephen Moss @stephenmoss_tv
Kompany close to signing new deal, says Guardiola

What Osaka could teach Kyrgios and Tomic

Unwanted record

London's clean Games boast in ruins as failed doping tests pile up
Concussed Halfpenny to miss start of Six Nations

Leigh Halfpenny is expected to miss at least the first two Six Nations matches after being told by a specialist he is at least three weeks away from a return from concussion.

The Scarlets full-back was concussed against Australia in November - the fourth time in six years. It has not played since and is continuing to show symptoms such as headaches.

Paul Rees

Leigh Halfpenny is still suffering headaches from a Samu Kerevi hit

It is not simply a matter of the lucrative deal with CVC Capital Partners to inject new capital into English club rugby union been signed before renewed efforts to move the goalsposts have commenced. Fresh attempts are already being made to suspend relegation, even if the club versus country narrative that has been selling the 30-year-old fly-half, who joined from the Scarlets' coach. “He will continue doing what he has been doing, such as running, and will then be reassessed. "It will be somewhere between three to five weeks but these things take time. That’s the timeframe we’re looking at. Leigh won’t play before that. It will be Warren Gatland’s call then.”

Halfpenny was injured when the Australia centre Samu Kerevi tackled him into falling off the full-back’s clearance. Wales were angry when no action was taken against the Wallaby, a feeling that has not softened with the player set to miss three months of the season.

Pivac is confident the 30-year-old will resume his career. “He has been having bouts of headaches. He is frustrated but his health and wellbeing come first. A number of players have come back from concussion before and there is no reason why it will not happen with Leigh.”

Pivac was speaking on the day when the 27-year-old Ospreys centre Ben John retired, having taken a 12-month break following a succession of head injuries.

"It has taken so long for me to recover the only decision for me was to retire," said John, who has started a new career as a personal trainer in London. "Rugby has been my life but my long-term health is more important.”

Gatland names his squad for the Six Nations on Tuesday. Already without the flankers Ellis Jenkins and Aaron Shingler, he has other concerns in the back row, with James Davies, Taulupe Faletau, Ross Moriarty and Dan Lydiate all injured.

Rhos Priestland will leave Bath at the end of the season after a four-year stint at the Recreation Ground. The 31-year-old fly-half, who joined from the Scarlets, last played for Wales in 2017.

Star Trek era needs core base to support mission

Simply tarting up the sport would be a disaster but an egalitarian NFL-style setup could be the way to the stars

Robert Kitson

It did not take long. Barely has the renewed efforts to move the goalsposts have commenced. Fresh attempts are already being made to suspend relegation, even if the club versus country narrative that has been selling the 30-year-old fly-half, who joined from the Scarlets' coach. “He will continue doing what he has been doing, such as running, and will then be reassessed. "It will be somewhere between three to five weeks but these things take time. That’s the timeframe we’re looking at. Leigh won’t play before that. It will be Warren Gatland’s call then.”

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Cricket

Taylor and Nicholls put Sri Lanka to the sword

Ross Taylor struck his 20th one-day international century and Henry Nicholls his first as New Zealand thrashed Sri Lanka by 115 runs to complete a 3-0 series sweep. Taylor top-scored with 137 while Nicholls made 124 and 219 as New Zealand dominated the tourists.

The Black Caps were looking to claim the one-Test series with their countrymen, having already won the first two matches by comfortable margins.

Taylor and Nicholls put 219 for the third wicket, with Nicholls top-scoring with 137. The pair were eventually dismissed when Taylor was run out for 124.

The Black Caps bowled Sri Lanka to the sword with 137 and 124 in the opening two matches, and once again it proved beyond Sri Lanka. Lasith Malinga’s men lost five wickets for five runs in 20 deliveries to be dismissed for 249 in the 42nd over.

Rugby league

Castleford dealt blow by long-term Gale absence

Castleford expect their former Man of Steel Luke Gale to miss most of the season with his ruptured achilles.

The Tigers’ pre-season was rocked on Saturday when the 30-year-old England half-back suffered the injury in training. Jon Wells, the club’s director of rugby, said he expected Gale would miss “between six and nine months”. If the latter proves to be correct, Gale will miss the entire season and Wells said the club will seek salary-cap relief in order to sign a replacement.

Serena Guthrie will captain Scotland in next week’s assignments

England have named their 12-strong team for the Women’s Six Nations Series, which runs from 13-20 January. Serena Guthrie will captain the squad once again with Jade Clarke, England’s most capped player, as vice-captain. Ama Agbeze is progressing well on her return from injury and will continue to be monitored every day, Jodie Gibson was unavailable for selection due to an ankle problem. She was on operational duty and in a return-to-play protocol. Tracey Neville’s side also include England’s women from the Vitality International Series, which will be the last time England compete before the World Cup in July. Guardian sport
Harrington admits to doubts before accepting Ryder Cup captaincy

Paul McGinley has made all subsequent captains work harder given how he prepared for 2014 at Gleneagles. “Everything was lining up,” Harrington explained. “But I had to be confident that I wanted to do it. “I didn’t want to walk into this and be halfway through going: ‘I don’t know about this. It’s a job’ - and I have to blame McGinley, not thank him - that you have to be committed to. It is a two-year job, 20-month job and I had to sit down and say: ‘Am I prepared to do this?’ If it ever was, this is no longer a jolly.”

By then followed what will widely be interpreted as a dig at Nick Faldo, a decorated player but hapless captain of Europe in 2008. “We have seen once or twice in the past, once, anyway, where your captain has done a half-hearted job and it doesn’t end well,” Harrington said. “I’m good at hitting a little white golf ball. Does that mean I’m good at managing? I had to ask myself these questions, am I prepared to do this, and I was. That’s basically it.

“I love playing golf, I really do. I enjoy it. This is what I love doing, is playing golf, but I’m prepared to put my golfing legacy on the line here. I could easily have just walked away from this and said: ‘Oh, it’s not for me, I’ve had a successful golf career.’ “I don’t want to be a winning captain at all costs but I want to be a winning captain. These are the things that you have to sit down and think: ‘Can I do the job?’”

In truth, it seems fanciful to suggest Harrington’s standing within the game - having won 30 tournaments worldwide, including three major championships - would be seriously diminished in defeat next year. The 47-year-old conceded Whistling Straits itself, semi-European in style, formed part of his thought process for a biennial event which has become home-team dominated in recent times.

“I’ve never taken anything on the line where I haven’t tried to give it 100% and win,” Harrington added. “I am committed, and yes, it [the result] will have an effect [on me]. Hopefully a more positive effect than a negative effect, if I win. But it’s something that you’d better embrace, because it will have that asterisk, if you don’t win it. You could be a great captain and lose and people will find fault in it. You could be a poor captain and win and people will think you did a great job. So I have to get over that.

“I came home from the Ryder Cup after Darren Clarke’s loss [in 2016] and I remember some guy coming up to me and starting to explain to me all that went wrong. He wanted me to throw my captain under the bus and I just turned around and said: ‘I was part of all those decisions. I was there.’ But it’s amazing, he wanted it to be black and white and it’s not.”

Harrington suggested he will cut by one the four wildcard selections utilised by Thomas Bjorn before successes at Le Golf National last year. The double Open champion also issued a staunch and timely defence of Rory McIlroy, who was criticised for branding the European Tour a “stepping stone” before kicking off his season in Hawaii last weekend. Harrington has no doubts whatsoever regarding the Northern Irishman’s commitment to his home continent.

“I have to look at his actions,” Harrington said. “That man loves the Ryder Cup. He has become a leader in the team room. He gives so much to the Ryder Cup. He has become a leader in that Ryder Cup team, there’s no doubt about it. You just have to know the man behind the scenes.”

Leg fracture rules Master Dino out of Cheltenham after Plumpton win

Guillaume Macaire’s five-year-old was on course to land a £60,000 bonus he had won at the Festival, having beaten Knockanassus two days ago in one of the strongest novice chase events ever staged at Plumpton. The news he will miss the season’s showpiece meeting is a setback for his French trainer, who has sold many future stars to British and Irish stables but has never saddled a Festival winner in his own right.

Master Dino arrived at the Sussex track with a big reputation, having won twice at Grade One level over hurdles in France. Knockanassus, himself a winner on his previous start, finished seven lengths behind the winner.
Kevin Mitchell

**Analysys**

**Kyrgios and Tomic could mirror Osaka and show they care**

When Andy Murray berated a social media troll as a “clown” for accusing him and other players of extending their careers “just for the money,” he will have had a sympathetic audience in nearly every corner of the locker room.

Injury has already robbed the Australian Open of the perennially fragile Juan Martin del Potro, and Alexander Zverev has put himself on the doubtful list. Kyle Edmund and Johanna Konta are carrying injuries that may also put them out of the season’s first grand slam. This is a tough gig. Of those still standing, several will embark on the Melbourne fortnight this weekend in hope rather than expectation.

As angry as Murray was on behalf of friends and rivals who bleed sweat for the love of the game when they may more comfortably be inspecting their retirement portfolios and tee-off comfortably be inspecting their retirement portfolios and tee-off comfortably be inspecting their retirement portfolios and tee-off comfortably be inspecting their retirement portfolios and tee-off, Kyrgios is the villain of his compatriot Bernard Tomic.

Tomic initially seemed bored with the game that had made him rich after Mischa Zverev put him out of Wimbledon in 2017. Echoing Kyrgios, he said: “I couldn’t care less if I make a fourth-round US Open or I lose first round. To me, everything is the same.”

In Melbourne, Kyrgios (No 25 in the world) and Tomic (No 85) will be some way distant from young Alexander de Minaur in the nation’s affections. “The Demon” has hustled his way into the top 30 with the sort of energy reminiscent of Lleyton Hewitt. So far, the 19-year-old has shown no brattish tendencies.

Murray, who has travelled their journey, will surely wish them all well but he will not forgive that midnighl troll for claiming he and others are hanging on only for the money.

If Kyrgios and Osaka were to talk about their neuroses, he might rediscover the innocent, less cynical swagger that carried him to a fourth-round win over Rafael Nadal at Wimbledon in 2014. That performance announced Kyrgios’s arrival – much as an 18-year-old Tomic had done his by reaching the quarter-finals three years earlier.

Both accepted the acclaim and riches but neither rose to the challenge of delivering fevered expectations. It was as if the more was asked of them, the less they gave. They wanted to thrive on genius alone, which never works.

A 28-year-old Osaka is holding an eight-day training camp in Doha.

The 28-year-old American and 2018 US Open champion was on Tuesday named in a 15-strong squad that will head to Qatar next week to prepare for the 2019 Women’s World Cup. Osaka will share the squad with the likes of Serena Williams and Johanna Konta.

Osaka has also been named by coach Sascha Bajin to play in the SheBelieves Cup, a friendly tournament featuring the USA and Brazil, that takes place prior to France 2019.

**Louise Taylor**

Louise Taylor

**Football**

**Stokes and Moore recalled for England Women camp**

An England squad has been named for the SheBelieves Cup in the US next month and there are several notable omissions.

Stuart Broad and Jonny Bairstow have been recalled for the England squad, which will head to the USA for the four-match tournament, starting in early March.

Moore and Broad were both appointed to the squad in March 2017.

The squad will take part in two pre-tournament friendlies in the UK against the Netherlands and Brazil before flying to the US.

The squad includes seven uncapped players, including Southampton’s Taleeb Ahmed, West Bromwich Albion’s Jack Sparkes and Huddersfield Town’s Alex Pritchard.

**Crystal Palace**

**FA examines Hennessy ‘Nazi salute’ controversy**

The Football Association has launched an investigation into reports of a Nazi salute being made by a Palace fan at the full-time whistle of Saturday’s game at White Hart Lane.
**Black Cats embrace illusion of old rivalry**

Jack Ross said he was unwilling to “dress this game up as something it’s not” but neither set of supporters listened to Sunderland’s manager.

Deep down, almost everyone accepted it failed to constitute a “proper” north-east derby and compensated by simply pretending it was. Indeed within the first 11 minutes there were two earsplitting giant bangs made by firecrackers released in the away end and the scent of smoke filled the cool January night air.

It all seemed more downtown Beirut circa civil war days as a Checkatrade Trophy last-16 tie uniting Sunderland’s League One first-teamers against Premier League defending, making things awkward for Sunderland. Ross’s side were initially horrible in possession and it took them 47 minutes to break the deadlock.

When Jerome Sinclair hit a post it seemed not to be Sunderland’s night. After less than eight months as their manager, with the club 14th in the table, Ross was daunted. Almost a year to the day that attracted more than 46,000, the League One Boxing Day win against Bradford, it was extremely noisy.

It all seemed more downtown Beirut circa civil war days as a Checkatrade Trophy last-16 tie uniting Sunderland’s League One first-teamers against Premier League defending. At times, it felt nearly as exciting as the real thing.

The trick to preserving that buzz, Ross said, was to sometimes look down at the away technical area, where Ben Dawson, rather than Rafael Benitez, shook hands with Ross. Admittedly the crowd was only 16,654 – 2,780 of them having arrived from Tyneside complete with police escort – which is small for a ground that attracted more than 46,000, the League One Boxing Day win against Bradford, it was extremely noisy.

The rather flexible Checkatrade rules permit Premier League sides to field five overage players. Two can even have more than 40 first-team appearances to their name, but Benitez was unwilling to risk any of his first-team squad so Dawson made do with an authentically junior side and named only five substitutes.

With the Wearside third in the third tier, an understudy to secure automatic promotion, Ross’s priority was Saturday’s home game against second-placed Luton and he duly made six changes from the side that drew at Charlton last weekend.

Nonetheless it was a strong-looking XI, captained by the former England Under-21s forward Duncan Watmore. Not that Dawson was daunted. Almost a year to the day since filling a vacancy created by Peter Beardsley’s continuing suspension while Newcastle investigate complaints of racism and bullying – allegations Beardsley denies – the understudy can reflect on a successful 12 months across the road.

Already in this competition Dawson has outwitted several high-profile Football League managers in Grant McCann (Doncaster), Harry Kewell (Notts County, since fired), Michael Jolley (Grimsby) and Sol Campbell (Macclesfield).

He has been helped by the proliferate of Elias Sasiensen, Newcastle’s 19-year-old Denmark Under-21 striker. He has scored 19 goals this season and ran out here fresh from signing a new three-year contract.

If the Dane’s relative lack of physical strength and power made things tough against Ross’s streetwise defence and eventually saw him substituted after 52 minutes, one spell of visiting pressure resulted in Callum Roberts unleashing an angled shot which Robinuition did well to divert.

Generally, though, Dawson’s side showcased some composed defending, making things awkward for Sunderland. Ross’s side were instantly horrible in possession and it took them 47 minutes to break the deadlock.

When Jerome Sinclair hit a post it seemed not to be Sunderland’s night. After less than eight months as their manager, with the club 14th in the table, Ross was daunted. Almost a year to the day that attracted more than 46,000, the League One Boxing Day win against Bradford, it was extremely noisy.
Gary Crosby has embarrassed Manchester City before and the Burton Albion assistant faces them again tonight

Stuart James

Gary Crosby looks slightly baffled when asked what he thinks comes up when his name is typed into Google. "I don't know, I've never looked myself up once," Burton Albion's assistant manager says. "I've never watched any games back that I've played in - no point. So I haven't got a clue. 'Joiner', hopefully, because that's what I am."

A friendly and refreshingly down-to-earth character, Crosby has been talking candidly at Burton's Pirelli Stadium for nearly an hour, reminiscing about the days when he was running down the right flank against miners one week and signing for Brian Clough and upsetting Alex Ferguson the next. Plucked from non-league football at 23, the winger racked up more than 150 games for Nottingham Forest between 1988 and 1994, in a period when cup finals were so commonplace for Clough and his players that Crosby has no idea how many times he appeared at Wembley.

The answer takes a lot longer to find on the internet than the footage that has arguably defined Crosby's career. It features one of the most controversial goals in English football and was scored against Manchester City, who just happen to be Burton's opponents in tonight's Carabao Cup semi-final first leg at the Etihad. "Oh right," says Crosby, sounding a little surprised after the Etihad. "Oh right, says Crosby, slightly baffled when asked what he thinks comes up when his name is typed into Google. "I don't know, I've never looked myself up once," Burton Albion's assistant manager says. "I've never watched any games back that I've played in - no point. So I haven't got a clue. 'Joiner', hopefully, because that's what I am."

The same could be said for a certain goal. "I bobbled it in as well," Crosby said in an interview 14 years later. "People are still in a state of shock."

Rewind to March 1990

To many the name Gary Crosby is the answer to the Google question. "Of course, that was Man City also, wasn't it?"

Gary Crosby was running down the right flank reminiscing about the days when he was playing for City. It was a league game in March 1990 but Crosby can picture the scene as if it were yesterday. "I can remember it being a deep cross, going around the back, maybe with Andy Hinchcliffe, and I got nowhere near it and went to the [advertisement hoardings]," he says. "And then all I thought as I got up and started running back on to the pitch was: 'He's got to have that ball in two hands.' So then I just did that [stoops to head the ball]. I don't think I even touched his hand. Whether the referee actually saw it, or to what degree he knew what had happened, I don't know."

City were furious. Their manager, Howard Kendall, remonstrated angrily with Roger Gifford, the referee, who was surrounded by City players. Dibble joined them and looked devastated when it was clear the goal - the only one of the game - would stand. Not surprisingly, it has featured on just about every sporting blooper video and DVD since. "I can never escape it," Dibble said in an interview 14 years later.

If that goal somewhat unfairly shaped the perception of Dibble's career, it feels as though the same is probably true for Crosby, albeit without the ridicule. "Maybe. It's the one thing you get remembered for," says Crosby, who was a League Cup winner with Forest in 1990. "But I had some fantastic times at Forest. Just to play in Brian Clough's side for four or five years, that's my biggest achievement in football - to be picked by him. I wasn't always the favourite, I understand that. But I must have been doing something right if he kept putting me in the side."

Crosby had been working as a joiner for six years when Clough signed him from Grantham Town in late 1987, on the back of a recommendation from Martin O'Neill, who was the non-league club's manager. Nicknamed "Meat Fly" by the Forest fans because of his slight build, Crosby was thrust into a whole new world. "I first played for Forest against Villa reserves at home on a Wednesday night [in a trial match]," he says. "When I walked into the dressing room - because it was the 1980s and I used to have long hair - Brian came in and said: 'You know those places with red and white poles outside?' I said: 'Yeah.' He said: 'It's about time you visited one.'"

"Then, straight after the game, he said he'd like to sign me. I said: 'Oh, brilliant. The only thing is I've given my word that I'll play for Man United reserves on Saturday.' Brian said: 'If you go anywhere near Manchester United, there's no contract here. So I said: 'Where do I sign?' On Friday evening there was a phone call from Sir Alex Ferguson, saying what a mistake I'd made and that I'd given him my word I would go there. But I couldn't take the chance of not having something."

Crosby played with Nigel, Brian's son, at Forest and they got on well off the field too, so much so that they discussed going into management together long before an opportunity came up in 1998 at Burton, who were in the Dr Martens Premier League, on the sixth tier of the pyramid, at the time. It says much for their friendship that they are still working alongside one another 21 years later, in their second spell at the club, after stints at Derby and Sheffield United. "That's about trust, I would say, as much as anything," Crosby adds. "Nigel's incredibly loyal, just like his dad was. He never thinks about himself. He's just honest and genuine."

Although Crosby is Clough's number two, he is often elsewhere on a matchday, looking at potential transfer targets or scouting opponents. Perhaps wisely, Crosby has opted against watching Pep Guardiola's side and it soon becomes clear the 54-year-old has been in the game far too long to be persuaded that a footballing miracle could happen. "The miracle has already happened," Crosby says. "I think people are still in a state of shock. I am, personally. You see that draw, you see Manchester City, Tottenham, Chelsea and Burton - it just looks ridiculous."

The same could be said for a certain goal. "I bobbled it in as well," adds Crosby, smiling. "Nigel always laughs at that. The couple of goals I did score were always bobbles. I couldn't finish like him."
Pep Guardiola is hopeful Vincent Kompany, who is in discussions with the club, will sign an extension.

The club’s Belgian captain, who joined from Hamburg in 2008, has a deal that expires in the summer, by which time he will be 33. He is due to be in the four competitions as far as possible. When Wigan put us out of the FA Cup last season I was sad. I take the cups seriously. Against Rotherham [Sunday’s 7-0 FA Cup win], for example, we played with nine players who didn’t play against Liverpool and the nine were a good selection.

It was perfect for the rhythm for Kevin [De Bruyne], [Ilkay] Gundogan, [Nico] Otamendi, [Kyle] Walker. It’s better to play Rotherham. Seventy minutes for Kevin at full intensity and tomorrow trying to play a little longer.

Guardiola has denied a claim that Sergio Agüero could run riot for City today, telling Wembley supporters: ‘Nobody gives us much of a chance and quite rightly so. But it’s great for our supporters’.

The matches Guardiola was referring to were the wins over Southampton and Liverpool, for which Kompany was recalled. Asked whether his defence is stronger when Kompany plays the manager said: “One against one absolutely we’re better when Vincent plays. [Aymeric] Laporte has a better left foot – every central defender has his own quality – but there’s no doubt Vincent has something special with his charisma, winning the duels. It’s incredible, he’s one of the best central defenders I’ve ever seen. The problem is whether he’s fit.”

With Burton at the Etihad for tonight’s Carabao Cup semi-final first leg, City are guaranteed to play at least five more domestic matches than Liverpool this season, after Jürgen Klopp’s team were knocked out of the FA Cup and Carabao Cup in the third round. Guardiola is unsure whether this could give Liverpool an advantage in the title race. “I don’t have a theory because of the weather.”

‘Charisma’ Guardiola in favour of Kompany extension

Vincent Kompany helped Manchester City to beat Liverpool

Jamie Jackson

Manchester City

Burton Albion

Tonight 7.45pm

Manager

Pep Guardiola

Key clash

Sergio Agüero v Ben Turner

Managers

Pep Guardiola ‘Winning is important, we cannot deny it, we are one step to go back to Wembley’

Nigel Clough ‘Nobody gives us much of a chance and quite rightly so. But it’s great for our supporters’

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Mauricio Pochettino wants to scream when he is told that he must win a trophy to validate his work at Tottenham. The manager hopes supporters see the bigger picture, how he has the club punching above their weight when it comes to things like balance sheets.

Pochettino wants to win this Carabao Cup semi-final purely for the thrill of winning and his team have put their noses in front before the second leg at Stamford Bridge, which has been scheduled for Thursday 24 January.

There was very little in it here and Maurizio Sarri - who is also without a trophy from his managerial career - departed cursing Chelsea’s lack of cutting edge. They were the team that pushed and they created the chances to have taken some reward. They could also lament the manner in which two chances came back off the post.

It was Harry Kane, inevitably, who scored the only goal - from the penalty spot - but one thing was clear. It is set up extremely nicely for the return.

Wembley had been the scene of Chelsea nightmares in late November when they simply did not turn up to the Premier League fixture with Spurs. The 3-1 scoreline was a mercy. When Sarri reflected recently on his first season in English football, he mentioned the losses to Wolves and Leicester as his regrets. The Spurs mauling? “I don’t talk about that,” Sarri said.

Pochettino started with the same system, with Dele Alli in a roving role behind Son Heung-min and Kane; partly to construct a creative platform for Alli, partly to ask him to stifle Jorginho when Chelsea had possession. That had been the basis of the league victory.

Alli released Son early on with a lovely ball over the top, which Andreas Christensen just about dealt with, and Chelsea could feel that they had made a solid start. Kane saw an overhead kick thud into Kepa Arrizabalaga - it
The tone changed on 24 minutes when Spurs got the penalty from which Kane banged home the opener, his sixth in six games for Tottenham. There are no sure things in football. There are no obviously extreme qualities. Watch him warm up before a game and you realise this overlooks the fact that when it comes to spanning a ball at goal he is prodigious, hypnotic, utterly thrilling in his power and fancywork. Some players wait the ball into the crowd during those drills. Kane absolutely murders the ball into corners. It isn’t luck, or a coincidence or goal-hungry that underpins this. He has just worked away at the margins, honed his key skill, made it so the percentages will always favour him. This was perhaps the most profound lesson to be drawn from a strange first half of this Carabao Cup semi-final. Chelsea had eight shots on target, and five of them were well saved. Kane wheeled away, looking overjoyed at his seventh goal in six games for Spurs with conviction. But then, they also didn’t have a centre-forward either. Lining up here with a three-man front line of Willian, Eden Hazard and Callum Hudson-Odoi: three excellent, skilful players full of craft and spring who between them have five goals in Chelsea’s last 20 matches.

For all its complexities, so much of football’s narrative is reverse-engineered out of the fine, sharp details. Choosing the right centre-forward, and then playing him the right way really is the most underappreciated of all these, a truism that loses nothing of its power as the game moves on around it.

And Kane was quietly brilliant here in the opening hour, playing in his slightly adjusted role with Son (Heung-min) so high up the pitch. His 1-0 goal was technically remarkable. He didn’t take a deep breath before the spot and from a standing position he had the ground by Arrizabalaga. But also to hare away from Antonio Rudiger before being bumped to the ground by Arrizabalaga.

Kane had been flagged offside. VAR suggested he was on, or on enough. The rest was a formality, a rubber stamp to the moment, a tick in the box, and a lesson too in the importance of that simple cutting edge. The crowd on that side cooed and purled. Inside Hudson-Odoi, Hazard sniped and snipped to good effect. But for all their fine approach play, their second half pressure, their possession of the ball, Chelsea’s edge was elsewhere: sitting on the bench to the 79th minute in the shape of Olivier Giroud, or absent completely in the form of the injured Alvaro Morata, who may or may not be any good. Of course, we have very important moves to Germany. If move to German would be good for him,” the Chelsea manager said.

“Is an English player, he is very young at 24 and I think he has a very good future here; with the England team and with Chelsea. I think he is a very impressive talent.”

“Is ready for the Premier League. Of course, we have very important players in the same position and he can play with only two wingers. Three is difficult. But he is ready.”

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Spot-on
Kane’s VAR-assisted penalty
the difference in cagey first leg

Tyne-Wear walloping
Sunderland prove too strong for Newcastle U21s

Halfpenny setback
Wales full-back set to miss opening Six Nations games

‘It’s no jolly’
How Harrington talked himself into Ryder Cup captaincy

Heady days
Burton’s No 2 on scoring that goal against Man City in 1990

Match report
David Hytner
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Spot-on
Harry Kane celebrates after scoring the only goal of last night’s Carabao Cup semi-final first-leg tie at Wembley
MARK GREENWOOD/IPSEX/SHUTTERSTOCK

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Cleaning Up

Tonight 9pm
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Toxic fumes threaten our children. Why don’t we act?

George Monbiot

Imagine that you could buy, in shops across the country, canisters containing toxic gas. Imagine that some people walked the streets, squirting this gas into the face of every child they passed. Imagine that it became a craze, so that a child couldn’t walk a metre without receiving a faceful. Imagine that, while a single dose was unlikely to cause serious harm, repeated doses damaged their hearts, lungs and brains, affecting their intelligence and their life chances.

It would be treated as a national emergency. Sales of the canisters would immediately be banned. The police would be mobilised. If existing laws against poisoning children were deemed insufficient, new legislation would be rushed through parliament. It’s not hard to picture this response, is it? Yet the mass poisoning is happening. And nothing changes.

According to a paper in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, burning fossil fuels is now “the world’s most significant threat to children’s health”. Their life chances are compromised before they are born. Toxic particles from exhaust fumes pass through the lungs of pregnant women and accumulate in the placenta.

Among the likely impacts of repeated poisoning, researchers now believe, is a “huge reduction” in intelligence. A paper published last year found that “long-term exposure to air pollution impedes cognitive performance in verbal and math tests”. Pollution stunts the growth of lungs as well as minds, raising the risk of asthma, cancer, stroke and heart failure.

How will this affect the Diesel Generation: in other words, those born since 2000? This was the year in which Tony Blair’s government, rather than derailing the integrated public transport it had long promised, sought to tweak the carbon emissions from cars by taxing diesel engines at a lower rate than petrol engines. Diesel cars might produce a little less carbon dioxide, but they release more nitrogen oxides and particulates, a tendency exacerbated by the manufacturers’ cheating. An entire generation – 18 years of births – has been exposed to the results of this folly.

Given that researchers have found an association between air pollution and childhood mental illness, could this help explain the rising prevalence of psychiatric disorders among English children since the first major survey, in 1999? A study conducted in London suggests that people with the highest exposure to pollution also have a greater risk of developing dementia. Might we have triggered a dementia timebomb, that could explode in 40 or 50 years?

The only difference between the absurd scenario with which this article began and reality is intent: no one means to poison children with their exhaust fumes. But the absence of a mens rea makes no difference to their health. The one-tonne metal canisters are still on sale (though the number bought has dipped slightly in the past year) and toxic gas is pumped into our children’s faces with every step they take. Especially on the way to and from school. These are the times at which children inhale the most particulates (especially if they are driven – exposure is much greater inside a car than on the pavement). Horrifying recent data also reveals that pollutants from nearby roads accumulate in classrooms, leading to higher levels inside than out. Due to the continued failure of successive governments to address this crisis, taking children to school damages their minds.

This is a national emergency. As 90% of the world’s children are now exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution, it is an international emergency. So why don’t we react as we would if the poisoning were deliberate, and ban the sale of toxic gas canisters? In the UK, the government says it will end the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans (though not buses and lorries) by 2040. Another generation poisoned. In the latest budget, it exacerbated the problem, announcing a further £8bn for roads, creating more space for toxic gas flanks.

When the government won’t act, only palliatives remain. In desperation, Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, has started installing air filters in nurseries and classrooms. It’s as if, rather than vaccinating children against diphtheria, they were issued with face masks. After the Lancet commission on pollution and health reported, in 2017, that pollution kills more people than smoking – and three times as many as Aids, tuberculosis and malaria combined – you might have hoped that governments, development agencies and health charities would have made it a priority. But they remain focused on communicable disease, while ignoring the ge, m mm ann e threat. Where is Save the Children? Where is Médecins Sans Frontières? Where are the philanthropists seeking to eliminate deaths from ambient air pollution, as Bill and Melinda Gates and others seek to wipe out malaria?
The government has failed. It’s time to go back to the people

Next week the House of Commons will take what is probably the most consequential vote of our era. Unless the government again gets cold feet, key aspects of this country’s economic model, social cohesion and international future will be shaped in the so-called “meaningful vote” over Theresa May’s Brexit deal. It will define what Britain is more than any other political event in modern times. It poses questions and choices that cannot be shirked.

This newspaper supported Britain’s entry into the European Community in the 1970s. We opposed Britain’s departure from the European Union in 2016. We took these positions on the basis of the same long-term principles. Britain is a European nation by virtue of its geography and history. It shares enduring economic and cultural ties and values with the rest of Europe. Above all, Britain has a direct interest, born of the suffering of its peoples in decades of war, in the peace and harmony of Europe from which all can prosper. In the era of Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, Britain’s engagement in Europe is freshly urgent.

However, the Guardian has never been an uncritical supporter of the EU. It has warned against the delusion of a United States of Europe. It has upheld the centrality of democratic nation states within the EU and stressed the enduring reality of national borders. It was enthusiastic about the epochal re-engagement between eastern and western Europe after the collapse of communism, but measured about the practicalities. It was critical about the reckless way that European monetary union was launched in the 1990s and, after much thought, preferred that Britain should keep its distance from the eurozone and its rules. These concerns have been vindicated by events.

Although we opposed Brexit, it is essential to understand why a majority voted for it. Leave’s victory cannot simply be dismissed as nostalgia for empire or dislike of foreigners, though these were factors. Many leave voters felt abandoned and unheard in an increasingly unequal Britain marked by vast wealth and poverty, increasing inequality across the country and growing post-industrial desertification elsewhere. Income levels in London have risen by a third since the financial crash but have dropped by 14% in Yorkshire and Humberside.

A cry for change

In June 2016 all this came together in the belief of a majority of voters that the EU did not offer the right solution to Britain’s problems. Those of us who disagree need to show humility about what happened, respect the majority, understand the swirling dissatisfaction underlying it, and address it with sustained and practical answers. Ever since the referendum, the Guardian has tried to follow that approach in these columns. We accepted, without enthusiasm, that leave had won. We saw Brexit as a cry for change. We hoped that Brexit would therefore be negotiated in the best way open to Mrs May’s government. We took the view that a “soft Brexit” would be the least bad outcome because it would prioritise jobs and the economy, maintain important links with the rest of Europe, not least in Ireland, and heal some of the wounds of 2016 by ensuring that the concerns of the 48% who voted to remain were taken into account alongside those of the 52% who voted to leave. If the government had produced something along these lines, there might have been a pragmatic consensus around a soft Brexit. We awaited Mrs May’s detailed proposals. This was the fair approach. Yet the Brexit process fell vastly short. Ministers did not say what they wanted before invoking article 50. The government took a hard approach, not a soft one. Mrs May missed her opportunity in the election of 2017. Her ministers proved incompetent negotiators. They were dismissive of parliament instead of seeking to build a majority there. Nothing substantial was done to address the social causes of the vote. The prime minister prioritised holding the Conservative party together over uniting the country — and failed in both. Her government was contemptuous of genuine concerns about everything from the interests of Northern Ireland or modern Britain. Instead of producing a deal which could command a majority in the Commons, it produced one that doesn’t even command a majority in the Tory party.

Collective floundering

This outcome is not the fault of the remainers, the opposition parties or political elites. The government’s failure is inescapable responsibility. Brexit has never been a properly worked out policy prescription for Britain’s problems. For many Tories, it is an attitude of mind, an unapologetic resentment against the modern world, foreigners, and Britain’s loss of great-power status. This explains more than anything else why hardline Brexiteers reject all compromise, refuse responsibility for the practical options, and continue to fantasise about a no-deal outcome which would make things far worse and hurt poor people most of all. It also explains why Mrs May’s deal — which leaves almost everything about the future relationship with Europe up in the air for two more years — is a leap of faith, and scarcely more acceptable than no deal at all.

There has been a larger collective floundering across the political spectrum, including in Labour. We are living through a period of national democratic failure. We are deeply divided in many ways, not just over Brexit. Long-term comprehensive reform of Britain’s concentrations of economic, social and political power is essential. Inequality must be tackled in a radical way, from the top as well as the bottom. There must be innovative, sustainable plans for towns, for the north, for the many areas that feel excluded from progress and success. There is no single magic answer to this national need. The past is no solution. That is partly why the Guardian has been and continues to be cautious about advocating a second referendum on Brexit as the solution to this wider failure of politics-as-usual. It may, in the end, be the only practical option facing MPs on Brexit. But badly framed referendums are a crude way of making democratic decisions, especially because referendums empower those who shout loudest.

Parliament’s role is crucial, but parliament is not perfect. Brexit has exposed the decrepit nature of our political system’s hardware (its constitutional arrangements) and software (the way we do politics). We need to open up to new forms of power and politics — better distributed, more diverse, more strongly integrated, and more modern. Parliamentary sovereignty needs to be better rooted in the people. Other forms of deliberative debate are essential buttresses of the parliamentary process. Ireland found a reasoned route through its own long and divisive argument over abortion through such a mechanism. A citizens’ assembly of voters — a representative group of voters selected at random — held a dignified and detailed civic conversation over several weekend sessions about the practical ways forward. The assembled conclusions formed the basis of the proposal approved by the Irish people last May and passed into law last month.

The contrast between this form of political dispute resolution and Britain’s argument in and since 2016 is humiliating. This lesson must be learned and applied in the reopening of the Brexit question.

Plausible alternatives

There is no outcome on the table this month that will not be divisive for years to come. That is true of a no-deal Brexit, which would be disastrous for the vast and diverse society we are and want to be. It is true for Mrs May’s deal, as it sets the terms of the UK’s departure but not the nature of the future relationship with the EU, leaving the door open to more venomous debate. And it is true of a second referendum, because leave voters will fear that this is merely a device to rob them of their voice and restore a failed form of politics which has done little by way of good for them.

No one creates division lightly. But divisions can be mitigated and rationally resolved in significant ways if the perils are recognised and the anxieties that underlie them are compellingly addressed. If Mrs May’s deal is rejected, as it should be, Britain should pause, consider and re-impose. This would require a set of clear and plausible alternatives, and the time and political support for the assembly to deliberate.

The Guardian has tried to follow that approach in these columns that we are seeking to heal, the medicine is not less democracy but more.

A new and fairer deal

This newspaper wants to see a reformed Britain within a reformed European Union. Neither part of this will be better achieved with Britain outside the EU. The issue facing the country this month is not simply Brexit. It is the kind of Britain in Europe we seek to be. All the major parties have, in one way or another, let the country down on Brexit. That is why any parliamentary vote for a second referendum must also be rooted in a more radical approach to political economy, in actively reducing the inequality between regions and communities, in a practical debate about immigration control, and ultimately in reform of democratic institutions. The correct relationship with Europe is inextricably linked to the need to invest in future-focused, prosperity and work, to refound a whole-nation redistribution of investment and power to the English regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

This is a movement that, in the current parliament, can only achieve if Labour wants it to happen. The responsibility on the Labour party to rise to the occasion is very great and will define its future relevance. The overarching purpose must be to bind Britain together, not force it further apart. This intent must be realised in long-term national promises, strategies and programmes, aiming at leave and remain voters alike and across the political spectrum. The message must be that this country needs a new and fairer deal, and that this is guaranteed by a better Britain in a better Europe. The government has failed, so we must go back to the people.
The economy is broken, but our leaders have no clue how to fix it

Aditya Chakrabortty

Just after midnight on 25 May 2016, a senior staffer in the remain campaign sent colleagues an urgent message. “Voters are very sceptical about our warnings on the economy,” began his email. “They don’t trust the numbers. They don’t trust the Treasury.” As head of strategy for Britain Stronger in Europe, Ryan Coetzee had bombarded Britons with evidence of the economic damage they would do to themselves if they didn’t stay in the EU. He and his team enlisted the Bank of England, the IMF, the OECD and pretty much every acronym that mattered. They’d wagged fingers, flung numbers around and pointed out the danger signs.

From David Cameron down, leading remainers considered the economy their trump card. In the biggest single choice Britain had had to make for four decades, they were sure economics would be the deciding factor. But with less than a month to go before the vote, seasoned operative Coetzee could see the strategy was failing. Why, just a few days earlier, George Osborne had produced Treasury analysis that Brexit would send house prices plunging by as much as 18% – and BBC journalists reported being deluged with calls from would-be buyers asking where they could sign up.

As remain started losing its central argument so, internal polling analysis showed, it began trailing lead. “When we started just saying, ‘the economy will be fucked,’ it showed what a profound misunderstanding they had of Labour motives,” wrote a senior remain strategist in an email to colleagues. “They’d wagged fingers, flung numbers around and pointed out the danger signs. But this economic chasm runs deeper and longer than just the past decade. Around the same time that Coetzee was raising the alarm in Westminster, I was reporting in Pontypool, south Wales. It was market day, and locals reminisced about old times, when the town centre would be “rammed”. In that day’s drizzle it was half-deserted. In the 80s and 90s, voters in south Wales were assured that vibrant new industries would replace the coalmines and steelworks that had shut down. What actually filled the void was public spending, and casual work and self-employment that barely paid its way.

“It’s dead now, because they took what they wanted,” Neil told me, his glasses specked with paint from his day job as a decorator. “They” meant Westminster, London, the rich. “Thatcher smashed the unions. Boosh! We’re out of here. Boosh! They’ve moved on.” Raised in a Labour family in a blood-red part of the country that had been deceived by the political classes for so long, he now considered all politicians “liars”. And in the EU referendum, he intended to let them know.

In the crudest of ways, Neil and others got some of what they wanted. Since the summer of 2016, politicians and pundits will freely declare that something in British politics and economics is broken. The trouble is, the governing classes are no closer to knowing what exactly is bust, let alone how to fix it.

It ultimately comes down to this: decades of privatisation, hammering unions and chucking billions at the housing market while stripping the welfare state has effectively ended any semblance of a national, redistributive economy in which a child born in Sunderland can expect to have similar life chances to one born in Surrey. Yet politicians remain fixed on mechanisms that no longer work adequately for those who actually depend on the economy. They obsess over GDP growth when the benefits of that are unequally shared between classes and regions. They boast about job creation when wages are still on the floor.

The irony is that Neil and other Labour leave voters have handed the keys to the very people least interested in reversing any of this. The top economic brains among the Brexiteers, miserable throwbacks such as Patrick Minford and John Redwood, believe the problem with Thatcher’s revolution is that it didn’t go far enough. The leaders who actually depend on the economy: if we did it more often, the answers might surprise us. The free-marketeers at the Legatum Institute did pose the question in a survey conducted in 2017. Top priorities for respondents were: food and water; emergency services; universal healthcare; a good garden bridge on the Thames didn’t even rank.

After reporting the survey, the Legatum Institute co-founder said: “Significant portions of the country ... are vehemently anti-capitalist.” The report was co-authored by Matthew Elliott, former head of the Vote Leave campaign. Which just about sums up the Brexiteers’ politics: savvy enough to listen to what people want, cynical enough never to enact it.
May knows she will be blamed for no deal. So it won't happen

Jonathan Powell

In a jam like this, when parliamentary discipline has broken down, No 10 has two last-ditch tactics up its sleeve. The first is to try to pull off the psychological trick of persuading MPs that the mood is changing, and that they had better fall in line before they miss the bus. The second is to blackmail them by painting a picture of how awful the alternative to the prime minister’s deal is, underlining that the responsibility for the ensuing chaos will lie with MPs who vote against her.

Unfortunately for Theresa May, neither of these ruses is likely to work. No 10 has been briefing since before Christmas that it is making progress with the European Union on the backstop and will soon be able to unveil changes that will make the plan acceptable to the rebels. Downing St also says it is in talks with the Democratic Unionist party - and if the DUP changes position, will most probably brief Tory rebels. This is either whistling in the wind or, more likely, deliberately misleading.

The DUP’s demands that the backstop be made time limited, or that the UK should be able to end it unilaterally, are impossible because they defy logic. The backstop cannot be time limited exactly because it is a backstop. Any end to the backstop needs to be conditions-based, not time-based, when an alternative to the prime minister’s deal is, underlining that the responsibility for the ensuing chaos will lie with MPs who vote against her.

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Neither happy talk about imminent breakthroughs nor blackmail will save May’s deal. Once again, the government is wasting time on delusions. The only way out of this mess is for the government to reach for the emergency brake and ask the EU to extend article 50. The sooner it does so, the better.
The belief that titles such as Officer, Dame Commander or Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire can be treated as symbolic, untainted by the gross brutalities of the imperial project, appear more plausible today, with historical distance. Accepting his Order of the British Empire, the historian David Olusoga, who has a Nigerian father, has insisted defensively that while “the empire was an extractive, exploitative, racist and violent institution”, the fact that “there isn’t an empire any more” changes things. Olusoga’s comforting thought runs counter to the British establishment’s own refusal, despite official criticism of the word “empire” in these titles with something less divisive. It also ignores the extent to which aspirations to a “non-white” identity can be seen as a defeat of racism. Apart from the ways in which tokenism enables hierarchical and exclusionary systems to continue as usual, the more vital question is whether OBEs facilitate the “need to confront” the history of empire. The role of an officer of the empire is hardly calculated to induce that confrontation.

The black scholar Paul Gilroy suggests that Britain’s “empire” in these titles with something less divisive, so explicitly and harmfully in the case for Brexit. Is the empire really over, or has it remained a virus-like sleeper cell in the British political imagination? The black scholar Paul Gilroy suggests that Britain’s refusal to accept the loss of empire has produced “deluded patterns of historical reflection and self-understanding”. Surely it is the task of black and Asian Britons to this nation? Beyond exceptional individual achievement, non-white Britons are entitled to their personal choices and compromises. What is more questionable is the presentation of these personal decisions as politically sound choices made selflessly in the name of all black Britons. Does having a few black names with OBE after them really signify that the British establishment acknowledges the profound historical contributions of black and Asian people to this nation? Beyond exceptional individual achievement, non-white Britons have also collectively organised for rights, fought racism and engaged in radical political education. So no: the “only options on the table” are not “to accept or decline” a seat at it. The real task is to bring this country to an understanding of what empire was, did and continues to do – and to question how a genuinely democratic decolonisation can be achieved in future.

One is either “profoundly anti-empire” or one accepts its many self-serving fictions along with the honour. Zephaniah’s choice was based on clear principles, from a long tradition of black and Asian resistance to the global harm inflicted by empire, and the understanding that imperial and domestic rule were maintained by paternalism, buying loyalties and heading off dissenters. A select class of non-white leaders could be upheld as exemplars of a just system even as the large majority continued to face widespread discrimination. Olusoga suggests that, by acknowledging the achievements of black and Asian Britons, OBEs can be seen as a defeat of racism. Apart from the ways in which tokenism enables hierarchical and exclusionary systems to continue as usual, the more vital question is whether OBEs facilitate the “need to confront” the history of empire. The role of an officer of the empire is hardly calculated to induce that confrontation. The British establishment, utterly reliant on fictions of imperial glory and benevolence, is not so naive as to facilitate its own undoing. Olusoga and others are entitled to their personal choices and compromises. What is more questionable is the presentation of these personal decisions as politically sound choices made selflessly in the name of all black Britons.

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Letters

NHS cash is welcome, but is it all an illusion?

The logjam in the political debate on how to finance our welfare state, and particularly the NHS, is described clearly by Rafael Behr (At the heart of the NHS cash boost lies a dishonesty: tax, 8 January).

The way to break this logjam and reach a satisfactory funding settlement for the welfare state is to initiate a regular “strategic welfare review”, based on the long-established process of periodic review. This is the central argument that Andrew Forsey and I advance in Not For Patching, recently published by Haus Curiosities.

The task of projecting our country’s needs, the changes in the machinery of government required to meet those needs, the costs of seeing them through and how those costs are to be funded is mammoth one. But the Office for Budget Responsibility is ideal placed to produce the necessary data on a regular basis for health, social care and social security.

Equally necessary is political courage from the prime minister to seek that longer-term settlement with the electorate on what outcomes our country desires from the welfare state and how their pursuit is to be financed.

A strategic welfare review should be tasked with looking at the potential role of a reformed national insurance base – applied to all citizens – in financing a combined health and social care service.

Frank Field MP
Independent, Birkenhead

Rafael Behr omits an explicit reference to Theresa May’s statement that the NHS plan is possible because the UK would no longer send “vast annual sums” to the EU. This is a classic magician’s trick: look, she said, here is the money we are saving by leaving the EU. But if you look closely, that money has gone: since the Brexit vote our GDP growth has slipped from the top of the G7 group to the bottom, and all the government financial assessments indicate that we will be left with any type of Brexit.

And if you want to look at medical opinion on the impact of Brexit on the NHS, read the 17 November issue of the British Medical Journal: the editorial and some articles argue that leaving the EU would have a seriously negative impact. There is a fundamental problem with magic tricks: they are just illusions.

Giuseppe Bigardi
Durham

The new money, £2bn, coming to the NHS in the next five years is welcome. Indeed, based on World Bank data as a percentage of GDP coming to health, 9.6% is the largest ever, topping the 9.4% of 2010. But this hides the fact that the percentage of GDP going to health fell in 2011 and 2013.

Moreover, the money has to go to 140 English health trusts, so it is questionable whether it meets the need. The only way to judge NHS funding is to compare it with other western countries: for example, Germany spends 11.5% of GDP, France 11.7% and the US 16.8%.

Over the past 30 years, the UK has been at the bottom of the league table, averaging 12.3%. But in terms of reducing adult mortality rates, we do better than most, including the US, indicating that the NHS achieves more with a proportionately smaller but feasible budget.

Prof Collin Pritchard
Bournemouth University

A repeal of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act is long overdue, but it is not necessary to repeal key sections of it in order to end “automatic tendering” (Time to curb privatisation of care, NHS chiefs tell PM, 8 January). The act only empowers the government to require tendering and the requirement is imposed under secondary legislation - the National Health Service (Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition) (No 2) Regulations 2013. These can be revoked with the stroke of a ministerial pen.

Getting rid of these and abandoning the intended long-term “integrated care provider” contracts would start to give some credibility to claims that privatisation of the NHS in England is ending.

Peter Roderick
London

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Prof Colin Pritchard

Anna Soubry abuse reflects the deplorable state of politics today

That a bunch of angry men should think it acceptable to intimidate and abuse Anna Soubry, who disagrees with her stance on Brexit is a lamentable reflection of the state of our political discourse, which has been continuously degraded during the past two years (MPs raise fears over abuse of Soubry, 8 January).

Those individuals (and we all know who they are) who stirred up division and antagonism during and after the referendum for their own political ends bear enormous responsibility for giving licence to extremists to behave in an aggressive and often criminal manner. It is time public figures and sections of the media stopped using derogatory and inflammatory vocabulary to describe those who hold a different view.

It is also reprehensible that

Stephen Barclay, the Brexit secretary, should suggest that this incident endorses the case for accepting Theresa May’s deal, as if this were a panacea for healing the rift brought about by the policies of his own government.

Susan Newton
Oldham

What are the Metropolitan police up to? Some years ago I was arrested and charged with “insulting and abusive behaviour liable to cause a breach of the peace” (section 5 of the Public Order Act) for protesting about nuclear missiles by lying down in silence in Parliament Square. Thankfully, the magistrate threw it out of court, making it clear that silent, still protest cannot be construed as insulting or abusive.

Today, in that same square police allow the hounding of people and the shouting of abuse, including openly racist abuse, even at the police. Isn’t this what the act is for?

Michael Ball
London

It seems extraordinary that people who declare themselves as Nazi and act in a harassing manner are themselves aping the tactics of the Brownshirts, members of the SA in pre-war Germany.

Stewart Jephcote
Bournemouth University

Nothing reveals more the surreal times that we live in than the police arrest of a woman who had shown up at the meeting of the Coventry Conservative Association and confronted a speaker.

Dr Graham Gudgin
University of Kent

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Baroness Deech, Prof Nigel Biggar
University of Oxford, Dr Philip Cunliffe
University of Kent, Prof Angus Dalgleish
St George’s, University of London, Dr Graham Gudgin
University of Cambridge, Prof Rudolf Hanka
University of Cambridge and 10 others (see gu.com/letters for full list)

Land of the setting sun

‘My wife and dog walking into the sunset together at Camber Sands, East Sussex. The weather was extremely windy and we nearly got blown away’

HILLARY BRITTEN
GUARDIAN/COMMUNITY

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Universities needn’t fear a no-deal Brexit

In their political intervention, the Russell Group and other university organisations are confusing the continually damaging withdrawal agreement, which must be voted down, with the future partnership, which is not acceptable to all countries.

The Russell Group’s funding complaints. In content and timing, the university organisations’ letter to MPs has “Project Fear” Mark IV’s fingerprints all over it. It should be seen for what it is and ignored.

As we did before. This is a win-win situation which does not require the UK to surrender sovereignty or accept destructive conditions.

The idea that whole countries should be forced into political servitude in order to qualify for academic or scientific mutual exchange is ridiculous, illogical and completely without evidence. No country has ever had to accept this from the EU before. The first major act of the May government was to pledge to support a Swiss-style payment into mutual academic research programmes, which answers the Russell Group’s funding complaints.

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Stewart Jephcote
Bournemouth University

Nothing reveals more the surreal times that we live in than the police arrest of a woman who had shown up at the meeting of the Coventry Conservative Association and confronted a speaker.

Dr Graham Gudgin
University of Kent

• Nothing reveals more the surreal times that we live in than the police arrest of a woman who had shown up at the meeting of the Coventry Conservative Association and confronted a speaker.

Baroness Deech, Prof Nigel Biggar
University of Oxford, Dr Philip Cunliffe
University of Kent, Prof Angus Dalgleish
St George’s, University of London, Dr Graham Gudgin
University of Cambridge, Prof Rudolf Hanka
University of Cambridge and 10 others (see gu.com/letters for full list)

Land of the setting sun

‘My wife and dog walking into the sunset together at Camber Sands, East Sussex. The weather was extremely windy and we nearly got blown away’

HILLARY BRITTEN
GUARDIAN/COMMUNITY

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Universities needn’t fear a no-deal Brexit

In their political intervention, the Russell Group and other university organisations are confusing the continually damaging withdrawal agreement, which must be voted down, with the future partnership, which is not acceptable to all countries.

The Russell Group’s funding complaints. In content and timing, the university organisations’ letter to MPs has “Project Fear” Mark IV’s fingerprints all over it. It should be seen for what it is and ignored.

As we did before. This is a win-win situation which does not require the UK to surrender sovereignty or accept destructive conditions.

The idea that whole countries should be forced into political servitude in order to qualify for academic or scientific mutual exchange is ridiculous, illogical and completely without evidence. No country has ever had to accept this from the EU before. The first major act of the May government was to pledge to support a Swiss-style payment into mutual academic research programmes, which answers the Russell Group’s funding complaints.

In content and timing, the university organisations’ letter to MPs has “Project Fear” Mark IV’s fingerprints all over it. It should be seen for what it is and ignored.

The weather was extremely windy and we nearly got blown away.
Political change vital to democratise AI

Stephen Cave is right to highlight the ethical issues with artificial intelligence (To save us from a Kafkaesque future, we must democratise AI, 4 January) but we should be wary of focusing on “diversity and inclusion”. He argues that including the voices of more women or black people will ensure a more ethical (and efficient) future for AI. But as software developer and activist Nishant Choksi points out: “The liberation of oppressed people can never be achieved by inclusion at systems controlled by a capitalist elite which benefits from the perpetuation of oppressions.” Let’s not kid ourselves that hiring a few black or female AI researchers would stop its abuses of power.

To democratise AI, we need to take back control of digital infrastructures and build alternative systems that serve collective interests. Refugees in Hamburg and cab drivers in Texas are running cooperative platforms for finding work. Cities such as Barcelona are building systems that give citizens control of their data. Tech and gig economy workers are unionising to demand better rights. These strategies recognise that AI systems relate to wider agendas such as privatisation and deregulation. To alter them we need political change, not just technical fixes focused on privacy or bias.

Also, we can stop using words such as Orwellian or Kafkaesque to describe the activities of tech giants and call them what they are: capitalists.

Miranda Hall
Researcher, New Economics Foundation

Public should curate cultural property

Your editorial (27 December) provides a good summary of some of the issues of cultural restitution facing museums in a post-colonial era. Britain’s civic museum collections are extraordinarily rich, reflecting the country’s imperial and industrial dominance. We are sitting on the loot of empire. But you omit that women lived so much longer than men; they were fitter and widowers were a rarity. One thing Cregan-Reid failed to note when he listed the kinds of choses that used to keep us active is that they were overwhelmingly undertaken by women - the longer-lived. Now that women are out at work and using the mod cons he mentioned (and a good thing too), I understand the gap between the longevity of men and women is narrowing - but not so much because men are partaking significantly in the domestic work.

Margaret Davis
Loanhead, Midlothian

Exercise didn’t die out with the Romans

Vybarr Cregan-Reid’s discussion of exercise claims that “After the Greeks and Romans, exercise all but disappeared from western culture.” It didn’t resurface properly until the 18th century” (The long read, 3 January). In fact, an awareness of exercise didn’t die out with the Romans.

Greeks and Romans, exercise all but disappeared from western culture. It didn’t resurface properly until the 18th century. This awareness of exercise didn’t die out with the Romans. The industrial dominance. We are sitting on a mountain of cultural property.

Dr Tessa Storey
Co-author with Prof Sandra Cavallo of Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy

Corrections and clarifications

- A fact box on Bolsover, Derbyshire, gave the proportion of non-UK-born people in the constituency as 20%. That was based on 2016 figures from the Office for National Statistics; the latest data, from 2017, put this figure at about 9% (8 January, page 17).

- A picture that accompanied a review of Pinter Five was captioned as showing Jane Horrocks and Luke Thallon in The Room. However, one of the other plays that formed the triple introduction at Leeds Playhouse was Pinter theatre (7 January, page 14).

More information is available on the website.

Alan Knight
St Antony’s College, Oxford

Ever more difficult to get what a tweet is

Having only recently learned that a tweet is a social media message, I read that “White House press secretary, Sarah Sanders, announced that Trump would be travelling to the southern border in a tweet” (Report, 8 January), which leaves me wondering if this useful neologism has also come to mean (a) a jiffy (b) a bullet-proof limo or (c) a fit of narcissistic presidential pique. Please help.

Free TV licences for the over-75s are not forced on us (Letters, 5 January). The licensing office does not hold a licence-holder’s date of birth. If you want to keep paying, just don’t let them know you are approaching your 75th birthday. My husband (nearly 78) and I (76) still pay and are happy to continue doing so.

Morgs Stark
Portstewart, County Londonderry

It’s probably too late (now fashion is involved) to point out that the cap worn in Peaky Blinders is not a flat cap, but an “errand boy” and “baker’s boy” (Backham’s men’swear label doffs caps to Peaky Blinders, 7 January). The cap in Peaky Blinders is actually named as a flat cap is flat on top, not a pastry-cook’s puffed-up confection with a button in the middle.

Joe Oldaker
Nuneaton, Warwickshire

“Saudi women to get text when marriage ends” (Report, 7 January). That’s meant to be progress!

Louise Morrey
Barlow, Derbyshire

Established 1906

Country diary

Ape Dale, Shropshire

At noon, the sun rises above the tree line and a golden edge casts a long shadow into Ape Dale. A frosty haze smokes through woods, across the brook that wriggles in tiny meanders - they call them “gippols” here in Ape Dale – to the Severn, through oaks that have stood for centuries and are studded with millions of little green crop leaves that won’t see the out the year. The industrial spaces of the old coalfield are extraordinarily rich, reflecting the cultural property.

It’s a quiet day – still and chilly. A buzzard, dark and ponderous, settles in a tree outside the shadow where land rises westwards. On a bank above is a small field, a corner of relict meadow, on top of which a bowser is parked under an oak tree. The plastic water tank on its rusty trailer may have been left in the shade at the end of last summer’s drought. The oak, rising from a hedge, may have been there for 500 years. It’s open, grown, its trunk, like a ruined stone tower glowing with silvery-grey lichens, reflects sunlight, and its crown conceals another buzzard; this tree looks much older than taller oaks nearby. It is slowly changing shape, withdrawing into the earth to withstand the weather for a few more centuries. Its internal life of fungi and insects hollows it out, making an edifice that appears monumental on the outside but is a shell supported by a thin growing layer under the bark and foliage now folded tightly in bronze winter buds. Inside, the oak is a tomb, holding the ghost of a remembered landscape, filling with shadow darker than that at the Edge. This tree is a repository of ecological memory, it grows in a dale that got its name from aparies, beekeeping, honey-making in the savage sweetness of the middle ages. The acres of wildflowers needed to feed the bees are long gone and with them the culture that created the meadows under the auspices of the monastery, leaving behind fragments of that world scattered around the dale. The bowser loses its function and agricultural ambition in its abandonment to become something placed in the old oak’s orbit like an offer.
not only in the UK but also across the globe - Burningham’s books are especially revered in the far east.

His genius lay in an ability to communicate in a childlike but never childish visual language and in his understanding of the mutually exclusive worlds of childhood and adulthood. This theme was explored in Come Away from the Water, Shirley (1977) and in Grampa.

Born in Farnham, Surrey, Burningham spent much of his childhood being moved around a succession of progressive schools that his liberally minded parents Jessie Macintosh and Charles Burningham wanted to try out. His father had fought in the trenches in the first world war but was registered as a conscientious objector at the outbreak of the second world war in 1939.

The family let out their house in Farnham and during the war years travelled the country in a caravan, setting up in remote rural spots in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Yorkshire, where his father would find work and John and his older sisters, Margaret and Elspeth, would be sent to the local schools.

While Burningham recalled with fondness the freedom of a childhood seemingly spent mostly in trees, he was hopelessly disadvantaged academically, with his arrival at each new school seeming to involve grappling with a whole new system. At the age of 13 some stability arrived when he was sent to AS Neill’s Summerhill in Suffolk, the original “alternative” boarding school, where he stayed, leaving with a school certificate in English literature but having failed the art exam.

After two and a half years of non-military service as a conscientious objector, involving heavy labour on forestry and housing projects, Burningham bumped into a former Summerhill schoolfriend on Waterloo Bridge in London, who mentioned that he was studying illustration and graphic design at the Central School of Art. John decided to try for a place himself. Despite not having attended the usual art foundation course he presented a portfolio of drawings and was accepted.

At the Central he was taught by the painter Keith Vaughan, the designer and illustrator Laurence Scarfe and the textile designer Bernard Nevill. Here he met and later married, in 1964, Helen Oxenbury.

Although Helen was studying theatre design, her own career as an illustrator blossomed too, and she went on to create many award-winning picture books including, with Michael Rosen, We’ve Going on a Bear Hunt (1989). Musing on how two artists so successful in the same field managed to stay together for so long, John speculated that the reason must be that each of them always thought of the other as the better artist.

Burningham graduated from the Central with distinction in 1959. Contemporaries there included the illustrator John Lawrence, who recalled with great affection Burningham’s wicked sense of humour.

John Burningham
Children’s author and illustrator best known for Borka, Avocado Baby and Mr Gumpy’s Outing

If you do a lot of travelling and moving about, it’s easy to go on doing just that,” the artist and picturebook-maker John Burningham, who has died aged 82, once remarked. He was referring to his peripatetic upbringing and subsequent work for the community in Calabria, Israel and Scotland as a young conscientious objector during his period of national service. But “Brum”, as he was known to friends, might just as easily have been speaking of his fearless creative journey.

The evolution of the art of picturebook-making, of composing a graphic sequence of pictures and words in interdependent harmony, owes much to Burningham, who, along with Maurice Sendak, was one of the greatest masters of the medium. With one or two notable exceptions, almost all of his work was self-authored, words and pictures developed in tandem, with increasing subtlety and economy. His first book, published in 1963, was Borka: The Adventures of a Goose With No Feathers, about a goose whose mother knits him a jersey and who has to undertake a journey by boat when the time comes to migrate. It won that year’s Kate Greenaway medal and its success launched a career that spanned six decades and more than 60 books.

There are many highlights, but the second Greenaway medal winner, Mr Gumpy’s Outing, in 1970, stands out as a brilliant example of cumulative graphic storytelling. Other much-loved titles include Avocado Baby (1982), Oi Get Off Our Train (1989) and Grampa (1984), the last of which won the Kurt Maschler award in 1984 and was adapted into an animated film in 1989.


In creating what might be termed (in Sendak’s words) “visual poetry”, Burningham constantly pushed at the boundaries of how much could be left unsaid, always treating the reader’s imagination with the utmost respect, whatever that reader’s age might be. In his books, the space between pictorial and verbal information is often large, inviting the reader to fill in the gaps.

In contrast to many of his contemporaries, such as Charles Keeping, Brian Wildsmith and Raymond Briggs, Burningham was not by any means a gifted draughtsman. It may be that the absence of mannerism or stylistic trickery in his drawing was key to the purity of voice that connected with so many readers and led to such widespread appreciation.


Linda Cyril for the Guardian, Jonathan Cape
Josephine Klein
Psychologist and academic who founded the Refugee Therapy Centre in London

He psychologist and psychotherapist Josephine Klein, who has died aged 92, had a passionate concern for social justice. It underpinned a variety of her initiatives as a researcher, writer and practitioner.

Two books came out of a period in the research section of the National Association of Boys’ Clubs in the late 1940s and a subsequent doctorate: The Study of Groups (1956) and Working With Groups: The Social Psychology of Discussion and Decision (1961). They pioneered a theoretical foundation by drawing critically on what was being done elsewhere in sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, and offered guidance on interventions in a variety of settings - therapeutic, youth and community work.

In her book Samples from English Cultures (1965), Josephine documented social change and noted who was missing out. She explored what kinds of difference it made, for example class and religion. Her analysis of child-rearing practices informed the development of interventions in schools, with parents and in youth work.

In the mid-1960s, Josephine put theory into practice when she and others set up the Archway venture in Brighton, East Sussex, initially for the mods, rockers and flowerpower people drawn to the seaside town. Some local people viewed them with hostility, but Archway addressed their vulnerability and need for support. It offered coffee, someone to talk to and a place to sleep, and marked a new kind of youth work, which also extended to children escaping physical and sexual abuse.

In 1962, and these two artists were at the forefront of a new and vibrant scale to a wide audience. It was the experience of designing bold posters clearly had an impact on the evolution of Burningham’s work in picturebooks. Most illustrators at the time would serve their apprenticeships through commissions for tightly controlled black and white line drawing, graduating to the occasional colour job if lucky.

But it was the experience of being taken to the studio that led Burningham to take matters into his own hands and to create a complete picturebook to show to publishers. The book was called Cloudland (1966), and was taken up by Tom Mauser at Jonathan Cape. Lawrence and another illustrator, John Vernon Lord, the latter a beneficiary of the brief period that Burningham spent teaching at the Central School of Art, recalled visiting the Burningham flat at the time he was working on Borka. They both spoke of their amazement at climbing down into the Percy Street basement and being presented with the art of their future collaborator and the fact that, unusually for the time, he always had transport of one kind or another, initially a Vespa scooter and later a military jeep.

Burningham travelled again after graduating, including a trip back to Israel, where he made puppets for Yoram Gross’s animation film Joseph the Dreamer (1963). But his first big break came in London shortly afterwards when he was commissioned by Harold Hutchinson, the publicity director at London Transport, to produce a number of posters. This was something of a dream commission, being comparatively well paid, printed to the highest standard and presenting the artist’s work at large scale to a wide audience.

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In former Soviet republics, a new resistance is stirring

Barbara von Ow-Freytag

An exciting wave of innovative activism is emerging across the former Soviet Union. I work for an organisation that supports civic activists and I see a new energy, self-belief and creativity that defies the pessimism permeating western debates about civil society in the region. What’s refreshing about these Generation Z activists is that they’ve linked up with designers, tech experts and artists to test new forms of advocacy, campaigning and storytelling. This has led to a surge of online multimedia campaigns and interactive games on social issues. Some have used chatbots to offer instant support to victims of human rights abuses.

In Russia, an experimental interactive online film launched by the independent news outlet Takie Dela tells the story of Katya, a young Russian girl living with the stigma of HIV. Viewers are invited to step into Katya’s shoes and are confronted with her life choices. This reaches a wider audience than a single production, the film reaches more people than a single Russian actor, and with accessible dialogue and a slick production, the film reaches more people than a single NGO ever could.

This matters immensely in a country where the government has failed to cope with one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in the world. Stigmatisation and ignorance are catastrophic. Local support groups are under growing pressure. They suffer from smear campaigns, funding cuts and being disconnected from international partners. Since the introduction of a law targeting NGOs as “foreign agents”, finding new ways to act is crucial. It isn’t just technology to which these new activists are turning. They’re filling a vacuum created by the growing rift between the government and ordinary Russians. In a recent study, 94% of Russians said they no longer rely on the state to solve their problems. That amounts to a breakdown of the “social contract” on which Vladimir Putin’s regime has long relied. It also gives Generation Z groups a chance to expand.

Take Dela is a frontrunner, combining in-depth journalism with direct support for charities working on issues it writes about. Last year it attracted 250,000 online donations. Other recent fundraising campaigns launched by Transparency International Moscow, as well as the independent Novoe Vremie (New Times) newspaper, which had been slapped with court fines, have also been successful – surely a sign of a new willingness among Russians to defend and support independent civil society.

And it’s particularly encouraging to see this apply to “harder” human rights issues such as prison conditions and torture. Studies show Russians no longer list “strong government” but “justice” as their primary demand, and rights groups are beginning to respond to this shift. Some merge activism with journalism, design, art and film. Team 29, a St Petersburg-based group defending media freedom, brings together lawyers and journalists. It runs an information platform that provides quality reporting on court cases, new legislation and human rights violations. It produces animated digital handbooks (such as “How to go to a protest and not mess it up”), and an online game offering advice on how to behave if you’re detained. With 75% of its users younger than 35, it manages to engage new audiences compared with more traditional human rights organisations.

In Armenia, the optimism and energy of young civil society is contagious. Anyone still convinced that all is doom and gloom in the post-Soviet era should pay a visit. Last year, young tech-savvy activists played a key part in encouraging citizens to take to the streets – a grassroots mobilisation that led to the resignation of the prime minister. Their communication skills also ensured the protests remained peaceful.

In Belarus, digital campaigners have built a website to help citizens. The response prompted the government to amend a controversial law on pension reform. Daria Sazonovich, who describes herself as a “socially engaged illustrator”, uses drawings and cartoons to raise awareness of the need for change. NGOs “are often caught in facts and figures”, she says. “We know how to raise awareness of the need for change. NGOs “are often caught in facts and figures”, she says. “We know how to raise awareness of the need for change. NGOs “are often caught in facts and figures”, she says. “We know how to raise awareness of the need for change. NGOs “are often caught in facts and figures”, she says. “We know how to raise awareness of the need for change. NGOs “are often caught in facts and figures”, she says. “We know how to raise awareness of the need for change. NGOs “are often caught in facts and figures”.

In Azerbaijan, where civic space is practically closed, exiled activists are connecting with those at home. Meydan TV, an online TV channel run from Berlin, reaches an audience of more than 500,000 inside Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, a popular Azerbaijani rapper Jamal Ali, who now lives in Germany, has gone viral with hard-hitting lyrics against corruption and injustice.

The new activists like to reach out to the public through art. In the southern Russian cities of Volgograd and Vladikavkaz, Anton Valkovsky, a young curator, organises “micro-interventions” in public squares and abandoned buildings as a way of prompting debate about social issues such as poor public management, neglect of the elderly and historical memory.

“Participatory art is simple, cheap and productive,” he tells me. “It involves citizens in a way that classical civic activism alone often can’t.”

These groups may seem marginal in countries that are marked by rising authoritarianism, but they’re drawing attention to concrete problems such as health issues, air pollution, social stigmas and bad governance.

This is the first genuinely post-Soviet generation of activists. They’re using technology and humour to connect, in ways that set them apart from their predecessors. They’re proving to be more active, dynamic and resilient than many of us expected. Theirs is probably a long struggle, but their innovative spirit gives them a fighting chance. They deserve our support.

In Armenia the optimism is contagious. Anyone who believes all is doom and gloom should pay a visit.

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*Activists attend a 2016 event in Volgograd, Russia* ©ALEX AKSELEYA

*Barbara von Ow-Freytag is a writer and political scientist based in Brussels*
It was like a spell, opening the doors to a dream world. “What’s News” VK.COM/WSNWS
12

Puzzles

Yesterday’s solutions

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.

Guardian cryptic crossword

Solution No. 27,713 set by Brummie

Across

1 Period furniture schedule (9)
6 Tootsie’s pay (4)
8 Idle American Liberal supporter needs muzzle! (6)
9 Bar after C sharp (6)
10 Townswoman on the outskirts of Los Angeles making records (6)
11 Stop runaway boar colliding with number of spectators (8)
12 Feeling smart? Make an offer (6)
13 Real sexist entertainer on the inside (8)
16 Passage from never-ending TV soap about bar (8)
17 Exotic insect is most particular (6)
21 Small person failed MOT — having to seek a lift (3,5)
24 Before extra time starts, Mark gets card (6)
25 Doctor finally intervenes in chronic ailment, ending in death (8)
26 Takes back gun (4)
27 In general, bustling court figure (9)

Down

1 Aim to be an instructor (5)
2 Doctor eating every last bit, given a recipe for duck (7)
3 European flower market’s ultimate sugar confection? No resistance! (5)
4 Secure plum in cases (7)
5 Trip when dancing on cruise, having snatched a kiss (9)
6 Load carried by father figure (7)
7 Implicit quality of public units (9)
13 Dismal scientist: “Dynamite to incomes!” (9)
14 Flag — Reuters wrong about dates (3,6)
17 Nasty tear on doll (snapped again?) (7)
18 Descriptive of K-9’s pinch of the ear (7)
20 Press piece’s a bit of a plant? (7)
22 One’s captivated by star-shaped feature of fluted column (5)
23 Penny, dead dishy thing (5)

Stuck? For help call 0906 200 83 83.
Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company’s access charge. Service supplied by ATS.
Call 0330 333 6946 for customer service (charged at standard rate).
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Rescue me!

How Britain fell for Romania's street dogs
Normal People: the read of a generation

A great measure of a book’s success is: are booksellers tired of being asked if they have it in stock? In one south London bookshop, the owner has put a sign in the window advising that yes, they do have copies of Sally Rooney’s Normal People, the literary phenomenon of the year.

This week, Rooney, 27, became the youngest novelist ever to land the Costa awards’ best novel category. Normal People is now favourite to win the prize for overall book of the year at the end of the month. Her second novel has been a surprise - not for its quality, which was assured after her confident debut Conversations with Friends - but for the response to it. There hasn’t been a literary novel that has had such an impact on conversation beyond the usual huddles of haters since perhaps Jonathan Franzen’s Freedom, or, before that, Monica Ali’s Brick Lane, or even before that, Zadie Smith’s White Teeth. Why?

So why has it become the novel of the moment - and, arguably, the decade? Normal People is a quiet, literary novel - but it is a zeitgeist novel too (despite being set five years ago). It’s hard not to emerge from Rooney’s book about two young people navigating adulthood in post-crash Ireland and sense that, somehow, the author has spotted something intangible about our time and exposed it. Like other zeitgeist novels, from Gone With The Wind, when mass-fiction began booming in the 1930s, to Franzen’s post-9/11 tome Freedom, Normal People has trapped a moment - in this case, our new sense of collective precariousness - whether individual, economic or political.

It is the first novel I have read that has convincingly captured what it is to be young today - often overeducated, neurotic, slightly too self-aware. So much can be read into the aspiration of the male character Connell to one day ‘start going to dinner parties and having conversations about the Greek bailout’ - a dream for a young man with preconceived ideas about what successful adults do. Or, indeed, to fellow protagonist Marianne’s sense that ‘her real life was happening somewhere very far away, happening without her, and she didn’t know if she would ever find out where it was or become part of it’.

‘Hysterical realism’ was the name the critic James Wood once gave to the mid-2000s boom of novels ostensibly deliberately setting out to capture the moment. He was not a fan of novels he saw as overstuffed with symbolism and real world events. But what Rooney does differently from Ian McEwan’s Saturday (the Iraq war) or Zadie Smith’s White Teeth (multiculturalism and globalisation) is to ensure it never feels like a lesson.

The most compelling question the novel poses is, simply: will Marianne and Connell eventually be happy? In one scene in Normal People, Connell is so engrossed by Jane Austen’s Emma that he loses track of time and, leaving the library, he marvels: “It feels intellectually unerosive to concern himself with fictional people marrying one another. But there it is - literature moves him.” There it is.

Sian Cain
Could this be Sweden's first female PM?

Sweden’s inconclusive September election saw a record 87 women take their seats in the 349-member Riksdag - the highest proportion of female MPs in Europe and the seventh highest in the world. But the country that in 2014 proudly declared that it had “the first feminist government in the world” has never had a female prime minister, and is about to enter an unprecedented fifth month under a caretaker administration.

The key to resolving the latter problem could well lie with 35-year-old Annie Lööf, a former business minister and, since 2011, the youngest ever leader of the tax-cutting, business-promoting, immigrant-welcoming Centre party. Neither is it inconceivable that Lööf, Sweden’s most trusted politician in a host of polls since 2017, could also find herself rectifying the former problem.

The election ended with the centre-right and centre-left blocs separated by a single seat, deadlocked - and facing a major problem - in the form of the far-right, anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, the fourth largest party of the previous parliament, is part of the four-member centre-right Alliance, and has sworn never to be a part of, or support, a government backed by the Swedish Democrats.

Centre’s voters could give a majority to Stefan Löfven, the outgoing Social Democrat prime minister and leader of the three-party centre-left bloc - except that Löföd campaigned on a promise not to govern with the Social Democrats either.

Both Löfven and the Alliance leader, Ulf Kristersson, have tried and failed to form a new government. Löfven was also asked to explore coalition options, but soon gave up, blaming the Social Democrats’ reluctance to accept liberal reforms.

Only two formal attempts to form a coalition as allowed before fresh elections must be called. If Löfven wins Lööf’s support, she could demand high office as a reward. Whether she would get it, however, is another matter.

Rhik Samadder

Teaching chemistry students to cook? It’s a great experiment

Imperial College London is including cookery lessons in its chemistry degree courses, starting this September. The introduction to Culinary Practice module, created in collaboration with the chef José Youssef from the Bague Culinary Centre, will allow students to “experience the ambiguities and challenges of translating written instructions into action” (ARA “following a recipe”). There are several reasons why I think this is a great idea, only some of which hold academic weight.

I met Youssef several years ago, and he is one of the most astoundingly good-looking guys I have ever set eyes upon. It’s almost unfair. Young Antonio Banderas had sex with a Magimix in Zorro’s kitchen. His science-theory-infused food is extraordinary, too. At the tasting menu I attended, we were given borscht, oyster ice-cream and a foamed squash. One course was based on a Mexican folk tale and there was a mushroom dish based around the scent of petrichor. I was like a kid in a candy store. Not a usual candy store, obviously, with piped custard and debossed happy memories. Molecular gastronomy gets a bad rap from food critics, but it’s right up my street. Sphère, emulsion, foams, there’s a whole babel-squeake theatre to this type of food that I love.

Another good sign is that the professor of surgical education and engagement science who spearheaded the changes is called Roger Kneebone. I hope that’s not one of the techniques he has pioneered. Is there anyone who doesn’t feel bewildered by such a delightful piece of nominative determinism? His involvement guarantees the course’s success.

Is cooking really educational? According to Kneebone, the thirteenth connected  - no, hold on. According to Kneebone, many surgical students spend so much time on screens that they have lost the dexterity to stitch patients. The idea is that the practical skills required by cooking will be invaluable to a new generation of scientists. I believe that’s true. Just look at The Great British Bake Off: some of its best contestants make brownies with a set square.

Cooking is one of the best teachers. Not only has it kept me sane and healthy, it has also got me interested in the science of food, despite being a chemistry brain-dud who thought an ionic bond was a Greek spy. Through cooking, I became interested in Maillard reactions, the hydrophilic-hydrophobic magic of egg yolks and the vibrational spectra of courgettes. There’s no reason this wouldn’t work the other way around - that booksmart students can’t develop their powers of observation, adaptation and hands-on ability by making chips or turning out a spotted dick.

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The university has indicated that, as part of the module, the students will have access to centrifuges, rotary evaporators and sonic homogenisers; just the ability by making chips or turning out a spotted dick.

Academics at University College London have scientifically proved the power of positive thinking. Positive mental attitude to life is associated with long-term health benefits, including more vitamin D in the blood, less cholesterol and less chronic pain. Great. Another kick in the teeth for us pessimists. When will people realise cock-eyed positive thinking is part of what led to no-deal Brexit? Does anyone actually want to live longer, any more? Withering from our salad days into the tomato-less years?

Soon we’ll see that the negative thinkers were right all along. Miserablists, this will be our year! Hurrah!
Should we rescue Romania’s street dogs?

Well-meaning people are saving abused dogs from hellish public pounds and starving to death. Why is this making experts anxious? By Sam Wollaston

On a dark, dreary winter afternoon, I have come to a farmyard in Essex, just outside the M25, to meet among others - Karine, Anna, Tommy Lee and Eskimo Joe. Tommy Lee and Eskimo Joe are from Romania, and are dogs. Rescue animals, hoping (if dogs can hope) to be adopted. Tommy Lee is missing a front leg - most probably from a traffic accident in Brasov, Transylvania - but is cheerful, inquisitive and friendly. Eskimo Joe is older, a little overweight, obstinate, camera-shy, resigned. I worry that potential adopters might not fall in love with Eskimo Joe. Karine and Anna Hauser are Swiss-Finnish sisters (human) and run the charity Love Underdogs.

Animal lovers, they were originally visiting a sanctuary in Romania for abused beasts from all over the world. But they couldn’t ignore the dogs, and started to work with a shelter in Branești, 100 miles north of Bucharest, and to bring to the UK for rehoming some of the most neglected ones. Love Underdogs is just one of dozens of charities in Britain importing rescue dogs from abroad - from Greece, Cyprus, Bosnia, and particularly from Romania, which has one of the biggest street dog problems in Europe. It’s not possible to be precise about the number of rescue dogs arriving in the UK, from Romania or anywhere else. Government figures on dog imports include commercially bred puppies. But the statistics do tell a story: no dog imports from Romania in 2013, and 3,166 the following year. Last year, the figure was 15,548.

Everyone I speak to agrees that since 2012 rule changes that harmonised the UK with the rest of the EU, making it easier to bring dogs into the country, the number of rescue dogs in the UK has rocketed. Look at all the charities out there (when Love Underdogs started releasing pets in 2012, it was one of a handful of charities doing it). Look at their social media presence. (It doesn’t take long to find a cute face, with sad, pick ME eyes). Famous people tweet about their Romanian rescue dogs. Columnists write about theirs. Then there is anecdotal evidence close to home. Well, work. Two adopters sit within five metres of my desk. As they try to persuade Tommy Lee and Eskimo Joe to pose for photos, Anna explains that the stray dog problem in Romania dates from the fall of the communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. “Countries that come out of dictatorships have a kind of shift where some things are important and others aren’t.” Dogs weren’t, so the stray population got out of control. Now it’s a political issue, and a business one - there is money to be made from keeping dogs off the street, catching them, killing them. “When it becomes a business, it becomes about cutting costs,” says Anna. They tell me about the place they found in the mountains where about 200 dogs had been left to kill each other and to starve because that’s the cheapest way to get rid of a load of dogs. And they show me pictures of public pounds where the floor is thick with compacted excrement and hair, and where carcasses are piled up on wheelbarrows.

But surely bringing a few out (they import about 60 a year) will not solve anything? Not on its own, which is why Karine and Anna are involved in projects in Romania: neutering programmes, education, working with their partner shelter, and the authorities to make the country’s public pounds less gruesome. And the few dogs they do take out tend to be the most needy. “What I say is, if you go to Romania, you look at their little faces, and then you tell me to leave them,” says Karine.

I can look at around 50 little - and not so little - faces here at the kennels near Waltham Abbey, just north of London. I meet Miss Babs, who is little and young; Lyra, who is little and young; Lyra, who is little and young; Lyra, who is little and young; Lyra, who is little and young; Moe, with little legs and a big overbite and who might appeal to a Simspon’s fan; and Winston, who is barking a lot . A lot of them are, actually, enough to drown out the roar of the M25. There are no barking incidents, a stray puppy survives instinctively... a stray puppy under the umbrella.

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Not everyone approves of bringing Romanian strays to Britain. Paula Boyd, the veterinary director of the Dogs Trust, the UK’s largest dog charity, says there are diseases in mainland Europe that we don’t have in the UK. With the pet passport scheme, a dog coming from any EU member state has to be microchipped and vaccinated against rabies and tapeworm. That is to protect humans, but there are plenty of doggy diseases that aren’t protected against, and she mentions a few scary-sounding ones: Babesiosis, which is tick-borne, ehrlichiosis, which affects platelet counts, a heart worm called Dirofilaria immitis, and leishmaniasis, which is
I am a woman nearing 40 and recently left academia for a job on an entry-level paygrade in an industry where my talents seem to be going good use; I am doing some good for the world. My heart is really in it, but my pay continues to stagnate and I am less senior than I should be. They are getting a big bang for their buck and just tell me to be patient. I cannot seem to get another job offer to improve my negotiating power. I have days where I feel so worthless. Should I threaten to quit unless they promote me? Is it really all about the money? I would consider why you feel your worth is tied up with the money and a status quo. Will you really feel “worth more” if you get another £1k a year from your employer? Why? What is it that you could or could not do for a year? Will you really feel better about yourself, or will you feel a kind of “impoverished syndrome”, stressed out at the dignity this would produce? Of course we all want to be paid for the work we do and the value we add, but if you are thinking rooted in this or in your assumptions about the worth of your previous academic background? Be in the mind there is so much uncertainty at present that you might be better working under the assumption better clear or before raising this with your employer. Meanwhile, work on your confidence and self-worth.  

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**Reply all**

I have been rescued from many positions. The Dogs Trust gets 30,000 calls a year from people wanting to relinquish animals. “I would encourage anyone thinking about getting a rescue dog to please consider a UK rescue organisation first,” says Boyden. “If you have been refused, think carefully about why. Thinking about the difficulties of getting a dog from overseas, particularly if you have never met it.”

On the behaviour side, she says that many of those dogs will have been free-roaming, used to making their own choices, and that taking those choices away by putting them into a British domestic environment can increase their stress levels. She mentions a dog from Romania in the charity’s case that was given up for those reasons. “That dog has certain challenges; it’s not in a position to be rehomed at the moment.”

For humans, it’s not easy getting accepted by the Dogs Trust. Alison Cousin says “as ‘like trying to get your child into some expensive private school’, before adding: ‘Not that I’d ever do that’.”

When her previous dog died, she knew that—being in full-time work—she would have problems obtaining a dog from a UK rescue organisation. So she got one from Romania, obviously. Via Croydon.

Suki, who came from a smaller organisation that loved Underdogs, is mostly cute, “like a black-and-white Basil Brush” says Cousin, who had no problem falling in love. They went for a walk. Suki seemed a little skittish, but Cousin, who had no problem falling in love. “Witneses… As well as working barked at, nipped or bitten—friends, brought Suki back to her home, had been checked and approved, a little skittish, but Coussins, who had no problem falling in love.

They went for a walk. Suki seemed of getting a dog from overseas, getting a rescue dog to please those reasons. “That dog has certain complex, independent, free spirits. Those who have adopted him are volunteers at a unique and valuable skillset, to work, with a professional if needs be.”

Suki, and her owner, needed to work. The vet put Suki on flunisolide (AKA Potesin). Cousin called in pet behaviour counsellor Ingrid Haskal, who didn’t want to be up before herself, “I didn’t want to be up before myself, ‘Threatening to quit is never a good idea, especially if you don’t have another role to go to, and so you’ve said, you can’t seem to get another job either. You can run a serious risk of the people who let you go out of business, but it’s a small team so every time she is absent, they are just a number and the uncertainty is so much uncertainty at present that you might be better working under the assumption better clear or before raising this with your employer. Meanwhile, work on your confidence and self-worth.  

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They are much more mature and complex than your normal poodle, and you need a different understanding of them. English dogs go as a puppy to a home; they have not had to deal with survival. Our girls are generations of survivors: they’re complex, independent, free spirits. An English dog is more of a pet and a child, a Romanian dog is a companion and a friend.”

In Wiltshire, Abbey, the Hauser sisters know it’s a commitment. But one that can be worthwhile. Their dogs are different, says Karina. “They are much more mature and complex than your normal poodle, and you need a different understanding of them. English dogs go as a puppy to a home; they have not had to deal with survival. Our girls are generations of survivors: they’re complex, independent, free spirits. An English dog is more of a pet and a child, a Romanian dog is a companion and a friend.”

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Why Colette is queen of the influencers

A new biopic of Colette starring Keira Knightley explores the enduring appeal of the French novelist, polymath and style legend. By Lauren Cochrane

Open Colette’s Wikipedia entry and – just as with one of her novels – you’re hooked right away. “She was a French author and woman of letters, also known as a mime, actress and journalist, nominated for the Nobel prize in literature in 1948.” She wrote more than 30 novels and was called “the greatest living French writer of fiction” by the New York Times, just before her death in 1954.

That’s not to mention her status as the ultimate cat lover. Thanks to Colette, feline fans on Instagram have an almost endless supply of quotes for captions (“Our perfect companions never have fewer than four feet” is a personal favourite). The other accolade missing from that impressive CV? Style icon.

Colette, born in 1873, came of age as photography became popularised. When the cheap and easy-to-use Kodak Brownie became available in 1900, she was 27 and already a personality in Paris.

She was photographed in thinker’s pose at her desk in a polka dot blouse; lounging with two cats and matching feline eye makeup; smoking in a man’s suit; in black stockings and dancewear backstage before a performance – in almost every picture, her kohl-rimmed eyes meet the viewer’s (and the photographer’s, more than likely a man) with confidence.

Colette offers a lesson in how a woman can use style to take ownership of her image – ensuring that she always has the last word.

Colette famously drew on her colourful life for her novels, including her experience of being a dancer in music halls (The Vagabond) and having an affair with a much younger man (Chéri and The Last of Chéri); the breakthrough Claudine series was inspired by her school days.

The expressive “this is me” shrug of her attitude is just as refreshing today as it was more than a century ago. It cuts through the decades much like her way of wearing men’s tailoring – in soft velvet with lashings of eye makeup and jaunty neckscarves.

Colette, the new biopic in cinemas this week with Keira Knightley in the title role, focuses on the author’s formative years. Growing up in the Burgundy countryside, she met Henry Gauthier-Villars AKA Willy, a controversial author and socialite who was an acquaintance of her father’s. He was 14 years her senior; they married in 1893. As the film tells it, Colette used fashion as a way to
express her transformation from a country girl in frills and long plaits to Parisian It girl with a bob and a trouser suit (tadpole: Knightley's leg of mutton blouses and cropped bolero could also work in 2033). Andrea Flesch, the film’s costume designer, says Colette’s style reflected not only her journey, but also the shifts in society at the turn of the century. “This period changed quite often; the shapes changed every two or three years,” says Flesch. “It was a very interesting time in fashion, the 1890s-1910s.” Colette, however, had her own style: “she was as free [with clothes] as she was in everything.” The author was so shook when it came to branding, either. Born Sidonie-Gabrielle, she became known by only her surname while she was still at school, recognising way before Madonna that a single moniker announces your importance from the get-go. After she separated from Willy, who famously plagiarised his wife, in 1906, this approach helped her as she became a giant of French literature.

Those taking style inspiration from novelists such as Colette reflect a wider, more highbrow trend in fashion: US novelist Joan Didion featured in a Celine campaign in 2015; French New Wave director Agnès Varda is the cover star of The Gentlewoman autumn edition, while painter Georgia O’Keefe’s portrait is on display at the Cooper Hewitt in New York this year. Terry Newman, in the coffee table book Lexicon of Style, and the Clothes They Wear, describes how Colette used clothes to “radiate character, both in her own life and in the lives of the characters she created in her writing.” That influence has endured in some surprising ways. From coming to Hollywood she let her name to Colette, the cult Parisian boutique that became an industry favourite before closing after 20 years in 2017. And Colette discovered Givenchy muse Audrey Hepburn, casting the almost-unknown actor in the stage version of her novel Gigi in 1953.

Always in the avant garde, Colette was also a pioneer in the acceptance of androgyny and sexuality that was, then: taboo. The film shows her relationship with antinocast Mathilde de Moray, or Missy, who was gay and wore men’s clothes. Flesch says Missy changed Colette’s style - a moment dramatised in the biopic when Knightley wears a pair of cycling culottes to stroll around a Parisian park. “Wearing trousers was a statement from Missy,” says Flesch. “She was scandalous, and she was accepted because she was a noblewoman and rich. Colette wanted to show she was on the same level. She wanted to shock as well.” Style isn’t a footnote of Colette’s legacy, it’s a central part of it.

Sixty-five years after her death, her influence extends beyond your bookshelf. Instagram captions and cinema: Colette’s free spirit is inspiring our wardrobes, too. Colette is released in the UK this week.

Neck and call

We should probably avoid trendspotting during displays of anxiety. Still, it’s hard not to make some link when you see men’s fashion choices emotionally played out in the Premier League.

Last week, during a particularly tense moment in an equally tense match between Manchester City and Liverpool, the City manager, Pep Guardiola, threw his snood on the ground in a tantrum. There was no need (City won), but when viewed alongside Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp, a manager who tends to wear his own snood-like “gaiter” wrapped around his face throughout an entire match, it suggested there is more to the snood-garter-whatever than meets the eye. It is not simply there to keep us warm: it is a tool, a shield, and a glaring example of how accessories can be weaponised against the wearer losing face.

Scarves, snoods, gaiters, ties, blankets and shawls are obviously big business in winter. We know this because they are one of the few trends that are as simple as it is mindful. “When it’s really cold, no scarf is insulating enough. I tend to grab the nearest blanket and wrap it round myself,” says the senior style editor at Matchesfashion.com, Chris Hobbs.

His flits between a yellow Loewe scarf and a large Mohair version by Acne Studios, but remains inspired by Kenny Kravitz’s giant-scarf moment. The US fashion writer Max Berlinger sits in the opposite camp. “I hate oversized ones that are chunky and look like they’re swallowing your head,” he says. “I think scarves are best when they are securely fastened at your neck and keep you warm. Life is complicated enough as it is.”

It is worth noting that snoods were banned by the International Football Association Board in 2011 and that ex Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson once called players who wore them “powder puff.” See? Emotional.

Morwenna Ferrier
Constant craving: is addiction on the rise?

From sex to sugar to social media, people are in the grip of a wider range of compulsive behaviours. What is driving them - and what can be done? 

By Amy Fleming

Addiction was once viewed as an unsavoury fringe disease, tethered to substances with obvious withdrawal symptoms, such as alcohol and opium. But now the scope of what humans can be addicted to seems to have snowballed, from sugar to shopping to social media. The UK's first NHS internet-addiction clinic is opening this year; the World Health Organization (WHO) has included gaming disorder in its official addictions diagnosis guidelines.

The first glimmer of this shift was in 1992, when tabloids reported that Michael Douglas, Hollywood royalty, fresh from starting in the erotic thriller Basic Instinct, was hooked up in an Arizona rehab facility with sex addiction. No matter that, to this day, Douglas strenuously denies ever suffering from the condition - the way we perceive addiction had begun to unfurl.

Back then, the broadening of the term was often viewed in medical circles as lazy appropriation; however, neuroscience has now largely accepted that it is the same brain chemical, dopamine, driving these irresistible cravings. What's more, our 21st-century world is so heavily baited with cues and stimuli - from unhealthy marketing to junk food, not to mention the nagging lure of online life - that it appears to be rigging our dopamine systems to become “hypersensitised”:

“The range of what people are getting addicted to has increased,” confirms Michael Linskey, a professor of addiction at King’s College London. “For my parents’ generation, the only options were tobacco and alcohol. Now there are more drugs, including synthetics, along with commercialisation and ways - especially online - of encouraging prolonged use of different things.”

Many of these emerging conditions are seen as behavioural rather than physical, substance-related addictions - but the consequences can be as grave.

“Tolerance, addiction diagnosis do apply to these disorders, says Linskey: “Tolerance, neglect of responsibilities, inability to stop, withdrawal.” Withdrawal is the obvious sticking point, although sugar withdrawal symptoms have been induced in lab rats - sweats, shakes, changes in body temperature, anxiety, the whole kaboodle. “If a teenager becomes intolerable when a gaming session is cut short, there’s some discussion as to whether that’s a sort of mild withdrawal,” says Linskey.

Once Robinson and Berridge had identified dopamine as “wanting” and pleasurable brain opiates as “liking” - two distinct phenomena - they discovered that you don’t have to like something in order to want it: a key finding about addiction.

In addicts’ brains, the craving is unbearable even when they no longer like the object of their desire. Berridge once told me that the “massive”, “robust” wanting systems in the brain can be turned on with or without pleasure, whereas pleasure “has a much smaller and more fragile brain basis ... That’s why life’s intense pleasures are less frequent and less sustained than life’s intense desires”. It also explains, perhaps, why humans are so easily headed into wanting new stuff and instant gratification, even when these things don’t make us happy.

“What’s happening in these addictions,” says Robinson, “is that the dopamine system is becoming hypersensitised, leading to these pathological motivational states.” He has identified these factors that could help explain why “there seems

"Cues associated with highly palatable foods are everywhere now"
to be a wider variety of problematic things (to get addicted to).” (He does caution, however, that “getting into social factors is very difficult in terms of proving cause and effect.”)

The first factor is that our modern environment is stuffed with craving-inducing stimuli. “People don’t appreciate the power of cues that have been associated with rewards, be it a drug or sex or food, in generating motivational states.” In fact, addicts can start liking the cues more than the end goal, such as the ringerole of scoring drugs and so on. “The amount of cues associated with highly palatable foods are everywhere now,” he says. “Drugs, sex and gambling as well, and that has changed quite a bit over the years and could be leading to more problematic use.”

Limsay agrees, adding “some of the marketing and design of gambling machines is a step ahead of all of us academics in devising ways to attract users and boost dopamine and retain them”. The “like” button, quantifying approval and igniting a compulsion to check social media, is a similar example. Introducing a report into the effects of social media on young people in early 2016, the UK’s children’s commissioner Anne Longfield wrote that “some children are becoming almost addicted to ‘like’ as a form of social validation.”

Robinson’s second consideration is dosage. Our liking of sweet tastes suited us when we were hunter-gatherers, helping us choose ripe energy sources. Now, we have high-fructose corn syrup, which now our minds with unnatural levels of glucose. Similarly with drugs, he points out: “Chewing coca leaves in the Andes is not the same as smoking crack cocaine. The pharmacology is different and this can also increase propensity to addiction.”

His final factor is simply access. “Food, sex, gambling and drugs—availability these days is much greater than it was in the past.” (For addiction can in include consuming porn, Sexting, compulsive masturbation, exhibitionism and chemsex.) All these factors, Robinson continues, “combine in complex ways - and I’m sure we don’t understand them all – to increase the probability of problematic use in a variety of things.”

Does this mean that more people are at risk in this era of throbbing dopamine excitement? “Major risk factors for addiction, such as deprivation and childhood trauma, are still important predictors for how easily your dopamine system can be hijacked, says Robinson - “but you have laden on top of that ubiquitous cues, more potent formulations and increased availability”.

Another theory about what is driving the diversification of addictive behaviours stems from a series of experiments conducted in Canada in the late 1970s known as Rat Park. The psychologist Bruce Alexander found that lab rats, when isolated in empty cages with the option of drinking either plain or drooped water, easily became addicted to heroin; if you put rats in a vast, toy-filled enclosure with other male and female rats for company, the heroin couldn’t compete. The context was driving addiction, rather than the drug itself. The resulting study made minimal waves when it was published - yet today, Alexander is being flown all over the world to share his take on addiction, which he calls the dislocation theory.

“The modern world breaks down all kinds of communities, all kinds of tradition and religious stuff that has made life integral and full for people in the past,” he says. “You can’t just say: ‘OK, now I’m going to give you back what modernity took away.” We have to reinvent society, as we perpetually do, with an eye on making sure there are enough connections for human beings with each other in a traditional way, so that people can grow up and be content enough so they don’t need to find substitutes in addiction.”

Organisations such as Addaction in the UK, he says, “are finding ways to get [addicts] together into groups and plant these groups in communities and getting the community to support people in these groups, not to give up their addictions but to have a meaningful life.”

Steve Moffatt, policy manager at Addaction, says that like all such services, “we’re just starting to try to understand the level of issues that are out there. For this generation coming from social media is a big thing and online activities generally, but we still don’t know the extent.”

Despite the increase in the range of addictions, says Limkay, there are still probably fewer addicted people than there were 30 years ago because of the level of education dependency - the most deadly one - has dropped from 50% to less than 20% in the UK. However, updates to diagnosis guidelines mean that people who sit lower on the addictive spectrum can now be seen as having problematic dependency. The influential American Psychiatric Association, he says, “used to distinguish between ‘abuse’ and ‘dependence’, whereas now they are in a single category of drug-use disorders. Perhaps as many as one in four males would meet the criteria for alcohol dependency, and a lower, but still substantial, number of females.”

And yet these people are at no risk of securers or death if they go into withdrawal. “There is a spectrum,” he says, “whether it’s alcohol or drug dependence or shopping addiction and people have become a bit more aware with placing the point at which behaviour becomes problematic at a lower level of use.”

Bowden-Jones says the best evidence for treating behavioural addictions is using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to help avoid cues (for example, taking a different route home so you don’t pass the places where you used to smoke or drink) and reaffirming what people have to lose with constant reminders, such as on wristbands.

Assistance can also come in the form of stimulus-control tools. “There are fantastic blocks to put in place that can stop you from watching porn, gambling and indeed playing computer games. And maybe, as you have an issue with, except for gaming,” says Bowden-Jones. “We need to get to a position where, in the cold reality of your day, you can say: ‘I don’t need to spend more than two hours a day doing this, so I will block myself after two hours of play.’” This responsibility, she says, lies with the gaming industry.

Mindfulness meditation has also helped to reduce substance abuse. In fact, it was found to be more effective than the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step programme and CBT in 2014 research led by Sarah Bowden, an assistant professor of clinical psychology at Pacific University in Portland, Oregon; the previous year, Bowden, Berridge and other neuroscientists’ humanities met to discuss addiction with the Dalai Lama. After all, Buddhists caught on to this craving problem thousands of years ago, using meditation to overcome dependency and to avoid the ever-present internet, for example. “Younger generations will be socially cut off,” says Bowden-Jones, “and what our patients say is when they were missing out, it pushes them more towards the virtual life that they already have a problem with rather than engaging properly in their face-to-face lives.” As Moffatt says, “that’s where they get their validation.”

Many of us would plot our internet habits on the lower end of this spectrum: slaves to our phones, wasting hours that we will never get back stuck down internet rabbit holes, compulsively checking for “likes”. “There’s a great distinction,” says Bowden-Jones, “between functional use and use that is not necessary. It’s like eating too much cake, which makes you feel bad. People who are out on social media too much, it’s not a positive experience, although it may have started off as a positive one when you were dopamine without the pleasure, again.

"Without human connections, people find substitutes in addiction"
Press one for sick, two for twisted

As star of Black Mirror’s interactive TV special, Fionn Whitehead has been forced by viewers into all manner of sadistic acts. He tells Rebecca Nicholson how it felt to be under your control in Bandersnatch.

It is strange to sit down with Fionn Whitehead only days after watching him in Bandersnatch, the choose-your-own-adventure Black Mirror episode that appeared on Netflix just after Christmas. As a viewer, you’re given the chance to make his character, Stefan Butler – a video-game developer in the early 80s whose project goes very wrong indeed – do all sorts of horrible and distressing things, directing the story, and his fate, with a series of sadistic clicks.

Of course, that’s the direction you decide upon. Perhaps you were kinder than me, and let it play out to only moderate doom. Or perhaps not. At one point, when a particularly gory option presents itself, Stefan looks into the camera and sighs, “Oh God, really?”. Before he goes about the bloody task.

Whitehead is 21, and Stefan is already his second big talking point role, after he played British soldier Tommy in Christopher Nolan’s harrowing 2017 epic Dunkirk.

Whitehead is aware of the hype around Bandersnatch – there are countless forums online attempting to map out the many courses the story could take, using a series of increasingly dense flowcharts – but the brunt of the fuss has passed him by. “I’ve noticed through my personal life as you’d expect from someone who had already sworn off social media as a teenager: ‘It’s not my bag,’ he shrugs. “It’s not my bag.”

If, of course, that’s the direction you take, Whitehead says that even the script was difficult to read; it was sent to him in Twine, software more typically used for writing games. “You spend a lot of time reading the script, thinking about the different choice paths, which added another level of complexity to the character arc.”

He reckons the average feature film takes two or three months to shoot, without alternative storylines being made up on top of each other. “But we shot the whole thing in six weeks, and it was four and a half hours’ worth of content.”

He found it helpful not to overthink it. “Stefan is totally unaware that someone else is controlling him until very close to the end of the film,” he explains. “Depending on what path you take, and all the rest of it. During the shoot, I tried to put that bit to the back of my mind, which is a hard thing to do when you’re shooting a scene that is a variation of a scene, almost the same, but very slightly different. A lot of reshooting a scene where the words would be slightly different, and shorter maybe. But you’d have to have it in the back of your mind that it’s like a deja vu thing, of having done this action before.”

Miraculously, it all comes together, and critics have responded well to its innovations, no matter how unsettling it seems for the viewer to be handed responsibility for a character’s most terrible life choices. “It was definitely an intense experience, but I loved it,” he says.

Whitehead is as closed about his personal life as you’d expect from someone who had already sworn off social media as a teenager: “I just enjoy my privacy. I think it’s important to have a life of your own, outside of work.” (His Bandersnatch co-star Will Poulter announced he was stepping back from social media in the wake of comments about the episode.)

Whitehead is clearly
‘If it moves me to tears, I’ve achieved what I wanted’

With gooses as backing singers and a thousand children singing like starlings, composer Erland Cooper finds music in the air of Orkney. Patrick Barkham meets him

It was raining; the wind was strong and a skiff of pink-footed geese was overhead, honking in the twilight, as Erland Cooper’s concert begins. Cley Marshes nature reserve on the Norfolk coast is an unusual place for a gig, but the perfect stage for an evening of music inspired by the birds of Orkney.

Cooper, known for the folk-rock of Orkney and the Carnival and the experimental soundscapes of the Magnetic North, migrated to new terrain for his debut solo album, Solan Goose, released last year. His combination of contemporary classical, ambient and electronic music sees comparisons to Ólafur Arnalds and other music of northerly latitudes, as well as winning admiration from literary figures including John Burnside and Robert Macfarlane.

“We were a wee bit stressed,” says Cooper to his audience in Cley, after a four-hour drive to the coast, “and all of a sudden the geese flew over and it reminded us why we make music. We want to take you to the Orkney islands, very slowly, very gently.” For all the gentleness, Cooper’s songs are deeply emotional and given lift by three classically trained multi-instrumentalists, particularly the woodwind notes delivered by the soothing soprano of Lottie Greenhow.

“If it moves me close to the point of tears, I’ve probably achieved what I wanted,” says Cooper when we meet the following week on London’s South Bank, where he’s rehearsing for an appearance with a rather different collaborator, Paul Weller. The “release” Cooper finds in his sparse music is matched by the release he finds in natural landscapes: “You can feel like you’re going to sob and you don’t quite know why.”

More recently, he has created the music for Netflix, a light and sound installation in Waltham Forest’s Lloyd Park, which this weekend will mark the opening of the first-ever London borough of culture. Cooper’s compositions sample the voices of 1,776 people from school, community and gospel choirs. One listener praised his samples of bird song; Cooper was delighted – they were children impersonating a starling murmuration. “They pretended to be starlings, singing at random times which is exactly what you want, and very quietly they came together, and sang together, which is scary like Hitchcock,” he says with a laugh.

Solan Goose hatched almost by accident. Cooper, born and raised on the archipelago of Orkney, was feeling increasingly stressed and claustrophobic in London. He’d arrive at his studio and turn on a noise he had heard – a jackhammer perhaps – into a “crack-a-doon out of it” and then improvise a piano over that. He named each recording after Orcadian dialect for island birds: solan goose (gannet), shadder (oystercatcher), tamnie moos (puffin) and cattle-face (short-eared owl). “It was a way to pull me home, back to childhood memory. Before I knew it, I had this fully fledged thing,” he says.

It wasn’t all quite that simple. In keeping with his commitment to Orkney traditions, Cooper tried putting traditional folk lyrics to his music, but it didn’t work. In fact, Cooper has found it a relief not to sing during a year of performing the album. “Hell out of joy with my own voice,” he says. “It’s a habitual experience when you doubt whether you can sing in the first place.” Instead, he embraced playing with classically trained musicians.

“The classical world can be intimidating for some, but I remind myself that music is just sounds, just patterns,” he says. “I’m always trying to do more with fewer notes.”

Cooper has completed the second of a trilogy of albums shaped by Orkney’s sea, land and air, as celebrated by Orkney poet George Mackay Brown. Solan Goose is the air; the sea is next; the record will be released in the spring. He returned to Orkney for inspiration, making recordings – sonic postcards – of the reverberations everywhere from beneath the pier to the inside of one of Orkney’s Neolithic chamber tombs. But he made the album in London, which provides a kind of critical distance. “I like to take [Orkney’s landscape] away in my wee books and bones and digital and analogue machines. When you listen to something out of context, that’s when you know what to keep and what to discard.”

He couldn’t wait to escape the island as a teenager. “Now all I want to do is tell people about Orkney and go back and take people with me,” he says. “There’s something about the landscape and latitude, the air is different. Over this nine-year period I’ve been making music in various guises, it’s the one true thing I constantly go back to.”

He passes and smiles. “I should work for the tourist board.”

Next is at the William Morris Gallery, London, Friday to Sunday. Erland Cooper at The Trades Club, Hebden Bridge, on 30 March.

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‘I find it too easy to fall into the trap of relying on other people’s opinions to feel gratified’

I’m always trying to do more with fewer notes...  —  Erland Cooper

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On the beach Buckie

Dying with... Emma Thompson in The Children Act

A photo from the set of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.
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**Theatre**

**Time Is Love/ Tiempo Es Amor**

Written and directed by Ché Walker, this play brings a touch of unexpected glamour to tiny Earl’s Court theatre. It is set in Los Angeles where it was originally performed, stars Gabby from the North Country’s Sheila Atim – who also composed the atmospheric score – and makes extensive use of video and dance. Yet, for all its high production values, I found it as puzzlingly enigmatic as its bilingual title suggests.

The plot is convoluted as The Big Sleep, and there are times when Walker’s dialogue seems to be paying direct homage to Chandler: at one point Atim as a sophisticated lapdancer called Rosa Chandler: at one point Atim as a sexy star  Girl from the North Country ’s Blaz and informing him, “I know you longer than your woman know you.” Atim, who played Emilia last year in Othello at Shakespeare’s Globe, here fulfills a familiar similar role in that she acts as Havana’s councillor when she is accused of infidelity. In addition to Shakespeare, the piece is also studded with references to films and plays ranging from No Fear to Mrs Warren’s Profession.

But I found myself constantly wondering what Walker was driving at. Is he suggesting, like Bacon, that there is a “wild justice” in revenge, that love is inseparable from treachery or that Los Angeles is the last refuge of the lonely? All those ideas surface but none of them is strong enough to hold the story together.

What we get is the theatrical equivalent of film noir. Atim’s music has a nerve-jangling quality. The sex, especially between Havana and the cop, is upfront and is represented both by cinematic coup d’état and choreographed movement. The threat of violence is also ever present. The cast, most of whom switch between English and Spanish, perform with great precision. Atim is always hypnagogic as a denizen of smoky nightclubs searching for romantic love. Gabriel Akudoke injects Blaz with a baffled charisma. Atim hints that Havana, however unfathomable, is at heart good, and Benjamin Caseley leaves us in no doubt that the comúnero Karl is in love with Blaz whom he incites to violence.

The strangest role, however, is that of a sex worker named Désdemoine who acts as a chorus. Played with dash and spirit by Sasha Frost, she is given to recurring dreams about preposterousfly flying over Los Angeles, which seems a rather desperate in attempt by Walker to lend mystery to a city that was once said to “have the personality of a paper cup.” Nouns such as Walker’s baroque play, it doesn’t really add up, yet I found myself succumbing to the filmic verve of his production. Michael Billington

Until 26 January

**Classical**

**Baroque at the Edge festival**

Until 2017, they were the London festival of baroque music, Lindsey Kemp and LUCY BENDING never had to worry about a performer’s laptop hooking up properly to the sequencer pedal. But since they established Baroque at the Edge, they deal with musicians who bring electronics, prepared pianos, folk instruments and more into the mix.

This weekend-long festival mines a fertile seam, inviting especially inspired performers to bring 17th- or 18th-century music into the present. Violin player Liam Byrne has inspired many new works for his old instrument, with his laptop in LSO St Luke’s, he showcased his in his afternoon concert. Composers included Nico Muhly, Edmund Fournier, Alex Mills, whose Suspensions and Solutions created hulks of sound through different reverb processes, and Samuel Milne, whose Unmished examines dementia in the way its

In the ringing acoustic of St James Clerkenwell, tapped the affinities between montevideo of the baroque and modern repertoire for solo violin. As well as thoughtful Bach, there was a slightly perturbed performance of Berio’s huge “Guardian Angel” Passacaglia, and Scarratt’s, occurring Capriccio No 2. Capping everything was Silverstein’s colossal Sequenza No 8, in which Silverstein’s control of the two distinct lines made it seem we were listening to two violins.

Back in St Luke’s in the late-night slot, soprano Nora Fischer sang barocco and Barrocco as the ever-present. The concert opener: the 1988 Christmas flip, but mentioning it underscores the success of the indelible Hearsay (1987) and All True Man (1991) albums. Hits like “Criticize” and “Fake Love” are still resonant and is upfront and is represented by cinematic and choreographed movement. The threat of violence is also ever present. The cast, most of whom switch between English and Spanish, perform with great precision. Atim is always hypnagogic as a denizen of smoky nightclubs searching for romantic love. Gabriel Akudoke injects Blaz with a baffled charisma. Atim hints that Havana, however unfathomable, is at heart good, and Benjamin Caseley leaves us in no doubt that the comúnero Karl is in love with Blaz whom he incites to violence.

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Until 26 January

The Guardian

Wednesday 9 January 2019
The great skill of Catastrophe has always been its unrivalled ability to show us brittle and spiky people, behaving mostly terribly, and then to make us feel deeply invested in their messy, fractured lives. Sharon Horgan and Rob Delaney have wallowed in their brutally unsentimental fictional on-screen romance for four years now, and what a relief it is to have it back. It is as warmly vicious, and viciously warm, as it has always been, and its acid tone cuts through with as much originality as it did in 2015.

Brilliantly, Sharon is still called “Sharon London Sex” in Rob’s phone, even though they are now married with two kids. Season three ended with its usual disaster—the title isn’t for nothing—as Sharon dealt with the fallout from the student affair and Rob, off the wagon, drunk and distressed, crashed his car. We pick up the story, and the pieces, in court, as Rob lays out what could be called the extenuating circumstances of his crime, by throwing his wife under a bus. Her concern for his wellbeing is palpable. “A criminal in a neck brace. What a fucking catch,” she cracks.

Much of the humour, or despair, is found in the mundane business of looking after the kids. Rob, busy with his job and his community service in a charity shop, has less time to spend with them, leaving Sharon with the brunt of the work. There is no saccharine familial love here, unsurprisingly: a trip to a museum leads to her own “garden variety cry for help”, as Rob puts it, and there is a moment that is Kids Say the Funniest Things, if Kids Say the Funniest Things existed as Rob puts it, and there is a moment that is Kids Say the Funniest Things.

And another thing, in other sitcom news, there’s not much I’m looking forward to more than Derry Girls, due this spring. But I’m glad this is the last series.

Ballet and Bullets
9pm, Vice

A little bit of magic, tucked away on Vice’s TV channel in one of the roughest and poorest favelas in Rio de Janeiro, 23-year-old Tuany Nascimento runs a ballet project called On Tiptoes for girls aged four to 15, many of whom come from families caught up in the area’s drug wars. Dotted with such surreal moments as pupils in pink tutus tripping through the urban landscape or dodging gunfire, this one-off documentary is an extraordinary account of daring, dreaming and hope.

Ali Catterall
## BBC One

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<td>Hollyoaks Double</td>
<td>7.00pm 8.00pm</td>
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<td>8.00</td>
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<td>Mock the Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>BBC One</td>
<td>QI Double Bill</td>
<td>9.00pm 10.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>BBC One</td>
<td>Top Gear Double</td>
<td>10.00pm 11.00pm</td>
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<td>BBC One</td>
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<td>Come Dine With Me</td>
<td>7.00pm 8.00pm</td>
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<td>Modern Family Double</td>
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## ITV

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<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>The King of Queens</td>
<td>6.30pm 7.30pm</td>
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<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>Everybody Loves Raymond</td>
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## Radio

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<td>BBC Radio 4</td>
<td>The Archers</td>
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## Other channels

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<td>Dave</td>
<td>The Jimmy Eat World Show</td>
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<td>Dave</td>
<td>The Jimmy Eat World Show</td>
<td>10.00pm 11.00pm</td>
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**Notes:**
- **BBC One** and **BBC Two** are the main channels, airing a wide range of programming from news to dramas.
- **ITV** and **Channel 4** are the main commercial channels, offering a mix of dramas, comedies, and reality shows.
- **BBC Radio 4** is the main radio channel, broadcasting a variety of shows including news, features, and drama.
- Other channels like Dave, Sky, and Others offer niche programming such as music, documentaries, and comedy. This includes shows like *The Archers* on BBC Radio 4, which is a popular radio soap opera.

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**Relevarovoditelpriuga.ru:** A website that provides news summaries. The site publishes summaries of global news and current events, ensuring that readers are well-informed about the latest happenings.
Puzzles

**Yesterday’s solutions**

**Quick crossword**

<table>
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<td>1 Storage container (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Draughts in America (8)</td>
<td>2 Cursory examination (4-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Bottle part (4)</td>
<td>4 Hang out with people of standing (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Scottish North Sea city (8)</td>
<td>5 Meat-eaters (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Compulsive purchaser (10)</td>
<td>6 Regards – features of a potato (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Very (4,2)</td>
<td>7 Hourglass contents (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Conforming to Jewish dietary law (6)</td>
<td>10 Author of The Forsyte Saga (10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 One lost bet (anag) – kind of whale or dolphin (10)</td>
<td>12 Gunfight (5-3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Sound made by a mobile phone (8)</td>
<td>13 Permanent tenure of land or property (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Imaginary evil spirit, used to frighten children (8)</td>
<td>16 Lines forming a unit of verse (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Horse-breeding establishment (6)</td>
<td>18 Seize – snatch (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Word search**

```
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
```

Solution no 15,185

```
A R M E N I A
A R M E N I A
A R M E N I A
```

**Sudoku**

```
9 5 4 1 3 2 7 6 8
2 6 7 1 3 5 9 4
1 7 9 2 4 6 8 3
5 6 8 3 2 1 4 7 9
4 3 5 9 1 7 8 2
7 1 2 4 6 9 5 1 3
6 4 8 5 3 2 1 9
8 5 1 2 6 9 4 3 7
3 2 9 1 4 7 8 6 5
```

**Word wheel**

```
C S H O P I T B S
A O S I L S E H R
N I R L R L G C M
I N N T P O S A
T I O E I R A E
R M E L V C R C S
O B A E O N H S T
C E L T I P A E R
B T E N A G E M O
E R H E N V I V A
S O A N G L I A
```

**Suguru**

Can you find 12 car models in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

**Pet corner**

Which president owned Polly the sweary parrot?

a. John Quincy Adams
b. Andrew Jackson
c. James Madison
d. James Monroe

Answer top right.