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January 6 hearings

House panel says Trump ‘chose not to act’ during attack on US Capitol

Committee investigating January 6 riots shared testimony showing that ex-president rejected pleas from even his family

The biggest moments from the Jan 6 hearings – video

[Joan E Greve in Washington](#)

Fri 22 Jul 2022 01.35 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 14.05 EDT

Donald Trump refused for hours to call off the deadly attack perpetrated by a group of his supporters at the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, the House select committee investigating the insurrection declared in its primetime hearing on Thursday.

The committee shared testimony from former White House aides indicating that Trump repeatedly rejected pleas from his senior advisers and even his own family members – including his eldest daughter and adviser, Ivanka Trump – to immediately issue a statement calling off the mob swarming the Capitol.

As Trump watched news coverage of the Capitol attack from the comfort of the White House dining room, the mob carried out violence that ultimately left several people dead, the committee said.

“In the end, this is not, as it may appear, a story of inaction in a time of crisis, but instead it was the final action of Donald Trump’s own plan to usurp the will of the American people and remain in power,” said Democrat Elaine Luria, who co-led the Thursday hearing with Republican and fellow committee member Adam Kinzinger.

More than three hours passed between the end of Trump's speech to supporters at the Ellipse near the White House and his tweet telling insurrectionists to "go home".

In that time, a group of Trump's supporters violently attacked law enforcement officers tasked to protect the Capitol and vandalized the building. Members of Congress, who had gathered at the Capitol to certify Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election, hid from the rioters and feared for their lives as the president stood by.

"President Trump did not fail to act during the 187 minutes between leaving the Ellipse and telling the mob to go home. He chose not to act," Kinzinger said.

Trump only decided to tell his supporters to leave the Capitol once it became clear that their attempts to disrupt the congressional certification of the election would prove fruitless, the committee argued. In a now infamous video message shared to Twitter on the afternoon of 6 January, Trump told the rioters to disperse while also praising them.

"Go home. We love you. You're very special," Trump said in the video.

"Whatever your politics, whatever you think about the outcome of the election, we as Americans must all agree on this: Donald Trump's conduct on January 6 was a supreme violation of his oath of office and a complete dereliction of his duty to our nation," Kinzinger said. "It is a stain on our history. It is a dishonor to all those who have sacrificed and died in service of our democracy."

Sarah Matthews, a former White House press aide who resigned after witnessing the insurrection, testified on Thursday that Trump rejected earlier efforts to bring an end to the violence. Trump was even resistant to the idea of calling for "peace" in a tweet until his daughter Ivanka talked him into it, Matthews said.

"To me, his refusal to act and call off the mob that day and his refusal to condemn the violence was indefensible," Matthews said. "And so I knew that I would be resigning that evening."

Even the day after the insurrection, Trump refused to acknowledge he had fairly lost the election. The committee [played outtakes](#) of Trump's address to the nation on January 7, in which the then-president took issue with various aspects of the script written by his team.

"I don't want to say the election is over," Trump said in one clip. "I just want to say Congress has certified the results without saying the election is over."

Trump says 'I don't want to say the election is over' in outtake video message – video

Appearing before the committee on Thursday, Matthew Pottinger, who served as Trump's deputy national security adviser, said the former president's election lies and the resulting insurrection had weakened America's global standing.

"January 6 helped feed a perception that, I think, emboldens our adversaries," Pottinger told the committee on Thursday. "I heard from a lot of friends in Europe, in Asia – allies, close friends, supporters of the United States – that they were concerned about the health of our democracy."

While Trump's advisers pleaded with him to take action on 6 January, a horrifying scene was unfolding at the Capitol. Trump's vice-president, Mike Pence, was escorted out of the Senate chamber due to safety concerns and was demanding that the US military come to the Capitol to end the violence.

Despite Pence's efforts, Trump still refused to act.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy called Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, asking them to help stop the violence, former White House officials testified.

The committee played a clip of Kushner telling investigators that Republicans on Capitol Hill, including McCarthy, seemed "scared" when he spoke to them.

In the face of those life-threatening conditions, congressional leaders persevered with their efforts to certify the election results. The committee

showed never-before-seen footage and images of House and Senate leaders inquiring about when they could return to their work, even as they hid from the rioters in a secure location.

“Other leaders upheld their oaths to do the right thing,” Luria said. She later added, “President Trump did not then and does not now have the character or courage to say to the American people what his own people know to be true. He is responsible for the attack on the Capitol on January 6.”

Bennie Thompson, the chair of the select committee who appeared virtually at the Thursday hearing because of a [coronavirus diagnosis](#), announced the panel will hold additional hearings in September.

The announcement comes amid [increased speculation](#) that Trump will soon announce another bid for the White House in 2024. Liz Cheney, the Republican vice-chair of the committee, argued that Trump’s actions on 6 January should disqualify him from office.

“Every American must consider this: can a president who is willing to make the choices Donald Trump made during the violence of January 6 ever be trusted with any position of authority in our great nation again?” Cheney said Thursday.

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January 6 hearings

Trump says ‘I don’t want to say the election’s over’ in 7 January address outtake

The 45th president was seen on video trying to record a speech after the attack on the Capitol the day before

Trump says ‘I don’t want to say the election is over’ in outtake video message – video

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

Fri 22 Jul 2022 00.35 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 14.57 EDT

Outtakes from a filmed address given by [Donald Trump](#) the day after the Capitol attack and played on Thursday by the January 6 committee show the then-president insisting: “I don’t want to say the election’s over.”

The never-before-seen footage was played in the [ninth dramatic public hearing](#) staged by the House committee, a session which focused on Trump’s refusal to act while the attack on the Capitol took place.

The committee vice-chair, the Wyoming Republican Liz Cheney, said the panel would return for more hearings in September.

The video of Trump trying to record an address was shot on the evening of 7 January, more than 24 hours after he incited a mob to [attack the Capitol](#) in an attempt to delay or stop certification of Joe Biden’s election win.

That process was presided over by Trump’s own vice-president, Mike Pence. Thursday’s hearing contained new and shocking evidence that Pence’s Secret Service agents thought he and they [might be killed](#).

The attack failed but it has been linked to nine deaths and nearly 900 people have been charged, some with seditious conspiracy.

Trump continues to pursue his lie that the election was subject to large-scale voter fraud and to suggest he will soon announce a new run for president. He could yet face criminal charges.

In the footage played by the January 6 committee, Trump is seen trying to deliver the address, with errors and complaints and offscreen prompts from his daughter and adviser, [Ivanka Trump](#).

“I would like to begin by addressing the heinous attack yesterday,” Trump begins, before pausing.

He continues: “And to those who broke the law, you will pay. You do not represent our movement, you do not represent our country. And if you broke the law ...”

Trump breaks off, wagging a finger and shaking his head.

“I can’t say that,” he says. “I’m not gonna ... I already said ‘You will pay’.”

He starts again: “The demonstrators who infiltrated the Capitol have defied the seat of ... it’s ‘defiled’, right? So I can’t see it very well. I’ll do this. I’m gonna do this. Let’s go.

“But this election is now over. Congress has certified the results.”

The 45th president stops again.

“I don’t want to say the election’s over. I just want to say Congress has certified the results without saying the election’s over, OK?”

Ivanka Trump is heard delivering prompts and suggestions. Trump resets himself, rapping the lectern with a fist.

He says “I would like to begin by addressing the heinous attacks yesterday” but pauses again, saying: “‘Yesterday’ is a hard word for me.”

Ivanka says: “Just take it out. Say ‘the heinous attack’.”

Trump says: “Ah good, take the word ‘yesterday’ out, because it doesn’t work with ‘the heinous attack on our country’. Say ‘on our country’. Want to say that?”

Restarting, Trump says: “My only goal was to ensure the integrity of the vote.”

He pauses and gestures angrily, then repeats: “My only goal was to ensure the integrity of the vote.”

Frustrated, Trump then hits the lectern again.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/21/trump-i-dont-want-say-election-over-outtake>

[The US politics sketch](#)[US news](#)

Hearing delivers gripping ‘finale’ full of damning details about Trump

Where the first seven hearings set out what Trump had done, this one told a fascinating story about what he did not do



A video of Donald Trump played at the hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

[*David Smith*](#) in Washington

Fri 22 Jul 2022 01.15 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 09.31 EDT

They did it. They pulled it off. Anyone who feared that the January 6 committee’s season finale would turn into an anti-climax – more Game of Thrones than M*A*S*H – need not have worried. There were shocks, horrors and even laughs.

The eight “episodes” have exceeded all expectations with their crisp narrative and sharp editing, a far cry from the usual dry proceedings on

Capitol Hill. Each has recapped what came before, teased what is to come and compellingly joined the dots against [Donald Trump](#).

Much of the credit must go to James Goldston, the former president of ABC News, who was brought in to help produce the hearings like a true crime series. Give that man an Emmy (if only to infuriate Trump, a TV obsessive).

Some viewers might have been disappointed on Thursday by the absence of chairman Bennie Thompson due to coronavirus (though he did join to open and close the hearing via video link). Yet with Liz Cheney in the chair and Goldston in the editing suite, a Grand Guignol was guaranteed.

There were chilling details of a US vice-president's staff calling their families because they feared death as the rioters closed in, having [breached the Capitol](#) that January 6 afternoon; there were damning stories about Trump watching an insurrection for hours on live TV and resisting pressure from senior staff to intervene; there were comical glimpses of a rightwing senator [fleeing the mob](#) he had emboldened.

And from outtakes on 7 January there was the defining image of Trump struggling to read a teleprompter, stumbling over simple words such as “yesterday”, and especially those that acknowledged he was a loser, and banging the presidential lectern like a frustrated child. “This election is now over. Congress has certified the results – I don’t want to say the election’s over.”

Trump says ‘I don’t want to say the election is over’ in outtake video message – video

To be in the Cannon Caucus Room as it all unfolded was to feel electricity in the air. It buzzed with the anticipation of reporters, photographers, TV camera operators, police officers, congressional aides and spectators. Once proceedings were under way beneath two giant chandeliers and the high, ornately-carved ceiling, Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal – who had been trapped in the House balcony on January 6 – could be seen fighting back tears as the scenes of carnage were replayed on a big screen.

Whereas the first seven hearings set out unforgivingly what Trump had done, this one told a gripping story about what he did not do, for 187 minutes on 6 January 2021. As his enraged supporters stormed the US Capitol, the president did not call them off or contact senior law enforcement or military officials who could have curbed the violence as the US Capitol Police and city police were vastly outnumbered.

What he did do was watch TV in his dining room next to the Oval Office, phone senators in a bid to make them delay the certification of his election defeat by Joe Biden, and call his unhinged lawyer and fellow coup-plotter Rudy Giuliani. It was not so much Nero fiddling while Rome burns as [Nero dancing](#) maniacally in the flames.

The details were set out with the committee's now customary slick and pacy presentation, cutting seamlessly from video deposition to 3D graphic, from archive footage to document excerpt, from Trump tweet to live witness.

Thompson and Cheney delivered pithy statements about Trump's dereliction of duty. Adam Kinzinger, a Republican member of the panel, summed up: "President Trump did not fail to act during the 187 minutes between leaving the Ellipse and telling the mob to go home. He chose not to act."

Congresswoman Elaine Luria noted that Trump was told that the Capitol was under attack within 15 minutes of leaving the stage at the Ellipse near the White House. He had just held a rally, demanding that heavily-armed supporters, [who later marched to the Capitol](#), be allowed in. A photo of Trump in the Oval Office had the caption: "Minute 11."

Luria said: "At 1.25pm President Trump went to the private dining room off the Oval Office. From 1.25 until 4:00 the president stayed in his dining room ... There was no official record of what President Trump did while in the dining room."

The dining room TV, she added, "was tuned to Fox News all afternoon" in perhaps the least surprising revelation of the hearings so far.

Indeed, 3D computer graphics showed the Oval Office and dining room, which had a TV above its fireplace, showing Fox News as it was on January

6 – a neat touch. Then there was a display of call logs and the presidential diary from that afternoon, both blank. And the presidential photographer was told “no photographs”.

Then came another pivot to video of a deposition by Pat Cipollone, the former White House counsel. He was asked if he was aware of Trump calling the defence secretary, or the homeland security secretary, or the attorney general. He was not.

The drama continued to build. There was more footage from the riot at the Capitol, which never diminishes in power, and a reminder of how the mob was just feet away from Mike Pence. A member of the crowd said: ““Mike Pence has screwed us!””

There was video testimony from an unnamed and unseen [White House security official](#) whose voice, borrowing more TV grammar, had been distorted to protect his identity: “The members of the VP [Secret Service] detail at this time were starting to fear for their own lives... There were calls to say goodbye to family members... For whatever reason on the ground the VP detail thought this was about to get very ugly.”

Did Trump call his devoutly righthand man to check if he was OK? He did not. At 2.24pm, Trump tweeted that Pence “didn’t have the courage” to overturn the election in his favour. Everyone agreed it was appalling timing.

Could Trump have addressed the nation? Again, the hearing was a model of clarity. A graphic showed how close he was to the White House briefing room. Sarah Matthews, a former deputy White House press secretary, testified in person: “It would take probably less than 60 seconds to get from the Oval Office dining room to the press briefing room. There’s a camera that is on in there at all times. If the president wanted to address people, he could have done so.”

Then, something extraordinary happened. A burst of laughter echoing in the cavernous caucus room. How could it be? The answer was Republican Senator Josh Hawley. The big screen showed a photo of him with fist raised in support of the insurrectionists earlier on January 6 – haughty, preening,

self-satisfied – and cut to a video of Hawley [running for his life](#) from the rioters as if auditioning for Chariots of Fire. Priceless.

January 6 committee watches Josh Hawley running from Capitol riots – video

Cheney remained po-faced on the dais, maintaining gravitas on this solemn occasion. Was she roaring with laughter inside? We shall never know. But it was another brilliant piece of choreography, guaranteed to provide fodder to late-night TV hosts and go viral on social media.

Kinzinger and Luria, both military veterans, formed an effective double act. Kinzinger delivered a barnstorming ending. “Donald Trump’s conduct on January 6 was a supreme violation of his oath of office and a complete dereliction of his duty to our nation. It is a stain on our history. It is a dishonour to all those who have sacrificed and died in the service of our democracy.”

Luria concluded: “President Trump did not then and does not now have the character or courage to say to the American people what his own people know to be true. He is responsible for the attack on the Capitol on Jan 6.”

And yet the door was left open for more. Thompson and Cheney announced that more evidence is being gathered and hearings will resume in September. Will this be a sequel that lives up to expectations, like The Godfather Part II, Toy Story 2 or Top Gun: Maverick? Or will it be Jaws 2? One way to settle the matter would be get Pence here to testify.

American politics has been a gruelling horror show for at least seven years now. The House committee hearings have shone an unforgiving light into every crevice with some master storytelling. The substance always matters but, for the power of persuasion, they have shown that style matters too.

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January 6 hearings

Republican Josh Hawley fled January 6 rioters – and Twitter ran with it

Capitol security footage of the Missouri senator spurred laughter during the hearing and spawned online ridicule

January 6 committee watches Josh Hawley running from Capitol riots – video

*[Martin Pengelly](#)
[@MartinPengelly](#)*

Thu 21 Jul 2022 23.40 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 14.05 EDT

The House January 6 committee on Thursday played Capitol security footage which showed the Republican senator Josh Hawley, who famously raised a fist to protesters outside, running for his safety once those protesters breached the building. It prompted a flurry of online memes ridiculing Hawley fleeing from the very people he had earlier encouraged.

Presenting the committee's case, the Virginia Democrat Elaine Luria showed pictures of House members and senators leaving their chambers.

She [said](#): “Senator Josh Hawley also had to flee.

“Earlier that afternoon before the joint session [of Congress] started, he walked along the east front of the Capitol. As you can see in this photo, he raised his fist in solidarity with protesters already amassing at the security gates.”

The committee showed the famous image of the senator raising his fist, which was taken by [a photographer for E&E News](#), subsequently bought by Politico.

“Later that day, Senator Hawley fled after those protesters he helped to rile up stormed the Capitol. See for yourself.”

The committee then played video of Hawley trotting across a corridor and hurrying down a staircase next to an escalator.

The Missouri Dems should host an annual Josh Hawley 5K as a fundraiser.

— Franklin Leonard (@franklinleonard) [July 22, 2022](#)

In the room, the clips were [greeted](#) with laughter.

Immediate reaction to the vid: [pic.twitter.com/XAv4jc2tjr](#)

— Dan Przygoda (@dprzygoda) [July 22, 2022](#)

Online, some took a similarly [lighthearted](#) view, one user [scoring](#) the footage of Hawley running to a soundtracks including [Stayin' Alive](#) by the BeeGees, [Born to Run](#) by Bruce Springsteen and the [Benny Hill theme](#).

Josh Hawley running away to a variety of soundtracks.

Pt. 2: Benny Hill Theme [pic.twitter.com/3cl6otJxiJ](#)

— Mallory Nees (@The_Mal_Gallery) [July 22, 2022](#)

Josh Hawley running away to a variety of soundtracks.

Pt. 5: Obligatory Kate Bush [pic.twitter.com/GQzDnbJb1r](#)

— Mallory Nees (@The_Mal_Gallery) [July 22, 2022](#)

Josh Hawley running away to a variety of soundtracks.

Pt. 9: Stayin' Alive [pic.twitter.com/YRf1fFMEJb](#)

— Mallory Nees (@The_Mal_Gallery) [July 22, 2022](#)

Hawley had been [the first Republican senator](#) to say he would object to results in key states won by Joe Biden, in the certification process Trump ultimately sent a mob to delay or destroy.

Hawley has denied trying to incite violence with his raised fist, [telling the Huffington Post](#): “This was not me encouraging rioters … At the time that we were out there, folks were gathered peacefully to protest, and they have a right to do that. They do not have a right to assault cops.”

Luria said: “We spoke with a Capitol police officer who was out there at the time. She told us that Senator Josh Hawley’s gesture riled up the crowd and it bothered her greatly because he was doing it in a safe space, protected by the officers and the barriers.”

The senator has also [used the image](#) for fundraising purposes.

The Lincoln Project, a group of anti-Trump conservatives, said: “Hawley’s legacy will forever be fleeing from the same mob he helped incite.”

After the mob had been cleared from the Capitol – a riot now linked to nine deaths and nearly 900 criminal charges – Hawley was one of 147 [Republicans](#) who went through with their objections to results in key states.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/21/josh-hawley-running-away-rioters-january-6>

2022.07.22 - Spotlight

- Inside Team Truss Slow off the mark but catching up fast in race for No 10
- Inside Team Sunak Tech bro vibes and Twixes as No 10 push ramps up
- Experience I was attacked by a wild boar while surfing
- You be the judge Should my fellow bridesmaid dial down the hen-do plans?

Conservative leadership

Inside Team Truss: slow off the mark but catching up fast in race for No 10

Foreign secretary's campaign bolstered by professional campaigners at nearby HQ



Liz Truss arrives for a hustings event with the Conservative Councillors' Association in Westminster on Thursday 21 July, 2022. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

*[Aubrey Allegretti](#)
[@breeallegretti](#)*

Fri 22 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT

A Boris Johnson loyalist who was caught on a trip to Indonesia when the prime minister was deposed, Liz Truss had to [scramble to pull together her leadership campaign team](#) at breakneck speed.

Though the writing had been on the wall for some weeks – evidenced by the fact that the “Liz For Leader” website was registered just two days after Johnson survived a confidence vote – the foreign secretary began from a slower start than her [rival, Rishi Sunak](#).

“Rishi’s machine is a lot more advanced than Liz’s,” said one Truss ally. “We’re up against a group who’ve been planning this for quite a long time – probably too long.”

Having to balance her bid for the top job alongside a full-time cabinet post, the foreign secretary is being supported by close allies in parliament and a group of professional campaigners working at the nearby headquarters.

For the first part of the contest, which saw MPs vote to select the final two contenders, responsibility for drumming up support and crunching the numbers fell to former whips Graham Stuart and Wendy Morton, bolstered by Truss’s special adviser, Sophie Jarvis, formerly of the rightwing Adam Smith Institute.

Now attention has turned to the fight to win party members’ votes, Ruth Porter, an adviser to Truss during her time as justice secretary, is said to be looking after day-to-day management of the campaign.

Porter has extensive experience of running a sharp operation, having come from public affairs firm FGS Global and previously been head of international affairs and government relations at the London Stock Exchange. She also has connections among policy wonks as a former head of communications for the Institute of Economic Affairs thinktank.

“She’s as dry as a pancake but got a great policy head,” said one Tory source.

Knowing the high value Truss places on carefully crafted photos posted to her Instagram, her team are also aiming to rival Sunak’s slickness on social media.

Strategic communications are being directed by Adam Jones, one of her Foreign Office political aides, and Jason Stein, a former media adviser to Prince Andrew and senior government ministers such as Amber Rudd. Meanwhile, minute-by-minute media handling is being led by Sarah Ludlow, another special adviser, who has sought to keep up Truss's momentum with a stream of lines fed to journalists about new supporters, favourable opinion polls and reaction quotes.

Away from the prying eyes of fellow MPs working for the rival campaign – and journalists – Truss's campaign is being run a few hundred metres from parliament in a £3m Westminster townhouse. The property is owned by Conservative peer Greville Howard, Enoch Powell's former private secretary and a landowner in Norfolk. It is familiar to Truss herself, given it was one of the places where Johnson's own 2019 campaign was based, when she held a key role working on policy.

Despite being the bookies' favourite thanks to her favourable polling among Tory members, Truss's inner circle is still trying to win over more MPs – including the more than 100 who had voted for Penny Mordaunt to be on the final ballot.

Given Sunak edged her on the [number of endorsements from colleagues](#), Team Truss wants to ensure it keeps some momentum by getting new supporters. “She didn’t do all those ‘fizz with Liz’ receptions for nothing,” one MP quipped.

The team was buoyed up by receiving the most significant endorsements from those who continued to serve in the cabinet, despite the wave of resignations that eventually forced Johnson out.

Simon Clarke, chief secretary to the Treasury, snubbed his former boss Sunak by backing Truss and was one of those who worked hardest to discredit Mordaunt and shore up the divided right of the party.

He could be tipped for a major promotion to the cabinet, though would be in for a tussle with the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, for the role of chancellor.

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Others supporting Truss who will hope to hold on to a space in her cabinet include Nadine Dorries, Thérèse Coffey and James Cleverly.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, the former chair of the Eurosceptic lobbying caucus known as the European Research Group, has also been instrumental in helping persuade Brexiters that Truss is a true believer, given she is a convert to the cause.

Another important backroom figure helping tout her Brexiter credentials is Hugh Bennett, who was a former aide to Brexit negotiator David Frost.

As the end of the Tory leadership contest approaches and the stakes get even higher, the battle between the final two candidates is [likely to get nastier](#). With gloomier economic conditions just beyond the horizon, Truss's outriders are preparing to step up their “stop Sunak” campaign.

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Conservative leadership

Inside Team Sunak: tech bro vibes and Twixes as No 10 push ramps up

Campaign is moving soon to bigger premises from where they hope to overtake frontrunner Liz Truss



Rishi Sunak arrives at a hustings event in London. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

[Jessica Elgot](#) Chief political correspondent

Fri 22 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT

Rishi Sunak's daughter was initially confused when she saw him going out the door the day after his resignation, asking him why he was still wearing a suit if he no longer had a job.

But Sunak was heading to a more organised operation than Boris Johnson's Downing Street ever was. The basement floors of the Grade II-listed

campaign headquarters on Dean Trench Street in Westminster have a distinctly “tech bro” vibe with trainer-wearing aides, motivational posters and colourful sofas.

The offices usually house the brand consultancy Bridge F61, co-founded by the Tory marketing guru Will Harris, part of the team that devised the slogan “The future’s bright, the future’s Orange” for the mobile phone firm.

Sunak professes to have a hip-hop playlist to get pumped up for speeches, though he admits to listening to the Global station Heart 00s on the way into HQ. And he sticks to Savile Row suits rather than Mark Zuckerberg-esque hoodies.

He starts the last leg of the race for the Tory leadership trailing his rival, Liz Truss, in polling and prepared to offer very little in terms of giveaways to party members. It is a difficult gamble, a campaign defined by caution and stressing only the candidate’s competence.

His team believe that one of Sunak’s biggest strengths is his media performances, though he can still often sound tetchy and thin-skinned. In debates he often looks far more at ease with his material than Truss does, and they believe her awkwardness will turn people off. “The more they see of her, the more people like him,” one said.

There will be attempts to recast his achilles heel – as a billionaire who can hardly claim to be in touch with working people – as a strength. Sunak has told his team he wants to talk openly about his experience as a second-generation immigrant and sell the idea of Britain as a place where people can aspire to make their fortunes, though much of his was acquired from his tech magnate father-in-law.



Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty. Photograph: Reuters

The campaign is moving soon to bigger premises in Holborn, the nexus between the City and old Fleet Street. It needs more staff space for a big operation. The aim is to get a slew of new endorsements from MPs in the coming days, and the team believe they will get them from more than half the parliamentary party.

Sunak is particularly proud of his campaign team's data-gathering nous, starting from their campaign launch, and everything is branded with their QR codes, included branded suncream – “Ready for Rishi, Ready for Sunshine” – which is handed out to journalists along with a Twix and a Sprite, reputedly the former chancellor's lucky charm snack before a big budget speech. Despite his self-professed “Coke addiction”, he has cut down to just one Coca-Cola a week.

The campaign mastermind is Liam Booth-Smith, the shades-sporting ex-Treasury aide who has long been at Sunak's side, once pictured in a leather biker jacket and shirt unbuttoned to the navel as he walked alongside his boss.

Sunak's chief spokesperson is his energetic Spad Nerissa Chesterfield, whose previous boss was Truss when she was trade secretary. No 10's Ben

Mascall jumped ship to run the media operation.

Another key figure is Sunak's digital guru Cass Horowitz, credited with overhauling his boss's image at the Treasury with slick videos and social media promotion.

Sunak's campaign video raised eyebrows for being long in the making – his domain was registered in December, at the height of the Partygate furore. But allies of Sunak swear Horowitz produced it in just a few hours, scrabbling around for family pictures on the night before its launch.

Sunak has a coterie of committed MPs who know how to do numbers – the former chief whips Mark Harper and Mel Stride, plus Grant Shapps who ran the spreadsheets for Boris Johnson's leadership campaign.

He is expected to lean on his endorsements from cabinet heavyweights such as Dominic Raab and Steve Barclay, but aides also point to the backing of next-generation female ministers such as Vicky Atkins, Helen Whately and Gillian Keegan, all of whom could be in line for promotion.

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Sunak will also use the campaigning skills of Ruth Davidson in Scotland and his ally Ben Houchen in Teesside, crucial for getting MPs in the north-east of England onboard to build his credibility in the “red wall”. Most coveted would be an endorsement from Kemi Badenoch, who worked with Sunak at the Treasury and who ran an insurgent rightwing campaign that could give Sunak credibility with that part of the party.

Barclay is the most whispered name for Sunak's chancellor; the pair worked together at the Treasury through the pandemic. Sunak would be likely to put his campaign chair, Oliver Dowden, an old friend, at his side at the Cabinet Office. And if Sunak wins her backing, Badenoch would also be likely to get a cabinet promotion.

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ExperienceSurfing

Experience: I was attacked by a wild boar while surfing

The pig pulled itself up and took a chunk out of the board with its teeth. There was a giant bite mark. That could have been me



Ingrid Seiple at Mokulē'ia Beach Park, Hawaii. Photograph: Bea Oyster/The Guardian

Ingrid Seiple

Fri 22 Jul 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 14.42 EDT

I have always loved being in the ocean. As a toddler, I swam before I walked. My dad was a Navy Seal and would take me bodysurfing, on his back, near our home in Kailua, [Hawaii](#), where I now live again, one block from the water.

When I was growing up in the 80s, surfing was considered a boys' pursuit. I was jealous of them with their boogie boards and surfboards. When I was

12, a family friend gave me their board. As far as I know, I was the first girl on this side of the island to surf. It was glorious, even though people often told me I didn't belong out there.

I went to university in California and surfed there. Longing for adventure, I bought a truck and started driving south, settling in Costa Rica, where I started a women's surf camp. A decade later, I returned to Hawaii for a master's in linguistics and to work as a massage therapist and personal trainer, and to continue surfing, which took me to Mexico, Fiji, Tahiti, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia.

One day in December 2021, I drove out at dawn to Mokulē'ia beach on Oahu's north shore. I picked a spot to surf and went down to the shore with a friend. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was out and the waves no bigger than two feet. We paddled out; he went right and I turned left. The nearest people were 200 metres away.

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine's biggest features, as well as a curated list of our weekly highlights.

I began surfing the waves, then saw something floating towards me. I wondered if it was a seal, but it looked stiff. Suddenly, it lifted its head out of the water. I was eye to eye with a wild boar, only 1.5 metres from me. It was shocked – and so was I. It had a bloody face as if it had been attacked, the longest snout, with tusks like a baby mastodon, and a look of desperation. I was afraid and, more than that, surprised. What was it doing here?

It started piggy-paddling towards me with all its might. I turned to paddle away, but its face was at my foot. I got off my board and placed it between us as a safety barrier. The pig pulled itself up and took a chunk out of the board with its teeth. I swam underwater in the other direction, and when I surfaced 3 metres away I realised it had broken through the fibreglass casing of the board and crunched through the foam. There was a giant bite mark. That could have been me.

The last I saw of the boar was it swimming out to sea, but I still needed to get out of the water because the blood from its face could invite a feeding frenzy from bigger animals. I paddled to the beach, where I discovered its tracks alongside those of hunting dogs. It looked as though it had been chased out into the ocean. My friend said it was the only time he'd seen me scared.

On the beach, a surfer known as Surf Trivia Guy [asked to record an interview](#) with me. It was picked up by news channels and circulated around the world. I didn't dwell on what had happened too much, but understood why others were intrigued. It was fun to see my interview translated into different languages.

I wasn't too traumatised; I don't consider it to be my most shocking encounter in the ocean. Three years ago, while swimming off Namotu Island in Fiji, I was stung by an Irukandji jellyfish, among the deadliest creatures in the ocean, with venom [100 times stronger than a cobra](#). I had to pull its tentacles off my face and was taken to hospital by helicopter. In 2000, I was stung by a stingray in Mexico, and in 2002 I dodged a venomous sea snake in Costa Rica.

Despite all the near misses, I can't get enough of the ocean. There are days when the water near home is a brilliant, clear aquamarine, with purple coral visible. It's beautiful and always surprising. I surf three times a week if I can. I also free dive and race canoes. I've taken part in canoe world championships for 12 years.

A few dangerous or painful encounters hardly seems a bad price to pay for extraordinary experiences. Taking a risk comes with the chance of discovering a new world and freedoms. If I were to have died on one of my adventures, I feel I would have died well. My love of the ocean will always be greater than my fears.

As told to Deborah Linton

Do you have an experience to share? Email experience@theguardian.com

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You be the judge[Life and style](#)

You be the judge: should my fellow bridesmaid dial down the hen-do plans?

One bridesmaid is stressed and can't afford the hen do, the other wants to go even bigger. Who's in the right? You decide



Illustration: Ilse Weisfelt/the Guardian

Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)

Fri 22 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT

The prosecution: Steph

Our friend wants a tropical hen do, but Katie seems to have no regard for how expensive it all is

One of my friends, Alisee, recently got engaged. Even though she's not getting married for another year and a half, the preparations have already begun. It's all we ever talk about.

I'm a bridesmaid, along with my good friend Katie. I was pleased to be asked, but I've found that Katie is really enthusiastic about bridesmaid duties whereas I'm more apprehensive. Katie has made a WhatsApp group for all us bridesmaids and keeps hyping Alisee's ideas up, even when they are ridiculous. I'm not sure I can keep this up for another 18 months.

From the minute Alisee got engaged, Katie has taken it upon herself to explain the bridesmaid duties to us in minute detail. She said we have to start preparations for the hen do immediately, and calls monthly bridesmaids meetings to plan it all. We have to collect money from Alisee's friends to fund the hen do, too.

Perhaps it's because I'm single, but I just can't imagine ever acting the same way

For the trip, Alisee wants a tropical location with a villa, butler service, loads of activities, a spa day and a night out. Katie has agreed to it all, and made it worse by suggesting we get personalised robes. I've told Katie to calm it down, as it's going to take a lot of money and time. But Katie thinks it is all totally acceptable. How can I be expected to get all this done on top of my job? I'm also not sure I can afford it. I don't earn as much as some of the others.

We're a tight-knit group of friends. Katie has been married for years and I think the reason she's so happy to appease Alisee is because she was a bit of a bridezilla herself. At her wedding, Katie changed the bridesmaid dresses at the last minute and put us in ones that we all hated.

Perhaps it's because I'm one of the few single friends in the group, but I can't imagine acting the same way. Alisee also wants us to pay for our bridesmaid dresses, which Katie says is "totally normal". I've suggested to Katie that we arrange a meeting with Alisee to manage expectations and

costs. But Katie thinks that will ruin Alisee's high. She said, "We'll probably only get married once: we have to do this for our best friend." But I don't want to speak to Alisee alone, and would like the backing of my friend. It would be good to get together and say something before it gets out of hand.

The defence: Katie

Steph needs to step up for her best friend – a girl's wedding is the most important day of her life

My philosophy is that a girl's wedding is the most important day of her life. We need to be there as much as possible for Alisee because she will only do this once.

Perhaps it's because I've been through it myself, but I don't think Alisee's demands are crazy. It's just what you do when you get married; you distribute responsibilities among your bridesmaids, and ask them to plan your hen. Steph and I are leading this. The WhatsApp group helped get things in order from the very start. We have to plan the hen do in advance because things will get booked up. That's just how it works.

I'm supporting Alisee and suggesting additions that will make the hen do extra special, like professional catering and a lovely villa with a pool. Steph is being a bit negative and saying that it's all too expensive, but most of these demands are coming from the bride, not me. I just want to do the best job possible for Alisee.

It's like a fun little club, and it's all about celebrating your friend

Steph was initially onboard with all my plans but now she's saying things like: "Do we have to keep messaging about drinking games when it's more than a year away?" She doesn't even really reply to a lot of the group chat any more. I'm worried she will be totally out of the loop by the time the hen do rolls around. It's a bit concerning.

I think that being a bridesmaid is so rewarding. You get to be front and centre at a loved one's wedding and you can make the hen do really special.

Usually you get to stay with the wedding party the night before. It's like a fun little club celebrating your friend.

When Alisee asked us both to be bridesmaids, I was really excited. I think, initially, Steph was too, but now the reality of what we have to do has sunk in and she's getting a bit nervous. I understand that Steph isn't as well-off as some of us, but I think if we just treat the hen do abroad as a girls' holiday, it will be fine. We would have spent that money on another trip anyway.

I don't want to rain on Alisee's parade and tell her to tone down her requests as I don't think they are that extreme. Steph just needs to get over the psychological barrier of it and step up for her best friend.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Katie help Steph talk to the bride about toning down the hen do?

To this middle-aged feminist, this all sounds ridiculous. Katie is clearly putting her friendship with Alisee and her wedding obsession over her friendship with Steph. She doesn't seem to be taking any of Steph's concerns seriously, even the financial ones, which is callous.

Beck, 56

Katie's enthusiasm is admirable but she must understand that other people have different priorities. Discussing drinking games for a hen do that is 18 months away is overkill. She should also take into account the financial means of the bridesmaids, not just the bride's "wants".

Marcin, 45

Alisee is asking a huge amount of her bridesmaids. I think Steph is absolutely right to set some boundaries and take a step back. She can't be spending a fortune on a trip she has no choice in.

Lydia, 26

By using the word "demands", Katie has inadvertently hit the nail on the head. It all sounds very demanding – and now accelerated into the

“bridesmaidzilla” stratosphere. Katie is obtuse to Steph’s worries. There is a lot about what she thinks, but no concern about leaving Steph out of pocket. Katie needs to chill out and check her ego.

Bryony, 47

We have two people who are talking to each other but not listening to each other’s point of view. Katie is consumed with wanting to do the best for Alisee but isn’t taking account of Steph’s apprehensions. On the other hand, Steph is not properly participating in discussions. Given that the three of them are longstanding friends, it’s surprising that neither of them have felt able to meet together with Alisee and come to a sensible compromise.

Guy, 69

You be the judge

So now you can be the judge. In our online poll below, tell us: should Katie agree to dial down the hen-do?

We’ll share the results on next week’s You be the judge.

The poll will close on Thursday 28 July 9am BST

Last week’s result

We asked whether Max should get a [third video game console](#), since his girlfriend Bryony thinks there’s not enough space.

24% of you said no – Max is guilty

76% of you said yes – Max is innocent

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2022.07.22 - Opinion

- I've fought wildfires for decades. None of it prepared me for the UK infernos this week
- Trump, modern Nero, watched the Capitol sacked from a White House dining room
- Digested week: Britain's heatwave meltdown mystifies Americans
- Being 'economical with the truth' has a long history in British politics – but enough is enough

[Opinion](#)[Firefighters](#)

I've fought wildfires for decades. None of it prepared me for the UK infernos this week

[Tim Green](#)

The fire service is at the frontline of the climate crisis – yet with 11,500 frontline staff cut we are simply not equipped for it



‘My fire service was just one of 15 across the country to declare a major incident on Tuesday 19 July.’ Firefighters in Wennington, east London.
Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Fri 22 Jul 2022 04.51 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 07.36 EDT

Over the last 27 years as a firefighter, I have fought plenty of wildfires and other extreme weather events, and I have seen at first hand how these incidents have become more frequent and extreme. At my former station in

Herne Bay, on the north Kent coast, we had specialist equipment for fighting wildfires, and we would travel for miles to tackle flames raging across land.

None of it compared to what I experienced in [this week's heatwave](#).

The record-breaking, sweltering temperatures were incredibly difficult to work in. Callouts to fires were relentless, and our time between incidents, to recuperate, rehydrate and take measures to prevent ourselves from falling ill, was very short.

While temperatures were at boiling point, we were at breaking point. We were so overstretched that at a fire where 40 trees were alight, I was one of a crew of only six firefighters available to tackle it. We could not spare anyone else due to two [huge incidents](#) up at Dartford that needed our people and resources.

My fire service, Kent fire and rescue service, was just one of 14 fire services across the country to declare a major incident on Tuesday 19 July, when temperatures reached record highs across the UK. It is no coincidence that all these fire services have had their firefighter numbers slashed, and funding cut by central government, since 2010.

Across the board, 11,500 frontline firefighter jobs [have been cut](#) in the UK fire and rescue service over the last decade. In Kent, our firefighter numbers have been slashed by 27% in that time. We are expected to do more with less; and it's putting not only the public but also firefighters at risk.

We were lucky in my fire service that no firefighters were seriously hurt, but some had to be treated for heat-related injuries. In other fire services, several of our brothers and sisters were injured while attending wildfires and other incidents caused by the scorching temperatures. Some even required hospitalisation.

It is clear that we are facing an epic climate emergency – and it is clear that this is an emergency that the UK fire and rescue service is not prepared for.

Record-breaking hot temperatures spark fires across England – video

The blame lies squarely at the government's door. These events were not unprecedented. [Firefighters](#) and the Fire Brigades Union have consistently warned about the growing number and scale of incidents linked to the climate crisis, and the pressure it is putting on our service. We have persistently called for investment and a reversal in the cuts to firefighter numbers so we are ready to protect our communities. Our warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

This very same government has showered us with praise for our response to this week's emergencies, but praise does not ease how burnt-out we are. Praise does not guarantee public safety.

If anything has been shown by this heatwave, it is how valuable our fire service and firefighters are. Yet it is clear that despite their praise, the government does not value us. We have still not heard a peep from a single government minister about properly resourcing the service for future climate disasters. Their thanks for our life-saving work is a paltry 2% pay offer, which is in reality a further cut in real wages. It is nothing more than an insult.

This week must be a wake-up call for the government. Delaying investment in the fire service is like waiting for rain to put out a wildfire. It is ineffective and dangerous. They cannot wait until another climate catastrophe before funding the frontline.

- Tim Green is a firefighter for Kent fire and rescue service and the Fire Brigades Union's south-east regional chair
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

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OpinionJanuary 6 hearings

Trump, modern Nero, watched the Capitol sacked from a White House dining room

[Lloyd Green](#)

Trump never asked the FBI or the national guard to protect Congress. He rebuffed entreaties to end the crisis. That's because he liked what he saw



Sarah Matthews, Trump's deputy press secretary, testified on Thursday that her boss gave the rioters a 'green light' and 'poured gasoline on a fire.'
Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Thu 21 Jul 2022 23.44 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 09.49 EDT

Thursday night's congressional hearing on the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol lived up to its billing as a season finale. A modern-day Nero, Trump watched reports of the invasion of the Capitol on Fox News [from the](#)

comfort of his private White House dining room. The commander-in-chief ignored repeated calls to end the mayhem.

“The mob was his people.” Trump never reached out to the military, the FBI, the defense department or the national guard to intervene. He rebuffed entreaties from Ivanka Trump, Mark Meadows and Pat Cipollone to end the downwardly spiraling situation.

Trump never walked to the press briefing room to say “enough”. He liked what he saw. His minions had taken matters into their own hands and brought Congress to a halt.

Trump struggled to record a message to disperse to his fans. He “loved” them; they were “special.” We heard this before. There were “good people on both sides” in Charlottesville.

Chillingly, the security detail assigned to the vice-president began to say “good-bye” to their families. If Mike Pence came to hang from makeshift gallows that was his problem. Trump thought he deserved it. Pence was *his* vice-president, he believed – with loyalty to him, not the US constitution. He was expendable.

The vice-president “folded,” he “screwed us,” according to the rioters. Trump’s tweet at 2.24pm blamed no one but his hapless running mate.

Sarah Matthews, Trump’s deputy press secretary, testified that her boss had given the rioters a “green light”. He “poured gasoline on a fire,” to use her words. “Rioters heard the president’s message”, to quote Rep Adam Kinzinger. In turn, they acted accordingly.

Senator Josh Hawley fled the Senate that day after earlier riling up the crowd with his outstretched arm and clenched fist. Cosplay can be dangerous to your health. Hawley reportedly harbors ambition for 2024.

The tumult of 6 January was not spontaneous. Trump knew that that the crowd was armed, but sought to accompany them to the Capitol. He wanted to obstruct the certification of the election with a phalanx behind him.

Carnage and destruction were OK. The ends justified all means.

Here, past was prelude. In 2016, Trump signaled that he might not accept the election's results if they did not meet his expectations. As Covid descended in the spring of 2020, he began to refer to November's upcoming ballot as rigged, months before a single vote had been cast. The events of 6 January horrify and shock, but they cannot be characterized as a surprise.

A recording of Steve Bannon evidenced that Trump's reaction was premeditated. The prosecution has rested in his criminal case; he will not be taking the stand.

Trump's standing slowly erodes, even as Trumpism retains its firm grip on Republicans. Hours before the committee's eighth public hearing, Representative Dan Crenshaw, a Texas Republican, announced that it would "suck" to nominate a presidential candidate who labored under criminal indictment. A [poll of Michigan Republicans](#) released earlier this week places Ron DeSantis, Florida's governor, in a foot-race with the 45th president.

Still, the [Republicans](#) are no longer the party of Abraham Lincoln. On Tuesday, Maryland Republicans selected a novitiate of QAnon to be their gubernatorial candidate and a neo-confederate secessionist as their pick for state attorney general. Even as Trump loses altitude, the "Big Lie" – the false claim that he actually won the last presidential election – retains its vitality.

Also on Tuesday, Arizona Republicans censured Rusty Bowers, a Republican and leader in the state's legislature, after he had testified last month before the committee and denied that Trump won Arizona. Fealty to "Dear Leader" remains a tribal litmus test.

Trump's dream remains alive. That nightmare is now woven into America's political tapestry. Our "very stable genius" continues to demand that state legislators undo the results of 2020 – as if they possess that power. This month, Robin Vos, speaker of Wisconsin's state assembly, told of Trump [recently asking him to do just that](#).

Beyond boosting DeSantis's ambitions, the latest hearing won't do anything to improve Republican chances of retaking the Senate. Despite inflation, rising crime and Joe Biden's record-shattering unpopularity, Democrats are mild favorites to retain the upper chamber.

Trump's antics exact a price. This was not the committee's final hearing. After Labor Day, broadcasts will resume. The midterms will be less than two months away. By then, the justice department will likely be immersed in weighing whether to prosecute Donald J Trump.

- Lloyd Green is a regular contributor and served in the Department of Justice from 1990 to 1992
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Digested week

Digested week: UK heatwave reaction suggests climate inaction is transatlantic

[Emma Brockes](#)



The nature of our collective response to the climate crisis suggests what's needed are psychologists as well as scientists



A member of the Queen's Guard is given water outside Buckingham Palace: 'This would be less weird if you didn't have one arm free.' Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

Fri 22 Jul 2022 05.34 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 11.16 EDT

Monday

The temperatures in New York hit a relatively modest high of 35.5C (96F) this week, as everyone looked across the Atlantic towards Britain. For Americans, almost 90% of whom have some form of air conditioning, [heatwave Britain](#) appears a mystifying place, where the trains stop running and the runways melt. In the US, the idea of schools shutting for the hot weather equivalent of a snow day is absurd. On the east coast, in a normal year the biggest threat during extreme heat is from blackouts, as everyone cranks up their AC. In New York, the first thing you do when temperatures drift up towards 40C is check the batteries in your torch.

Those are the day-to-day issues of global heating in the city. The long-term impact, as Jennifer Lawrence's character in [Don't Look Up](#) put it, turning to shout directly into the camera, is, obviously, "we're all going to die". It won't happen tomorrow, or the day after that, but as we have known for a

while now, in some indeterminate middle distance we face the strong possibility of extinction.

The nature of our collective response suggests that what's needed in public life isn't scientists but psychologists. Seamlessly over the last few years, one form of denial (end times aren't coming, so there's no point trying to change) has become a different form of denial (end times are definitely coming, so there's no point trying to change). Like the failed execution of overambitious new year resolutions, we can't do everything and so choose to do nothing.

Meanwhile, the culture offers up easy targets for the displacement of blame. Kylie Jenner [takes a 17-minute flight](#) on a private jet, and it feels good to put the catastrophe on her. It's getting uncomfortably hot in here, but if the Kardashians did this, and we agree to hate the Kardashians, we are absolved of all further engagement. Right?

Tuesday

In the last moments of life before the flood waters take us, we may spare a moment to thank Ben Affleck for his service. We first met Affleck back in the 1990s, when he was as cheerful and boisterous as a labrador. Since then he has been through numerous incarnations, none of which have ever quite hit standard-issue movie star. Juggling his [order from Dunkin' Donuts](#), struggling to stay in shape, looking as exhausted and burnt out as the rest of us, the appeal of Affleck – unlike that of his buddy, Matt Damon, who has the charisma of a hedge fund manager – is built on chaotic foundations.

Famously, a few years ago he regretted getting a back tattoo and [pretended it was fake](#). A happier recent reversal has been his reunion with his old flame Jennifer Lopez. Affleck and JLo first dated in 2002 after they met filming Gigli (a movie [described by the New York Times](#) on its release as a “hopelessly misconceived exercise in celebrity self-worship, which opens to national ridicule today”).

This week, multiple divorces later, the couple revealed they had married at the Little White Wedding chapel in Las Vegas last weekend, and that JLo is [changing her name](#) to Jennifer Affleck. Anyone wanting to unpack this

information further is invited to subscribe to her newsletter, On the JLo, and to offset the guilt with a donation to the climate crisis charity of their choice.

Wednesday

To avoid the heat, we join a fanatically temperature-controlled climbing gym. I went indoor climbing a handful of times 20 years ago and figure it's like riding a bike. Halfway up the 40ft wall, attached to the top by an auto-belay device, I realise I have made a terrible mistake. The sensation is like the one you had as a child when you climbed to the top of the high diving board and understood, too late, you couldn't jump.

A young instructor squints up at me from the ground. "Just lean back and let go," he says.

"I can't."

Eight or nine people, waiting for ropes to become free, shift their attention to the unfolding drama.

"You can," he says.

"I can't."

My children, who five minutes earlier raced to the top of the wall and jumped off without incident, stand agape in their harnesses.

"Let go of the wall," says the instructor.

"I can't."

"Just do it. You have to trust." This makes me laugh, loudly.

"I have significant trust issues," I shout, over my shoulder. Shit shit shit. If seven-year-olds can do it, I can, too. Still, no dice. If it weren't for the fact that I'm English and, after a few more seconds of panic, the fear of embarrassment outstrips that of death, I'd still be up there. I let go and tip back off the wall.



Boris Johnson does Top Gun: 'I feel the need, the need for ... tactical alignment with the worst candidate in the race, in the hope she might win and make my record look better.' Photograph: No 10 Downing Street/Beem

Thursday

Incredibly, a prospect worse than Boris Johnson rises from the Tory leadership contest in the form of [Liz Truss](#), the current frontrunner. Technically, of course, there's not much Truss could do to upstage her predecessor for awfulness, short of some sort of Mr Bean pratfall triggering nuclear annihilation. Somehow, however, after all the lies, the deaths from Covid, and the chaos of Brexit, the idea that it may fall to a person as disoriented as Truss to clean up is more depressing than the original outrage.

There is, however, one cheerful political moment of the week, when cameras pick up Theresa May standing, arms glued to her side, [failing to clap](#) Johnson's last PMQs. By the standards of Tory party rebellion, it's practically the French Revolution.

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Friday

The huge open-air pool in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, is at capacity, testing the patience of the parks department staff. A woman built like Miss Trunchbull, in regulation Bermuda shorts and brandishing a very powerful megaphone, patrols the perimeter of the pool, shouting at swimmers for infractions. (No hats, no bags, no coloured T-shirts to preserve against gang livery). After our swim, we have trouble getting back into our locker and she materialises, genie-like, at one end of the changing room. “Who needs the bolt cutters?” she yells, holding aloft some industrial-size machinery and looking with relish in our general direction. Summer in the city is tough, I feel her rage.

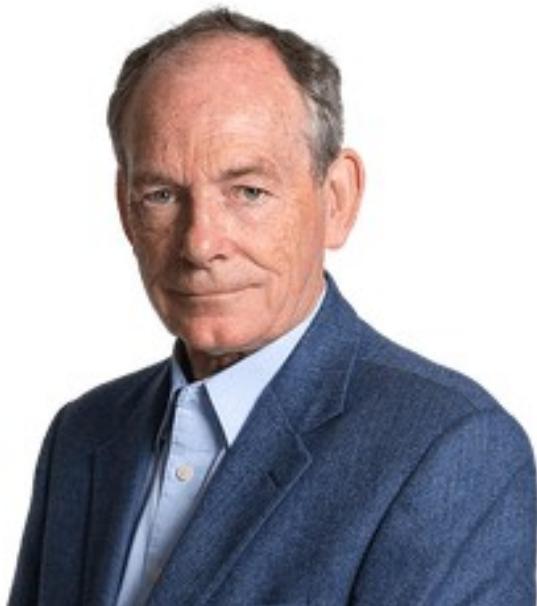
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[Opinion](#)[Conservative leadership](#)

Being ‘economical with the truth’ has a long history in British politics – but enough is enough

[Simon Jenkins](#)



Liz Truss’s claim that tax cuts will reduce inflation are eerily reminiscent of Boris Johnson’s infamous style



Liz Truss pictured with cabinet colleagues earlier this week. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Fri 22 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 10.55 EDT

Boris Johnson was a liar and had to go. It appears they are allowed to say that [even in the Palace of Westminster](#), in certain circumstances, where dignity has traditionally banned such offensive words. Johnson might have thought he could roar and primp and bluster a few more months into the safety zone of another general election, as he half-implied at his last, raucous [question time](#) in the Commons on Wednesday. His favoured weapon, his tongue, might enable him to fight another day. But he had told a lie too many. He was doomed.

I still feel historians will find the swift fall of Johnson puzzling. Politics has long been a conspiracy of mendacities. Johnson seized power through telling lies about the benefits of freeing Britain's economy from the EU's single market. Since Brexit the Office for Budget Responsibility [has estimated](#) a 4% drop in UK growth, which the FT calculates as £40bn in lost tax revenue every year owing to Johnson's hard deal. Just over [half the electorate](#) now think leaving the EU was a mistake. History might imagine this played some part in Johnson's departure. But no – he is going because of lying about parties and what he knew of the [misbehaviour of a whip](#).

The truth is that the political club can handle *grand* lies. Tony Blair lied about the threat from Saddam Hussein and took the nation to a needless war. He did not need to resign. Eden survived his [fabricated narrative of Suez](#), whereas Macmillan was devastated by Profumo's personal lie. As for "security", all prime ministers think it entitles them to lie through their teeth – "being economical with the truth", according to a phrase popularised by Thatcher's cabinet secretary.

The customary excuse is that politicians are allowed to make up stories about the future, and indeed the past, otherwise they would never get elected. In his book [Political Hypocrisy](#), the Cambridge professor David Runciman pleads that a degree of falsity is needed to underpin the hopes, the optimism and even the faith that people have in democratic leaders. Leadership is about plausible illusion. Churchill called it "terminological inexactitude". Johnson thought Brexit might make him Tory boss and duly dubbed it taking back control even when he must have known, as every trader now knows, that it would do the reverse.

To Runciman, exploiting hypocrisy is the essence of power, the capacity to promise the earth even when promiser and audience both know it is rubbish. Lies are intended to convey confidence and ambition, as when parents lie to their children to secure their love. Johnson was adept at it. He promised to "level up" the country. He told everyone Britain was the greatest country on earth and "world-beating". He sent aircraft carriers to the South China Sea and danced attendance on Ukraine. He laughed and joked and lied. It was magnetic. He remains, [according to YouGov](#), the most popular Tory leader for a generation (with 30% liking him).

This might be the message Johnson passed to his acolyte Liz Truss, now predicted by some to be prime minister in a month's time. Rishi Sunak believes fiscal caution, honesty and responsibility are the truthful way to appeal to the Tory members. Truss disagrees. She promises what a chorus of economic commentators declare to be fiscal nonsense. She [assured](#) the BBC that her tax cuts would reduce inflation. Asked to justify this statement, she could only cite [Patrick Minford](#), economic architect of the Brexit disaster. I have combed the columns of the financial press and found not one supporter of her thesis.

Experts from the OECD to the Resolution Foundation point out that the UK has among the lowest tax burdens in Europe. Many incoming regimes promise tax cuts and higher spending on public services, with a temporary rise in borrowing. The novelty in post-Covid Britain is that the resulting indebtedness would rise beyond all peacetime precedent. Since every public service is now screaming for cash, for Truss to preach tax cuts is not just to preach severe austerity. It is to preach what she must know the Treasury and cabinet will not actually do. But if such politicking worked for the Johnson, why not try it again?

The art of political mendacity is to concentrate on what cannot immediately be tested – to lie about the future. The lies that led to Johnson’s downfall might have been relatively small but they were about the present and instantly falsifiable. They were Houdini lies, securing escape from one entrapment even if only leading to another. They eventually erode trust all round.

I believe that veracity in public life is actually on a rising curve. Political statements can be verified by the media with ever greater ease. The shroud of secrecy that has long hung over government – petty corruption, lack of audit, planning bribery – is proving vulnerable to ever more intensive digital penetration and monitoring. Craven falsities and pledges are easier to disentangle and test.

If politicians were unable to promise the earth – or claim to have created it – democracy would be dull indeed. Yet there must be limits. When [Rishi Sunak](#) says two plus two equals four and Liz Truss says five, I have no option. I have to go for Sunak.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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2022.07.22 - Around the world

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[Sri Lanka](#)

Sri Lanka security forces raid protest camp as Ranil Wickremesinghe flexes muscles

Arrests as hundreds of demonstrators evicted from camp blocking presidential office, hours before they were due to vacate area

Sri Lankan forces raid anti-government protest camp – video

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) in Colombo

Fri 22 Jul 2022 01.28 EDTFirst published on Thu 21 Jul 2022 20.21 EDT

Sri Lankan security forces have carried out a violent early morning raid on the main anti-government protest camp in Colombo, beating protesters, destroying tents and arresting nine people.

Friday's raid saw thousands of police and troops armed with riot gear descend on the protest camp, known as Gota Go Gama, where hundreds of people have been living for over three months. More than 50 people were injured and three people were sent to hospital in the attack, according to St John Ambulance volunteers at the scene.

The crackdown came a day after Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is an unpopular figure, was sworn in as Sri Lanka's new president following the toppling of president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was forced to flee the country amid huge public anger.

According to those present for the raid, armed military officers in black uniforms began violently clearing tents close to the Presidential Secretariat building, the offices of the president which have been occupied by protesters since an anti-government protest last week.

Nine people were arrested, a police spokesperson said, adding that the protesters had “no legal right to hold the area”.

The protest groups had announced they would be peacefully handing back the building back to the government on Friday afternoon, but instead the government took it back by force.

The action appeared to be a show of might by the newly elected Wickremesinghe, who is seen to occupy a weak political position and is facing heavy public pressure to step down. On the day he was elected president by MPs in a secret parliamentary ballot, Wickremesinghe had issued a warning to the protesters, who he had previously decried as infiltrated by “fascists” and “extremists”.

“If you try to topple the government, occupy the president’s office and the prime minister’s office, that is not democracy, it is against the law,” he said.

The attack is likely to deepen public mistrust in Wickremesinghe’s government which is already seen as having no legitimacy. One of Wickremesinghe’s first actions as president was to declare a state of emergency that gave sweeping powers to armed forces and the police to arrest and detain suspects for long periods without being charged.

Among those hurt in Friday’s pre-dawn raid was Chanu Nimesha, 47, whose body was covered in bruises and welts from where she was hit and kicked by military officers. She described being asleep in her tent when she heard an announcement over loudspeakers and then screams as people began to be beaten by security forces ripping up their tents.

“I was hiding behind another tent but they saw me and they started brutally beating me,” said Nimesha. “The officers were saying ‘take the bitch out’, ‘kick her’ and ‘take her in’. I thought I was going to die.”



Troops smash protest tents on the main road to the president's office.
Photograph: Rafiq Maqbool/AP

Nimesha said she fought back. “I was kicking and biting them to resist and then I ran away before they could arrest me,” she said. “I was just in my nightdress but I managed to run away to some tents they weren’t attacking. But then the officers came here and they beat me again here, they trying to arrest me. They kept saying ‘we need to take the bitch in’ but I was resisting.”

Despite her injuries, Nimesha said she was too worried about going to hospital in case she was reported to police and arrested.

Sahan Weerawaradhana, 26, was also badly beaten by military as he tried to enter the camp on Thursday night. He said officers had seized his friend’s phone and begun deleting video footage she was taking of the scene, and then began assaulting him. His body was covered in bruises and his face and lip were swollen from the attack.

“They grabbed me and started brutally beating me with wooden sticks, kicking me with their boots, and were hitting me with the back of their guns,” said Weerawaradhana.

He said the officers then took him away and kept him in custody for four hours. “They were punishing us, they made us stay in these squat military positions for hours which was torture,” said Weerawaradhana. “I was just thinking shame on them. I gave food to the military officers every day in this camp, we all did that because we don’t want violence.”

Several journalists, including one from the BBC, were beaten by officers. The Bar Association of Sri Lanka, the main lawyers’ body in the country, confirmed that least two lawyers were assaulted when they went to the protest site to offer their counsel, and one lawyer was taken into custody. Its statement on Friday said the used of the armed forces against civilians was “despicable and will have serious consequences on our country’s social, economic and political stability”.

Akila Aluwatte, one of the lawyers who came down to the scene, said the incident had been a “violation of human rights. Protesters had announced they would peacefully vacate the building but instead the authorities have forcefully taken it and brutally beaten people up.”

Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch, condemned the raid as a “vengeful abuse of emergency powers under the executive presidency to punish those that had criticised the failures of the Rajapaksa administration- perhaps an act of loyalty to the party that backed his appointment”.



Soldiers remove protesters' barricades blocking the presidential office entrance. Photograph: Arun Sankar/AFP/Getty Images

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, who came to collect accounts from the scene in the aftermath, said it was “a total violation of the fundamental rights of the people by the executive”.

There was also widespread condemnation from the diplomatic community, including the US ambassador, Julie Chung who said she was “deeply concerned about actions taken against protestors at Galle Face in the middle of the night.” She later met with Wickremesinghe to express what she described as her “grave concern over the unnecessary and deeply troubling escalation of violence against protesters.”

No comment was given from Wickremesinghe’s government on the raid. On Friday morning after it took place Dinesh Gunawardena, who is a longtime ally of the Rajapaksa family and old school friend of Wickremesinghe’s, was sworn in as the new prime minister.

Despite promises to form a unity, cross-party government, it was also announced that the cabinet under president Wickremesinghe would remain almost exactly the same as under President Rajapaksa, dominated by MPs

from the Rajapaksa's ruling party, further fuelling concerns that this new regime would prove no different from the last.

In the remaining tents of Gota Go Gama, the mood was one of fear and rage. Navoda Bennett, 20, a resident of the camp since April, described how, as news spread that they were under attack, protesters had gathered all the vulnerable people living in the camp and formed a protective circle around them.

"We were terrified," she said. "There were babies, children, pregnant mothers, disabled people, a lot of people who could not fend for themselves. People started running this way screaming, many of them had been badly beaten. There were only about 150 people left here and maybe 2,000 military officers."

Asiri Perera, another resident of the camp, said the action made it clear "we are now living in a police state."

"Ranil needed to prove his power," he said. "He doesn't have the voters' support so he wanted to show to all the politicians and the army that he is strong. It's devastating because we got rid of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, we thought we were making progress for Sri Lanka, but we have ended up in the same place again."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/22/sri-lanka-security-forces-raids-protest-camp-as-ranil-wickremesinghe-flexes-muscles>

[Shinzo Abe](#)

Plan for Shinzo Abe state funeral faces growing opposition

Cabinet has approved event for 27 September but critics question cost and possible political exploitation



Protesters hold a rally outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo on Friday against the decision to hold a state funeral for Shinzo Abe. Photograph: 細島啓輔/AP

[Justin McCurry](#) in Toyko and agencies

Fri 22 Jul 2022 04.46 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 06.38 EDT

Opposition is mounting to plans to hold a state funeral for the former Japanese prime minister [Shinzo Abe](#), who was [shot dead](#) earlier this month.

The cabinet on Friday approved arrangements for the funeral – only the second of its kind for a former Japanese leader in the postwar period – on 27 September.

Abe, the country's longest-serving prime minister, died a fortnight ago after being shot from behind while making a campaign speech in the western city of Nara.

His violent death shocked a country with negligible rates of gun crime and sparked a debate over how best to honour the memory of the influential but divisive politician.

Abe served as prime minister for more than eight years over two terms, and was hugely influential in the ruling Liberal Democratic party even after he resigned in 2020.

Government officials have argued in favour of a state funeral, to be held at the Nippon Budokan in central Tokyo, claiming Abe had shown “outstanding leadership” in reviving [Japan](#)’s economy, strengthening its security ties with the US and overseeing the reconstruction of the region destroyed by the March 2011 [triple disaster](#).

“We made this decision … due to Abe’s record as the longest-serving prime minister, during which he exerted leadership skills distinctive from others and bore heavy responsibility for dealing with a number of serious domestic and international issues,” the chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, said on Friday.

Matsuno said the event would be “non-denominational, simple and sombre”, adding that the estimated cost and number of attendees had yet to be decided.

Opposition politicians and civic groups questioned the use of taxpayers’ money for the funeral, where guests are expected to include foreign leaders.

They have also said the public was deeply divided over Abe’s legacy. “It clearly violates freedom of thought and conscience protected under the constitution,” Mizuho Fukushima, who leads the opposition Social Democratic party, told about 200 people protesting outside the prime minister’s office on Friday.

The Asahi Shimbun said it opposed any attempt to pressure people into mourning Abe. “We cannot help but worry that according [him] such special treatment will only widen the gap between those who supported Abe and those who didn’t, and hinder an objective evaluation of a political leader,” the newspaper said in an editorial.

On Thursday, 50 people filed for an injunction with the Tokyo district court seeking a halt to the use of public funds for the event, saying a state-sponsored funeral without parliamentary approval violated the constitutional right to freedom of belief.

A recent poll by the public broadcaster NHK found only 49% supported the idea of a state funeral for Abe, who inspired absolute loyalty among rightwingers in his party but horror among critics at home and abroad for his unapologetic nationalism.

Social media users complained about the cost and the possibility that the event could be exploited to celebrate Abe’s brand of conservatism and glorify his political legacy.

One Twitter user singled out the current prime minister, Fumio Kishida – an Abe protege who supports holding a state funeral – for criticism.

“Kishida always brags that he listens to the people, so why isn’t he doing it now?”

Others contrasted the government’s speedy decision on Abe’s funeral arrangements with the lack of action over the latest Covid-19 wave, with [daily cases at record highs](#).

“Given they’re doing next to nothing about the pandemic, how did they manage to decide this so quickly?” one Twitter user wrote. “Take the money you’ll use for the funeral and do something about the coronavirus.”

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A private funeral for Abe was held last week at a Buddhist temple in Tokyo, as large crowds gathered in the street to offer flowers.

The only other postwar Japanese leader to receive a state funeral, in 1967, was Shigeru Yoshida, who led the country after the second world war.

Abe's alleged killer, Tetsuya Yamagami, told police he had targeted him for his links with the [Unification church](#). He reportedly said his mother had made [huge donations](#) to the church two decades ago that had left the family bankrupt.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/22/shinzo-abe-state-funeral-growing-opposition-japan>

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Snapchat

Shares in Snapchat owner slump 25% amid slowdown in ad revenue

Parent company Snap talks of ‘incredibly challenging’ conditions as it seeks new sources of revenue



Snap, the parent company of Snapchat, declined to make a revenue forecast on Thursday as it reported a poor set of quarterly figures. Photograph: Lionel Bonaventure/AFP/Getty Images

[Dan Milmo](#) and agency

Fri 22 Jul 2022 05.45 EDTFirst published on Fri 22 Jul 2022 05.04 EDT

Shares in [Snapchat](#)’s parent company have fallen 25% after it confirmed investors’ fears of a slowdown in advertising revenue for social media firms.

Snap painted a grim picture of the effects of a weakening economy on social media in quarterly results on Thursday and declined to make a revenue

forecast in “incredibly challenging” conditions, hitting its share price in after hours trading and setting off a chain reaction among listed rivals.

Snap, which generates more than two-thirds of its revenue in North America, said some advertisers continued to face supply-chain disruptions and labour shortages, and many others were contending with rising costs amid record inflation, which has led to cuts in spending on advertising.

Snap’s revenue for the second quarter ending on 30 June was \$1.11bn (£930m), missing analyst expectations of \$1.14bn, which pushed its shares down by a quarter to \$12.33. The figure grew 13% from the prior-year quarter. Snap said revenue in the current third quarter was flat compared with the prior year.

Daily active users on [Snapchat](#) rose 18% year-over-year to 347 million, beating consensus estimates of 344 million users.

Mike Proulx, a research director at analysis firm Forrester, said: “While the platform’s user base remains strong, Snap’s ad-centric model is no longer a sure bet and is especially volatile heading into a period of economic headwinds where marketers are sure to pull back their ad spend.”

The California-based company said it would significantly slow hiring, invest in its advertising business and find new sources of revenue in order to grow at a faster pace. [Advertising](#) is Snap’s main source of revenue. It recently launched a premium service called Snapchat Plus, which costs \$3.99/£3.99 a month and offers features such as the ability to message friends from your desktop.

Facebook owner Meta, Google owner Alphabet and other companies that sell online ads lost about \$80bn in combined stock market value on Thursday after Snap’s results. The company is normally one of the first of the social media firms to report second-quarter earnings and is viewed as a bellwether for similar stocks.

Investors are expecting the slowest-ever pace of growth for social media ad revenue this year, as rising inflation and other economic woes cause brands

to slash their marketing budgets.

Twitter, [mired in a legal dispute with would-be suitor Elon Musk](#), reports results later on Friday.

Tech stocks have been hit this year as rising inflation around the world has combined with interest rate increases from central banks to rattle investors. Advertising has not been the only factor in their decline. Tech stocks, the price of which can be based on expectations of strong future earnings over many decades, can be relatively less appealing than the immediate fixed returns on offer from investments such as bonds, which become more attractive in a higher lending rate environment.

So far this year, shares in Meta have fallen 46%, with Alphabet down by 21%, Apple by 15% and Netflix by 62%.

“We are not satisfied with the results we are delivering, regardless of the current headwinds,” said Snap.

Recent privacy changes on iPhones, macroeconomic challenges and increasing competition for a pool of advertising dollars that is growing more slowly all contributed to “substantially slowed” revenue growth, Snap said.

Snap has been investing heavily in augmented reality technology and ads, which overlays digital images on to photos and videos of the real world.

Snap’s chief executive, [Evan Spiegel](#), and the chief technology officer, Bobby Murphy, have agreed to serve in their roles through to at least 1 January 2027, for a \$1 salary and no stock-based remuneration, the company said. Both own significant stakes in the company.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jul/22/snap-shares-slump-25-amid-slowdown-in-ad-revenue-for-tech-firms-snapchat>

New South Wales

Splendour in the Grass chaos: first day of music festival cancelled amid wild weather

Performances at four main stages have been called off, as attendees of the Byron Bay festival report long queues, flooded campsites and people sleeping in cars due to the downpour

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Splendour in the Grass music festival hit by torrential rain – video

Sian Cain and agencies

Fri 22 Jul 2022 00.29 EDTFirst published on Thu 21 Jul 2022 21.08 EDT

After two years of delays due to Covid, the first day of the Splendour in the Grass festival has been called off due to wild weather, amid chaos with ticket holders reporting 15-hour queues and flooded campsites.

In a statement, festival organisers said they had “decided to err on the side of caution and cancel performances on the main stages” – Amphitheatre, Mix Up, GW McLennan and Park(lands) Stages – on Friday only.

They said that programming on Saturday and Sunday would move ahead as planned.

Major acts including Gorillaz, DMAs, Kacey Musgraves and the Avalanches were due to take to the stage on Friday. Ticket holders who were on site reported that Korean-Australia rap crew 1300, who were set to perform on the Mix Up stage at 12.10pm, came on stage half an hour late before their performance was formally called off.

Statement from Splendour in the Grass organisers
pic.twitter.com/zcROtIEKex

— SplendourintheGrass (@SITG) [July 22, 2022](#)

The [Byron Bay](#) grounds of Australia's biggest music festival have been hit by torrential rain, with thousands of attendees arriving on Thursday to find their campsites inundated with water. Many festivalgoers – most of whom have paid more than \$500 each for a three-day ticket and a camping pass – took to social media to complain about long queues to enter as vehicles got bogged or ran out of fuel, and a lack of communication from staff on site.

The Bureau of Meteorology issued a severe weather warning for the [New South Wales](#) northern rivers district, predicting another 30mm of rain would fall in Byron on Friday – but conditions could begin to ease on Saturday afternoon.



Thousands of music fans are making their way to Byron Bay for the Splendour in the Grass festival, where campers faced long queues to enter.
Photograph: Jason O'Brien/AAP

On Friday morning, Splendour organisers announced on social media that the festival's main campsite at North Byron Parklands was closing to new

arrivals “due to ongoing weather conditions” and directed all incoming travellers to head to the Byron Events Farm 13km away. Free bus shuttles were being provided to help people get around the sites.

Some scenes from the Splendour in the Ground campground this morning. [@abcnews pic.twitter.com/SRH4oMuhQY](#)

— Tobi Loftus (@tobiloftus) [July 21, 2022](#)

At that point, organisers said that “the show will go on rain, hail or shine” – but festival-goers reported “total chaos” on site amid confusion among Splendour staff, security and shuttle bus drivers about the state of affairs.

Hilary Randall, who joined the queue of cars at 3pm on Thursday and finally arrived at her campsite at 9.30am on Friday, said she had only learned the first day was cancelled through the media.

“We haven’t heard anything official. There are still buses running from our campgrounds,” she said. “We’re hearing news from people not even at the festival – we’re about to line up for a bus so we’ll see what happens.”

Earlier, Randall described the chaos of the arrival queue. “At about 2am we got confirmation to turn our engines off and sleep in the car,” she said.

“It was about 9am when they told us to go to the new campsite. We’ve heard nothing at all from Splendour except on social media. Anything we’ve heard has been from other people inside or people further up the queue, or people who are walking up and down the queue trying to find out what is going on.”

No food or drink was provided to those waiting hours in their cars overnight, she said.

“We walked up this morning to see if we could just get our wristbands, so we could go in and get food and they told us we couldn’t do that. We didn’t bring food, so we had nothing since 2pm yesterday.”

Guardian Australia audio producer Miles Herbert arrived at North Byron Parklands at 9.30pm on Thursday and said it took two hours to move 20 metres in the queue.

Splendour in the grass 2022, really hoping for a cancel-refund tickets-let me go home announcement asap xxx [@SITG](#)
pic.twitter.com/xioLqzFRUp

— Kate (@kate_ohagan3) [July 21, 2022](#)

“There were literally cars breaking down, running out of fuel, people pulling over on the side of the road because their car’s battery has died,” he said. “Tow trucks were coming in and pulling cars out of the queue, and people were peeing on the side of the road. Truly horrible, literally the whole night.

“As we were driving into the venue, to our left and right there were people who had just been like, ‘Fuck this, I can’t wait any longer’ and had pulled off to sleep in their cars.”

He arrived at his campsite at North Byron Parklands at 4.30am, but it was completely flooded.

“They told us we could risk it if you want … It was just such an absurd situation – truly laughable,” Herbert said. “I think we all thought we were gonna get in, we were gonna get to our tents, everything was gonna be fine. And once we entered the parklands we were immediately confronted with like, that wasn’t going to happen.”

He left the grounds and managed to get a hotel room at 5.30am.

On social media, some have redubbed the festival “Splendour in the Lake” while others called for it to be cancelled entirely and some [kind-hearted locals offered](#) to help tow vehicles out of the mud.

All of the festival’s “destination spaces”, including Global Village, Tipi Forest, Forum, Comedy and Science tents, would remain open on Friday to patrons who were already on site or at the Byron Events Farm, organisers said.

Moshtix will contact all ticket holders affected by the cancellation with more information about refunds, they added.

“Please be assured that our event team is working very hard to provide the best experience possible under the current circumstances,” they said.

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Splendour in the Grass has been beset by problems in recent weeks. Little over a week before the festival, [organisers claimed](#) they had only just been informed that a “new” change in legislation meant that all ticket holders under 18 would need to be accompanied by an adult, forcing parents to fork out hundreds to act as chaperones. However, NSW officials rejected this claim, telling Guardian Australia that the [organisers had been directly reminded](#) one month before that the 2019 legislation change would impact them.

Several acts have also pulled out of performing, with US rock headliners Yeah Yeah Yeahs announcing last week that they would no longer be playing due to health issues.

Wild weather continued to lash the east coast on Friday, with people being warned to stay out of the ocean as an offshore weather system moved from south-east [Queensland](#) to northern NSW.

The low-pressure weather system was expected to move south later on Friday and Saturday.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jul/22/splendour-in-the-grass-2022-weather-rain-byon-bay-music-festival>

Hong Kong

Hong Kong publishers excluded from book fair over politically sensitive material

At least three booksellers say they were banned from the annual jamboree as the city embarks on ‘new form of censorship’



People browse a stall at the annual book fair in Hong Kong. Some publishers say they have been banned for political reasons Photograph: Isaac Lawrence/AFP/Getty Images

Sum Lok-kei in Hong Kong

Fri 22 Jul 2022 00.39 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 06.20 EDT

Hong Kong publishers have decried a “new form of censorship” after vendors selling books deemed politically sensitive were allegedly excluded from the industry’s traditional annual trade fair.

With hundreds of exhibitors spread over the city’s major exhibition facility, the seven-day event which began this week once drew more than 1 million visitors and was a staple business opportunity for the sector.

But this year publishers that showcased books last year about [the protests that swept the city in 2019](#) have been banned from the book fair, without explanation.

One was Hillway Culture, while at least two other publishers, Humming Publishing and Kind Of Culture, also had applications turned down.

The city's trade development council, which organises the fair, refused to comment on the rejections, only saying that not every application would be successful.

It also said the books displayed were not vetted in advance but vendors were legally responsible for what they sold.

Raymond Yeung of Hillway Culture said opinions and books that were not favoured by the government were being kept away from official platforms such as the book fair.

Yeung, who is also a writer, became a public figure after he was injured during a 2019 protest and suffered a partial loss of sight in his right eye.

“Publishers like ourselves, who put out political and so-called ‘sensitive’ books, are starting to be censored,” Yeung said, adding that some local printers have also refused to print their publications after the introduction of the national security law in June 2020.

Inside the halls of the Hong Kong exhibition centre on Thursday, some eager readers were seen dragging suitcases and trolleys behind them, hunting for bargains at the fair.

Few of the books on offer were about the huge protests that erupted in the city in 2019 in response to a contentious extradition bill, and which became the most significant unrest the city had experienced since its return to Chinese rule in 1997. Of those available, the booksellers refused to be interviewed.

Volumes about China's Cultural Revolution in the 60s and others about the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown could still be found, as well as publications on Hong Kong's colonial past.

In 2021, members of a pro-Beijing group had filed police reports on publishers who carried books about the protests, alleging that they violated the new security laws.

With their path to the official book fair blocked, Hillway Culture tried to organise its own "Hongkongers' Book Fair" with more than a dozen other independent publishers and bookstores.

Days before the event, however, the venue's landlord terminated the lease with Hillway Culture, claiming the organiser had violated venue rules by sharing the space with other vendors.

Yeung said similar events had been held at the venue in the past, suggesting it was political pressure that changed the landlord's mind.

"This is not a matter of the law ... there are hidden forces stopping these events and books from seeing the light of day," he said.

"This form of censorship is scarier, because there are no rules we can follow."

Professor Fu King-wah of the University of Hong Kong's journalism and media studies centre, said it would be hard to judge whether publishers and their books were censored by the official book fair's organiser, since any such process would happen behind closed doors.

But he warned that the introduction of the national security law could have led to self-censorship among writers and publishers, adding that it does not always come in the form of outright bans.

"Over the past year, we saw some news outlets not being able to continue their operations, and technically the government did not ban them," Fu said, referring to the [closure of news media such as Apple Daily](#) and Stand News.

Both companies ceased operations after executives were arrested under the national security legislation and had their funds frozen, but the display and circulation of relevant archival material had not been outlawed.

With the government's plan to enact more laws targeting speech, such as the proposed fake news law, Fu said the space for free speech in Hong Kong "would only continue to shrink" in the near future.

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- [Queues, cancellations, chaos What has gone wrong at Heathrow?](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Russian forces facing ‘significant military and political setback’ in Kherson, says UK](#)
- [Tory leadership Sunak vows to put UK on ‘crisis footing’ if he becomes PM](#)
- [Liz Truss Foreign secretary vows to scrap remaining EU laws by end of 2023](#)

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France says it is ‘not responsible for Brexit’ amid row over Dover travel chaos – as it happened

French transport minister hits back at Liz Truss’s suggestion that France needed to fix the ‘avoidable and unacceptable’ situation

Updated 12h ago

[Nadeem Badshah](#), [Jedidajah Otte](#) and [Hamish Mackay](#)

Sat 23 Jul 2022 15.06 EDTFirst published on Sat 23 Jul 2022 02.49 EDT

Key events

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[A summary of today's developments](#)
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[France and UK trade blame over Dover gridlock](#)

Thousands of lorries queue near Dover amid travel chaos – video

Nadeem Badshah, Jedidajah Otte and Hamish Mackay

Sat 23 Jul 2022 15.06 EDTFirst published on Sat 23 Jul 2022 02.49 EDT

Show key events only

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Live feed

From 16h ago

11.23

'France not responsible for Brexit', UK told over border queues

The French transport minister, **Clément Beaune**, has hit back at the UK foreign secretary, **Liz Truss**, who had demanded France fix the “avoidable and unacceptable” situation at Dover.

In a tweet, Beaune said on Saturday afternoon:

The French authorities are mobilised to control our borders and facilitate the traffic as much as possible. I discussed this constructively with my counterpart [Grant Shapps]. But France is not responsible for Brexit.

Les autorités françaises sont mobilisées pour contrôler nos frontières et faciliter le trafic autant que possible. J'ai échangé à ce sujet de manière constructive avec mon homologue @grantshapps 🇫🇷
Mais la France n'est pas responsable du #Brexit.
pic.twitter.com/6FIBZ7RnKG

— Clement Beaune (@CBeaune) [July 23, 2022](#)



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Updated at 12.22 EDT

Key events

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[12h ago](#)[15.06](#)

A summary of today's developments

- The French transport minister, **Clément Beaune**, has hit back at the UK foreign secretary, **Liz Truss**, who had demanded [France](#) fix the “avoidable and unacceptable” situation at Dover. In a tweet, Beaune said: “The French authorities are mobilised to control our borders and facilitate the traffic as much as possible. I discussed this constructively

with my counterpart [Grant Shapps]. But France is not responsible for Brexit.”

- The foreign secretary, **Liz Truss**, who is running to become the next Tory leader and prime minister, reiterated her claims that **France** is to blame for logjams at **Dover**, claiming French authorities “had not put enough people on the border”. In an interview with Sky News, she appeared to reject the suggestion that Brexit was to blame, and said “a lack of resource” on the French side was causing the long queues.
- **Pierre-Henri Dumont**, a right-wing Republican MP whose constituency includes **Calais**, said there was “no need to blame French authorities for the traffic jams in **Dover**”. The delays were “an aftermath of Brexit”, [Dumont tweeted](#). “We have to run more and longer checks.” The MP also accused London of having “rejected [a] few months ago a proposal to double the number of passport booths” for French police in Dover.
- **Doug Bannister**, chief executive of the Port of Dover, has said that extra checks needed since Brexit were causing longer transaction times at border control, after French politician **Pierre-Henri Dumont** blamed Brexit for the disruption seen on Friday.
- **P&O Ferries** said earlier this afternoon it is taking up to four hours to clear the relevant security checks at Dover, adding that if passengers miss their ferry, they will be booked on the next available crossing.
- **Lucy Morton**, professional officer for the ISU – the union for borders, immigration and customs staff, was asked on the BBC’s Today programme whether Brexit is to blame for more rigorous checks by French border officials. She said: “It’s certainly the case that the checks are more rigorous than they used to be. Prior to Brexit, there was a deemed right of entry. We weren’t in Schengen but there were still very minimal checks … and frequently there were no French checks at all.”

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[13h ago](#) [14.34](#)

Here is more from foreign secretary Liz Truss on the talks she held about the delays.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss on delays at the UK-French border:
pic.twitter.com/OvLNMoecrH

— Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (@FCDOGovUK) [July 23, 2022](#)

However, [France](#) government official Catherine Colonna's take on the talks with Truss strikes a very different tone.

Bonne conversation avec [@trussliz](#) sur les difficultés de circulation près de Douvres. Nous avons salué la coopération entre services techniques compétents pour résorber les retards. Nécessité aussi d'améliorer les installations du port de Douvres.
<https://t.co/xCjVOjAg1k>

— Catherine Colonna (@MinColonna) [July 23, 2022](#)

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Updated at 14.37 EDT

[13h ago](#)[13.54](#)

Dave Harvey and his family faced lengthy delays on the roads on their way to the Eurostar terminal at Folkestone.

He said they had queued for three hours to get through and did not understand why the M20 had been closed.

“[It’s a] bit of a joke really,” Harvey told the BBC.

Asked how he felt at the start of his family summer holiday, he replied: “Frustrated. Especially with the young one.”

“Sad and frustrated.”

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14h ago **13.43**

Conservative MP for Dover & Deal , Natalie Elphicke, on her solutions for the Dover travel chaos.

What next for Dover?

It's time to invest - in Kent roads, border facilities and lorry parks.

It's time to invest in UK global growth.

It's time to invest in Dover. pic.twitter.com/WMirSYPFrT

— Natalie Elphicke MP (@NatalieElphicke) [July 23, 2022](#)

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14h ago **13.33**

Angie Emrys-Jones and four family members, including three children, endured nearly 11 hours in a queue and were only able to board the Eurotunnel at 4.15pm having joined the queue at 5.30am.

The 46-year-old from Cornwall said the family were “fed right up” and still had a 16-hour journey ahead of them to Umbria, central Italy.

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[14h ago](#)[12.52](#)

P&O Ferries has said it is taking up to four hours to clear the relevant security checks at Dover, adding that if passengers miss their ferry, they will be booked on the next available crossing.

[#PODover](#) Please be aware that there is heavy traffic at border control in the port of Dover. If you are booked to travel today please allow at least 3-4hrs to clear all security checks. Rest assured, if you miss your sailing, you'll be on the first available once at check-in`

— P&O Ferries Updates (@POferriesupdate) [July 23, 2022](#)

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Updated at 12.56 EDT

[15h ago](#)[12.28](#)



Lorries queuing during Operation Brock on the M20 near Ashford in Kent on Saturday. The RAC said an estimated 18.8m leisure trips are planned in the UK between Friday and Monday. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

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Updated at 12.31 EDT

[15h ago](#)[12.13](#)

While those queueing to cross the Channel are still facing three- to four-hour waits, jams on many routes in the south-east have cleared, according to the AA.

The AA Route Planner is still issuing a traffic warning to holidaymakers heading towards the Port of Dover and the Eurotunnel terminal at Folkestone, but only a few isolated pockets of heavy traffic remained elsewhere by about 5pm on Saturday.

Roads are expected to be much quieter on Sunday, but a backlog of freight remains to be cleared.

Jack Cousens, the head of roads policy for the AA, said: “The picture throughout the day has been one of steady improvement.

“Travellers heading to holiday homes away from the south-east earlier today would’ve felt some congestion around lunchtime and into the early afternoon, but those queues have now fallen away.”

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Updated at 12.20 EDT

[15h ago](#)[12.01](#)



Jedidajah Otte

The foreign secretary, **Liz Truss**, who is running to become the next Tory leader and prime minister, has just reiterated her claims that **France** is to blame for logjams at **Dover**, claiming French authorities “had not put enough people on the border”.

In an interview with Sky News, Truss seemed to reject the suggestion that Brexit was to blame, and said “a lack of resource” on the French side was causing the long queues.

BREAKING: Foreign Secretary Liz Truss says disruption to travellers trying to cross the Channel to Europe is a result of French authorities 'not putting enough people on the border' to manage the queues.<https://t.co/PAiZ4D1jU3>

□ Sky 501, Virgin 602, Freeview 233 and YouTube
pic.twitter.com/bGWDkrweWj

— Sky News (@SkyNews) [July 23, 2022](#)

That's all from me for today, thanks for following along.

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Updated at 12.19 EDT

[15h ago 11.47](#)

Natalie Chapman, from haulier group Logistics UK, said some lorry drivers had waited “in excess of 18 hours” to cross the Channel.

She told the PA news agency:

There are two main issues. First and foremost, the welfare of those drivers, and the second part is that this is one of the most important trade routes for us in and out of the UK and we want to keep trade flowing, so this is obviously causing us significant issues as an industry.

Chapman blamed a number of factors for Saturday’s travel chaos on Kent’s roads, including a lack of resourcing at French border control, increased traffic due to problems with airlines, and Brexit changes which mean longer processing times for people crossing the Channel.

She added:

As I say, the cause was that lack of resource yesterday but also, of course, it takes a lot longer to process through traffic than it used to.

You used to, prior to Brexit, just wave your passport and they may or may not be looked at, but now every one is checked and stamped.

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Updated at 11.51 EDT

[16h ago 11.23](#)

'France not responsible for Brexit', UK told over border queues

The French transport minister, **Clément Beaune**, has hit back at the UK foreign secretary, **Liz Truss**, who had demanded [France](#) fix the “avoidable and unacceptable” situation at Dover.

In a tweet, Beaune said on Saturday afternoon:

The French authorities are mobilised to control our borders and facilitate the traffic as much as possible. I discussed this constructively with my counterpart [Grant Shapps]. But France is not responsible for Brexit.

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Mais la France n'est pas responsable du [#Brexit](#).
pic.twitter.com/6FIBZ7RnKG

— Clement Beaune (@CBeaune) [July 23, 2022](#)

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Updated at 12.22 EDT

[16h ago](#)[11.18](#)

French regional prefect **Georges-François Leclerc** said that at midday, out of the 9,000 to 10,000 vehicles scheduled to pass from Dover to [France](#) on Saturday, 60% had passed without any issue.

Vehicles had to wait about an hour and a half during the morning and later for only about 45 minutes, Leclerc said on BFM TV.

Asked if French customs officers were to blame for the delay, he said this was false, Reuters reports.

“Today the situation is back to normal,” Leclerc said, apparently referring to staffing levels on the French side. “The Port of Dover, which is a private port, found it easier to blame the French police [for the delays].”

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Updated at 11.28 EDT

[16h ago 11.04](#)

The chief executive of the Port of Dover, **Doug Bannister**, has said in an update that he welcomed the “commitment shown by both French and UK authorities to resolve the issue”, as port authorities said they were “relieved that French border staff (Police Aux Frontieres) have now been fully mobilised at French border controls in **Dover**”.

Bannister stressed, however, that the required staffing levels must be maintained for the rest of the summer “so that we can begin to return to the positive experience we had planned for those going on their well-earned breaks”.

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Updated at 11.14 EDT

[17h ago 10.38](#)

Here’s a video from Sky News, showing queues on the way to the Eurotunnel which the broadcaster reports are now seven hours long.

Seven hours of queues to reach Eurotunnel terminal □

British holidaymakers have been warned to allow several hours to get

through the Channel border at Dover and Folkestone, as the UK and France continue to argue over who is to blame for the gridlock<https://t.co/yLobNaXpcY> pic.twitter.com/3pV3D84hD7

— Sky News (@SkyNews) [July 23, 2022](#)

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Updated at 10.50 EDT

[17h ago](#)10.15



Lorries queuing during Operation Brock on the M20 near Ashford in Kent on Saturday 23 July. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA



Cars queue at the check-in at the Port of Dover in Kent as many families embark on getaways following the start of summer holidays for many schools in England and Wales. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

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Updated at 10.27 EDT

[17h ago](#)[10.02](#)

Travel expert **Simon Calder** has explained in a BBC interview why Brexit is behind the massive queues at the port of Dover.

He added in a tweet:

Sailing over from Dover? Today is the busiest day for crossings to France since 2019. Queues to reach the port and once inside 1-2 hours to get through French passport control.

One motorist tells me: “We have to put up with it. That’s what the British do.”

'You can't just wave a passport anymore': Simon Calder says Brexit behind Dover chaos – video

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[18h ago](#)[09.34](#)

More than 100 fixed-penalty notices have been issued in the past 24 hours for non-compliance with rules for freight drivers, the [Kent](#) Resilience Forum (KRF) said, according to PA reports.

EU-bound hauliers have been warned that not complying with signs to follow the Operation Brock traffic management system on the M20 and trying to jump the queue risks a £300 fine, as well as removal to the back of the queue.

Toby Howe, KRF tactical lead, said the forum was “working hard to keep traffic moving” but that “due to the disruption being experienced at the ferry ports and Eurotunnel, it is important that drivers should plan for lengthy delays” and ensure they have enough water, food and medicines.

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Updated at 09.43 EDT

[18h ago](#)[08.56](#)

BBC News reports that the backlog at Dover is “starting to clear” but that it will still take “some time” to get passengers to their destinations.

Dan Johnson [writes](#):

We’re told the backlog is starting to clear but that it will take some time to get everyone where they need to be.

Traffic is moving through Dover itself, into the port and onto ferries. Local streets are moving more freely than yesterday.

But there are still thousands of cars and lorries held on roads into Dover.

Motorists are being warned to carry water and food – it's a warm day on the roads of Kent. They've been told if they miss their ferry they'll be put on the first one available.

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Updated at 09.14 EDT

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[Airline industry](#)

Queues, cancellations, chaos: what has gone wrong at Heathrow?

As the airport asks airlines to turn passengers away, a blame game is being played out between both sides



Travellers queueing to pass through security at Heathrow airport.
Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Gwyn Topham](#) *Transport correspondent*

Sat 23 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 07.18 EDT

What has gone wrong at Heathrow? The airport that confidently laid out expansion plans and charged its customers a hefty premium has been repeatedly suffering the kind of chaos people pay money to avoid: flight cancellations, long queues, lost baggage mountains and strike threats. Now, at the start of the full summer peak, it has [told airlines to turn passengers away](#).

In a week when baking temperatures swept across Britain, few places were feeling the heat more. Heathrow's own posters highlighting the "elephant in the room" – aviation's contribution to climate change – have never looked more apposite as the mercury hit a record 40.2C at the airport, the grass between its runways parched a desert brown.

Last week, Heathrow announced a 100,000 daily cap on passengers until 11 September, infuriating airlines and putting thousands of customers' plans in jeopardy. The airport insisted it was "protecting holidays", but the response was fierce. Emirates initially refused point blank to comply or cancel flights. In some of the milder invective, Willie Walsh, the director general of Iata – and an old frenemy from running British Airways and its parent group, IAG – has described Heathrow as "a bunch of idiots when it comes to running airports".

Anxious storm clouds of passengers

Inside the airport terminals this week, the line between exceedingly busy and frantic was thin. At least, though, the air conditioning was working. In a late morning lull in Terminal 5, it did not look like chaos. "Give it a couple of hours," a BA staffer at the queueing ropes said, grinning, a mild sweat on. "It just comes and goes ... Just random."

The airline sector's turmoil is self-perpetuating: huge queues grow with anxious passengers turning up ever earlier for flights. Wider travel disruption does not help: installed with laptop and luggage in Pret, one seasoned traveller said he had arrived nine hours before his flight to Australia, after warnings that the heat could halt the trains he needed for the airport.

The adjacent Terminal 2 is Heathrow's most modern addition – opened in 2014 with the optimistic objective of passengers traversing to and from the plane in minutes, without traditional check-in lanes. Now though, a man in a suit was explaining patiently over and again to customers that despite checking in online, they must still enter the daunting United Airlines queue to comply with US security procedures.

All around, various staff – in airline livery, hi-vis vests or the pink polo shirts of “Heathrow helpers” – are marshalling incoming groups that appear and disperse like rumbling storm clouds.

Post-Covid restrictions, with corporate travel down, ever fewer passengers are likely to be mobile, unencumbered, tech-savvy frequent flyers. Many here are non-English speaking, with large amounts of luggage; old, young, infirm, faced by bewildering layouts, prompts for QR codes and additional Covid documentation, and needing assistance of all kinds.

And if terminals can appear chaotic, the worst problems have been airside. Delays today are relatively minor but the arrivals board now has an additional feature alongside a flight’s landing time: whether its bags have been delivered or are arriving. While BA’s flight from Kuwait landed more than 90 minutes ago, the bags have yet to make it to the carousels.

So cutting passenger numbers by just a few thousand can make a huge difference to those who do travel, according to Heathrow’s chief executive, John Holland-Kaye, defiant in Terminal 5 on Tuesday, after mounting speculation over his future. “We’re taking action with the cap to protect people’s holidays. We’ve got 100,000 passengers travelling through today, it’s the hottest day we’ve ever had, and the airport is working smoothly. That shows that the action we’re taking, in difficult circumstances, is working.”

Pointing the finger

Holland-Kaye said no one wanted a “blame game”, but said the overriding factor was a lack of airline ground handling staff, either contracted out – to companies such as Menzies, Swissport or Cobalt – or directly employed. The main effect of the cap will be limiting further ticket sales, but about 1,500 passengers on the busiest summer days will be forced to change their plans, on top of the hundreds of thousands already bumped by mass BA cancellations ordered earlier this summer.

“The reality is that if the airport, airlines, or ground handlers don’t have enough capacity, people are not going to get away on their flights in a much worse way: their flights cancelled after they’ve checked in, maybe even on the plane,” Holland-Kaye said. “That’s the worst of all worlds.”

Labour shortages have been worsened by lengthy background checks for new recruits and competition from other sectors.

Surprisingly few things actually come under the airport's direct remit, bar the security officers and provision of the infrastructure. Airlines run check-in. The immigration hall, scene of previous years' headline-hitting queues, is the responsibility of the Home Office and its Border Force employees. While the automated baggage systems are (usually) kept functioning by Heathrow, the handlers who put the bags in or take them off are employed, or contracted, by airlines.

Even the people on the tarmac, driving trucks to bring luggage, attaching air bridges or pushing back aircraft from the stand, are the airlines' direct or outsourced staff.

'Excessive' shareholder returns

Airlines, however, point to multiple Heathrow failures: the understaffed security that saw long queues at Easter; the unreliable baggage system; and a failure to plan before the cap, brought in at the 11th hour. As Holland-Kaye himself put it, there are 400 separate companies working at the airport, and his role is to "keep all of them working in tandem".

While airlines such as BA have concurred and cut ever more flights from their schedule to keep the plates spinning, the latest standoff has played out to a backdrop of a bitter row over landing charges. Heathrow had proposed to double the price, set by the UK regulator, that it can make airlines pay per passenger.

That prompted a furious backlash from carriers who have sustained huge losses and query whether Heathrow's shareholders – largely Qatar and other sovereign wealth funds – should be digging deeper, after taking £4bn in dividends in the last decade.

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Heathrow's ever-increasing debt, up to £15.4bn at last count, has financed investment that directly raises returns the more it builds, under the regulatory system. Airlines see it as enjoying an enviably stable position – or as the chief executive of Virgin Atlantic, Shai Weiss, put it: “Abusing its monopoly position to fleece passengers and deliver excessive returns to shareholders.”

At the Farnborough airshow this week, Walsh said Heathrow was unprepared for the strength of recovery because of its own pessimistic forecasting, which he claimed was to “game” the regulator to allow it to hike landing charges. While airlines had spotted pent-up demand recovery, Heathrow played it down. Holland-Kaye rejects the accusation, saying airlines should have hired more handlers earlier if they expected the bounce back.

The blame game appears to have some way to run – as do the problems. Holland-Kaye says it will take 12-18 months for the staffing issues to resolve. The cap may not lift for half-term or Christmas, he hinted: “They have about 70% of the staff trying to serve about 80-85% of the passengers and that doesn’t work.”

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[Ukraine war live](#)[Ukraine](#)

US accuses Russia of deepening global food crisis – as it happened

We are now pausing our live coverage of the war in Ukraine. We will return in a few hours to bring you all the latest developments.

Updated 8h ago

[Maya Yang \(now\)](#); [Nadeem Badshah](#), [Tobi Thomas \(earlier\)](#)

Sat 23 Jul 2022 19.00 EDTFirst published on Sat 23 Jul 2022 02.21 EDT

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- [20h ago](#)
[Odesa attack 'outrageous', says US ambassador](#)
- [21h ago](#)
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[Russia at risk of significant setback in Kherson, says UK](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Fatalities reported as 13 missiles hit Ukrainian airfield](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Summary](#)



The aftermath of a missile strike on a school building in Kramatorsk, Ukraine
Photograph: Alex Chan Tsz Yuk/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

[Maya Yang \(now\)](#); [Nadeem Badshah](#), [Tobi Thomas \(earlier\)](#)

Sat 23 Jul 2022 19.00 EDTFirst published on Sat 23 Jul 2022 02.21 EDT

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Live feed

From 10h ago

[17.17](#)

The US Secretary of State has condemned the Russian attack against Odesa, accusing [Russia](#) of deepening the global food shortage.

In a statement posted on Twitter, Anthony Blinken said, “The United States strongly condemns Russia’s attack on the port of Odesa today. It undermines the effort to bring food to the hungry and the credibility of Russia’s commitments to the deal finalized yesterday to allow Ukrainian exports.”

The United States strongly condemns Russia's attack on the port of Odesa today. It undermines the effort to bring food to the hungry and the credibility of Russia's commitments to the deal finalized yesterday to allow Ukrainian exports.

— Secretary Antony Blinken (@SecBlinken) [July 23, 2022](#)

Blinken also said that the attack undermines the diplomacy of the UN, Turkey and [Ukraine](#) in formulating the deal in attempts to alleviate the growing food crisis around the world.

"This attack casts serious doubt on the credibility of Russia's commitment to yesterday's deal and undermines the work of the UN, Turkey and Ukraine to get critical food to world markets," he added.

The Secretary of State went on to blame Russia for the global food shortage and said "Russia bears responsibility for deepening the food crisis and must stop its aggression."

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Updated at 17.28 EDT

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[8h ago](#)[19.00](#)

Summary

Thank you for joining us for today's live coverage of the war in [Ukraine](#).

It's 2am in Kyiv and we will be pausing our live reporting overnight and returning in the morning.

You can read our comprehensive summary of the day's events below.

- **Ukraine's defence ministry on Saturday urged citizens in Enerhodar, a key area seized by Russia, to reveal where Russian troops were living and who among the local population was collaborating with the occupying authorities.** "Please let us know as a matter of urgency the exact location of the occupying troops' bases and their residential addresses...and the places of residence of the commanding staff," it said, adding that exact coordinates were desirable."
- **The governor of the Zaporizhzhia has said that Russia is keeping 170 people captive in the Zaporizhzhia oblast, the Kyiv Independent reports.** According to governor Oleksandr Starukh, Russian forces have abducted at least 415 people in the southern region since February 24 - the day Russian forces invaded Ukraine - and at least 170 individuals are still being kept captive.

- **The US Secretary of State has condemned the Russian attack against Odesa, accusing Russia of deepening the global food shortage.** “In a statement posted on Twitter, Anthony Blinken said, “The United States strongly condemns Russia’s attack on the port of Odesa today. It undermines the effort to bring food to the hungry and the credibility of Russia’s commitments to the deal finalized yesterday to allow Ukrainian exports.”
- **3.7 million Ukrainian refugees have received temporary protection status in the European Union, according to the UNHCR.** In a new report released Friday, the UNHCR cited that 3.7 million Ukrainians have registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe.
- **Video footage has emerged of a powerful explosion that took place in the Russian-occupied territory of Horlivka on Saturday in the Donetsk Oblast, Euromaidan reports.** Emerging reports from outlets have been claiming that Ukrainian armed forces have hit a Russian ammunition depot.
- **The former deputy secretary of Ukraine’s Security Council has been suspected of high treason, the Kyiv Independent [reports](#).** According to a report released on Saturday by the Ukrainian State Bureau of Investigations, Volodymyr Sivkovych is suspected of collaborating with Russian intelligence services and managing a network of agents in Ukraine that spied on behalf of Russia.
- **Germany has delayed defense weapon delivery to Ukraine, the Kyiv Independent [reports](#).** The outlet, sourcing German media organization German Welt, cites that anonymous Ukrainian officials have reported that Ukraine’s application for eleven IRIS-T air missile defense systems is currently being held up by Germany’s Federal Security Council.
- **Hungary’s nationalist prime minister Viktor Orban Saturday called for US-Russian peace talks to end the war in Ukraine, lashing out at the European Union’s strategy on the conflict.** In a speech in Romania, the 59-year-old ultra-conservative leader also defended his vision of an “unmixed Hungarian race” as he criticised mixing with “non-Europeans.” Orban has condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February, but maintains an ambiguous position on the conflict.

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Updated at 19.25 EDT

8h ago18.50

Two US citizens recently died in the Donbas region of eastern [Ukraine](#), CNN reported on Saturday, citing a U.S. State Department spokesperson.

Reuters reports:

The spokesperson, not named in the report, did not provide any details about the individuals or the circumstances of their deaths but said the US administration was in touch with the families and providing “all possible consular assistance,” according to CNN.

“Out of respect to the families during this difficult time, we have nothing further to add,” the spokesperson was quoted as saying by CNN.

The State Department did not respond to emailed queries from Reuters on Saturday.

Ukraine has been under siege by [Russia](#) for nearly five months in what Moscow calls a “special military operation” to disarm Ukraine and rid it of anti-Russian nationalism fomented by the West. Kyiv and the West say Russia launched an unprovoked war.

Several Americans have volunteered to fight alongside Ukrainian forces despite warnings not to take up arms. A US citizen was killed in combat in May after he joined thousands of foreign fighters who have volunteered to help Ukraine fend off Russian forces.

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9h ago 18.22

Ukraine's defence ministry on Saturday urged citizens in Enerhodar, a key area seized by Russia, to reveal where Russian troops were living and who among the local population was collaborating with the occupying authorities.

“Please let us know as a matter of urgency the exact location of the occupying troops’ bases and their residential addresses ... and the places of residence of the commanding staff,” it said, adding that exact coordinates were desirable.

The statement by the ministry’s defence intelligence directorate was posted on Telegram and was directed towards Enerhodar residents and those around the city, which is home to a major nuclear power station.

The statement also asked residents for details “of local collaborators who went over to the side of the enemy,” including where they lived and worked, as well as information about “people who ‘sympathise’ with the occupiers.”

Russian forces captured Enerhodar in early March and in May, the Russian-appointed head of the city was injured in an explosion. [Russia](#) has identified the explosion as a “terrorist attack.”

The intelligence directorate’s appeal also asked for the routes that Russian military equipment was using in Enerhodar.

“Together, let’s kick the occupants out of our homeland!” it said, adding people could either provide details via WhatsApp or Signal or by phone calls.

Enerhodar had a pre-war population of more than 50,000. Many residents work at the two power plants near the town, one of which is the Zaporizhzhia facility, the largest nuclear power station in [Europe](#).

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9h ago [17.52](#)

The governor of the Zaporizhzhia has said that [Russia](#) is keeping 170 people captive in the Zaporizhzhia oblast, the Kyiv Independent reports.

According to governor Oleksandr Starukh, Russian forces have abducted at least 415 people in the southern region since February 24 - the day Russian forces invaded [Ukraine](#) - and at least 170 individuals are still being kept captive.

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10h ago [17.17](#)

The US Secretary of State has condemned the Russian attack against Odesa, accusing [Russia](#) of deepening the global food shortage.

In a statement posted on Twitter, Anthony Blinken said, “The United States strongly condemns Russia’s attack on the port of Odesa today. It undermines the effort to bring food to the hungry and the credibility of Russia’s commitments to the deal finalized yesterday to allow Ukrainian exports.”

The United States strongly condemns Russia’s attack on the port of Odesa today. It undermines the effort to bring food to the hungry and the credibility of Russia’s commitments to the deal finalized yesterday to allow Ukrainian exports.

— Secretary Antony Blinken (@SecBlinken) [July 23, 2022](#)

Blinken also said that the attack undermines the diplomacy of the UN, Turkey and [Ukraine](#) in formulating the deal in attempts to alleviate the growing food crisis around the world.

“This attack casts serious doubt on the credibility of Russia’s commitment to yesterday’s deal and undermines the work of the UN, Turkey and Ukraine to get critical food to world markets,” he added.

The Secretary of State went on to blame Russia for the global food shortage and said “Russia bears responsibility for deepening the food crisis and must stop its aggression.”

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Updated at 17.28 EDT

[11h ago](#)[16.32](#)

3.7 million Ukrainian refugees have received temporary protection status in the European Union, according to the UNHCR.

In a new report released Friday, the UNHCR cited that 3.7 million Ukrainians have registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe.

Additionally, the organization cited that there are now nearly six million individual Ukrainian refugees across Europe since the war began in February.

In total, nearly one-third of Ukrainians have been forced from their homes since the Russian invasion, making the conflict the “largest human displacement crisis in the world today.”

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[11h ago](#)[15.59](#)

Video footage has emerged of a powerful explosion that took place in the Russian-occupied territory of Horlivka on Saturday in the Donetsk Oblast, Euromaidan reports.

Emerging reports from outlets have been claiming that Ukrainian armed forces have hit a Russian ammunition depot.

A powerful explosion occurred today in the Russian-occupied Horlivka, Donetsk Oblast

As "Novosti Donbasa" reports, the explosion occurred on the territory of the Mashzavod after shelling pic.twitter.com/2tphj23Ep

— Euromaidan Press (@EuromaidanPress) [July 23, 2022](#)

Massive explosions in the occupied Horlivka again. Reportedly, Ukraine's armed forces have hit a concentration of Russia's equipment pic.twitter.com/qMTC5bbxB1

— UkraineWorld (@ukraine_world) [July 23, 2022](#)

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[12h ago](#)[15.18](#)

The former deputy secretary of Ukraine's Security Council has been suspected of high treason, the Kyiv Independent [reports](#).

According to a report released on Saturday by the Ukrainian State Bureau of Investigations, Volodymyr Sivkovych is suspected of collaborating with Russian intelligence services and managing a network of agents in [Ukraine](#) that spied on behalf of Russia.

The outlet also reported the bureau saying that Ukraine's former deputy head of security service in Crimea, Oleh Kulinich, was detained due to him allegedly being part of the same network of spies.

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[13h ago](#)[14.38](#)

Germany has delayed defense weapon delivery to Ukraine, the Kyiv Independent [reports](#).

The outlet, sourcing German media organization German Welt, cites that anonymous Ukrainian officials have reported that Ukraine's application for eleven IRIS-T air missile defense systems is currently being held up by Germany's Federal Security Council.

The council is led by German chancellor Olaf Scholz, who in recent weeks defended his country's record of delivering weapons to Ukraine, saying that Germany began sending weapons to Ukraine as soon as the war began in February.

Germany's ministry of economy had previously approved of Ukraine's application for the defense systems and passed the decision onto the Federal Security Council, German Welt reported.

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[13h ago](#)[13.43](#)

Hungary's nationalist prime minister Viktor Orban Saturday called for US-Russian peace talks to end the war in [Ukraine](#), lashing out at the European Union's strategy on the conflict.

Agence France-Presse reports:

In a speech in Romania, the 59-year-old ultra-conservative leader also defended his vision of an “unmixed Hungarian race” as he criticised mixing with “non-Europeans.” Orban has condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February, but maintains an ambiguous position on the conflict.

Before Moscow sent in troops, he had sought close ties with Russia's President [Vladimir Putin](#). And last week, he said Europe had "shot itself in the lungs" by imposing sanctions against Moscow over the military operation.

"We're sitting in a car with four flat tyres", he said on Saturday, of efforts to stem the bloodshed. He went on to add, "A new strategy is needed, which should focus on peace negotiations instead of trying to win the war."

Orban said "only Russian-US talks can put an end to the conflict because Russia wants security guarantees" only Washington can give. The EU, he added, "should not side with the Ukrainians, but position itself" between both sides.

The sanctions "will not change the situation" and "the Ukrainians will not come out victorious", he said, adding, "The more the West sends powerful weapons, the more the war drags on."

Orban claimed the "war would never have broken out if Donald Trump were still head of the United States and Angela Merkel were the German Chancellor."

Hi everyone, this is Maya Yang and I'll be taking over the blog for the next few hours with the latest updates. Stay tuned.

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[14h ago](#) [13.05](#)

Three people were killed and 19 others were injured when 13 Russian missiles hit a military airfield and railway infrastructure in Ukraine's central region of Kirovohrad, the regional governor has said.

A soldier and two security guards were among those killed at an electricity substation, Andriy Raikovych said on television.

Raikovych said the strikes had disrupted the electricity grid and that one district of the regional capital, Kropyvnytskyi, had been left without power as a result, Reuters reported.

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Updated at 13.19 EDT

[14h ago](#)[12.40](#)

Miranda Bryant

Under the threat of imprisonment and interrogation, and the constant pressure of searches by Russian soldiers, six artists secretly met in a basement studio in the occupied Ukrainian city of Kherson.

In the months after their homes were taken over by Putin's forces, the artists formed a residency during which they created dozens of works, including drawings, paintings, video, photography, diary entries and stage plays.

The results, which they have named Residency in Occupation, offer a harrowing insight into the horrors endured by millions of Ukrainians living under the Russian invasion.

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Updated at 12.43 EDT

[15h ago](#)[12.23](#)



Ruth Michaelson

Turkey's defence minister, Hulusi Akar, has said Turkish officials are "concerned" following the Russian missile attack on Odesa, highlighting that the attack occurred a day after a deal to safely export Ukrainian grain was signed in Istanbul.

Akar said the Turkish defence ministry spoke to the Ukrainian defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, and infrastructure minister, Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's signatory for the grain deal yesterday.

"We received the necessary information," [said Akar](#). "There was a missile attack there. They stated that one of the missile attacks hit one of the silos there, and the other one fell in an area close to the silo, but that there was no negativity in the loading capacity and capability of the docks, which is important, and that the activities there can continue."

Akar added that he had also spoken with the Russian side: "In our contact with Russia, the Russians told us that they had absolutely nothing to do with this attack and that they were examining the issue very closely and in detail.

"The fact that such an incident occurred right after the agreement we made yesterday regarding the grain shipment really worried us.

“However, we continue to fulfil our responsibilities within the agreement we made yesterday, and we also expressed in our meetings that we are in favour of the parties to continue their cooperation calmly and patiently here.”

The text of the agreement states that the deal to export the grain from three Ukrainian ports including Odesa should last for a period of 120 days, unless one party officially notifies the others of its intent to pull out.

However, it also states that “the parties will not undertake any attacks against merchant vessels and other civilian vessels and port facilities engaged in this initiative”.

The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has pushed to position Turkey as a key diplomatic partner for both Russia and the west on Ukraine and hosted multiple sets of talks, mentioned the grain deal during a speech to workers in a small central Turkish town, but with no reference to the port attack.

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Updated at 12.29 EDT

[15h ago](#)[12.06](#)



Oleksandr Chubuk, a Ukrainian farmer, stands on wheat grain in a warehouse in the village of Zghurivka, in Kyiv oblast. Photograph: Valentyn Ogirenko/Reuters

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Updated at 12.17 EDT

[15h ago](#)[11.56](#)

The UK's foreign secretary, Liz Truss, has described a Russian attack on Ukraine's Black Sea port of Odesa as "absolutely appalling".

The attack came hours after Moscow and Kyiv signed deals to allow grain exports to resume from the southern city.

Speaking at a campaign event in Kent, the Conservative leadership candidate said: "It is absolutely appalling that only a day after striking this deal, [Vladimir Putin](#) has launched a completely unwarranted attack on Odesa.

"It shows that not a word he says can be trusted. And we need to urgently work with our international partners to find a better way of getting the grain

out of Ukraine that doesn't involve [Russia](#) and their broken promises.”

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Updated at 12.04 EDT

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Rishi Sunak

Rishi Sunak says he is underdog in PM race as ‘forces that be’ want Truss

Former chancellor suggests Tory party powers hope leadership contest will be ‘a coronation’ for his rival

'I am the underdog,' says Sunak in Tory leadership campaign speech – video

Miranda Bryant, Aubrey Allegretti and Peter Walker

Sat 23 Jul 2022 07.08 EDTFirst published on Sat 23 Jul 2022 03.59 EDT

Rishi Sunak has positioned himself as the underdog in the Conservative leadership race, claiming the “forces that be” want Liz Truss to be the next prime minister.

Addressing a crowd in Grantham on Saturday, the Lincolnshire home town of Margaret Thatcher, Sunak declared “have no doubt, I am the underdog” and suggested that Conservative party powers want the race to be “a coronation” for Truss.

“The forces that be want this to be a coronation for the other candidate. But I think members want a choice and they are prepared to listen,” he said during a speech, surrounded by supporters carrying signs with his campaign slogan “Ready for Rishi”.

Truss, whom he did not refer to by name, has pledged to review all EU laws kept after Brexit by the end of next year in a “red tape bonfire” if she becomes prime minister.

The former chancellor refused to elaborate on who the opposing figures were, but reiterated that he was not the favourite. “I was talking generically, but obviously I start this part of the contest in the underdog position,” he told reporters afterwards.

He said the [NHS](#) would be “safe in my hands” and warned it faced its biggest crisis in decades amid a “backlog emergency”. He has promised to set up a “vaccines-style” taskforce to tackle the backlog.

He said his other priorities would include keeping Brexit and the union “safe”, tackling illegal immigration and crime and ensuring that regardless of their parents or background, a child’s “birthright should be a world-class education”.

“If we are to deliver on the promise of Brexit, then we’re going to need someone who actually understands Brexit, believes in Brexit, voted for Brexit,” he said to cheers.

Describing himself as “a product of immigration”, he said Britain “mustn’t lose compassion but must be tougher”.

On the cost of living crisis, he said he would “grip inflation and bring it down”, describing rising inflation as “the enemy that makes everyone poorer”.

He said the country must be told “the truth about tax” – claiming he would cut tax but not until tackling rising inflation.

“We have to tell the truth about the cost of living,” he said. “Rising inflation is the enemy that makes everyone poorer and puts at risk your homes and your savings.”

He called for the need for radicalism in politics, telling the crowd: “Real change is there, I swear it.”



Sunak and his family during a visit to Vaculug tyre specialists at Gonerby Hill Foot, Grantham, on Saturday. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

On defence spending, he said 3% was not a plan but an “arbitrary target” and promised to do what is needed to keep the country safe.

During questions, he described his approach to the economy – tackling inflation before cutting taxes – as “common-sense Thatcherism”, believing it was “what Margaret Thatcher would have done”.

Asked whether Truss was misleading on tax cuts, he said increasing government borrowing would be “immoral”.

Experts and union leaders said Truss’s proposals to tear up red tape would be hugely difficult to achieve in the context of civil service cuts, with warnings it could end up becoming a “bonfire of rights”.

Truss and Sunak have begun a blitz of policy announcements in an attempt to edge ahead in the Conservative leadership runoff. Ballot papers will start arriving on party members’ doormats in little more than a week, though they have until 2 September to vote.

The two candidates, who made it through an initial stage of voting by MPs, will take part in a series of hustings events for members, starting in Leeds on

Thursday. They will also go head to head in a televised debate on Monday.

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Sunak's speech came after he [told the Times](#) the UK needed to be on a “crisis footing” to deal with inflation and a host of other challenges.

“They’re challenges that are staring us in the face and a business-as-usual mentality isn’t going to cut it in dealing with them. So from day one of being in office, I’m going to put us on a crisis footing,” the former chancellor said.

He also suggested the foreign secretary’s plans could cause interest rates to rise, while rejecting the suggestion he is running a “project fear”.

However, in an interview [with the Telegraph](#), Truss defended her economic vision. Describing herself as an “insurgent” who wants to change things, she told the newspaper she wanted the UK to become a “high growth, high productivity powerhouse”.

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Liz Truss

Truss vows to scrap remaining EU laws by end of 2023 risking ‘bonfire of rights’

Scale and complexity of task would be difficult in context of civil service cuts, say experts



Liz Truss is attempting to position herself as the self-styled ‘Brexit-delivery prime minister’. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

[Peter Walker](#)

[@peterwalker99](#)

Fri 22 Jul 2022 17.30 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 00.15 EDT

Hundreds of laws covering employment and environmental protections could disappear overnight if [Liz Truss](#) becomes prime minister after she promised to scrap all remaining EU regulations by the end of 2023.

Despite warnings about the scale and complexity of the task, Truss launched her leadership runoff campaign by promising a “sunset” for all EU-derived

laws within 15 months.

Attempting to position herself as the self-styled “Brexit-delivery prime minister”, Truss’s proposed timetable is notably accelerated from that given by Boris Johnson’s government.

Jacob Rees-Mogg had pushed for a similar cliff-edge deadline, seeing the demise of 2,400 pieces of legislation, but two and a half years later, in June 2026. His plan [prompted a cabinet row](#) over feasibility, given the scheduled cull of a fifth of civil service numbers, or about 90,000 jobs.

Experts and union leaders said Truss’s proposals would be hugely difficult to achieve in the context of civil service cuts, with warnings it could end up becoming a “bonfire of rights”.

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The plan comes as Truss and Rishi Sunak begin a blitz of policy announcements in an attempt to edge ahead in the [Conservative leadership](#) runoff. Ballot papers will start arriving on party members’ doormats in little more than a week, although they have until 2 September to vote.

Truss and Sunak, who made it through an initial stage of voting by MPs, will go through a series of hustings events for members, the first taking place in Leeds on Thursday. They will also go head to head in a televised debate on Monday.

Sunak announced a vaccine rollout-style scheme to reduce NHS backlogs. In a highly symbolic choice of venue, the former chancellor will launch the next stage of his campaign on Saturday with a speech in Grantham, the birthplace of Margaret Thatcher.

The foreign secretary is seen as the preferred choice of many Tory members, but Truss has previously faced scepticism from some in the party for her political journey, which she began as a Liberal Democrat before supporting remain in the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Her Brexit plan would mean each remaining EU law and regulation would be “evaluated on the basis of whether it supports UK growth or boosts investment”, with those deemed not to do so replaced. Any EU laws not replaced would simply disappear at the end of 2023, just 15 months after Truss potentially takes power in September.

Truss said this would mean that as PM she could “unleash the full potential of Britain post-Brexit, and accelerate plans to get EU law off our statute books so we can boost growth and make the most of our newfound freedoms outside the EU”.

Sunak has previously said he will appoint a new Brexit minister to go through the remaining EU laws, with instructions for the first set of changes coming within 100 days of him becoming prime minister.

After the announcement of Truss’s plans, unions warned of the potential impact on EU-derived workers’ protections. “These are all essential, not a nice-to-have,” said Frances O’Grady, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress. “Let’s call this out for what it is – ideological posturing at the expense of ordinary working people.”

Dave Penman, head of the FDA union, which represent senior civil servants, said the task had to be seen in the context of plans to get rid of one in five civil service jobs over the next three years.

“If a new prime minister also wants to review thousands of pieces of legislation, then something needs to give,” he said. “Any serious government needs to demonstrate how it will match resources with commitments, otherwise this is just fantasy politics.”

Another complication is the fact that diverging from EU standards in areas such as employment or environmental protections could bring retaliation from Brussels, given the terms of the post-Brexit trade deal, not least in terms of extra checks.

“The more divergence there is in practice, the more checks the EU will want to impose,” said Catherine Barnard, deputy director of the UK in a Changing

[Europe](#) thinktank. “The more divergence there is, the more trade friction there will be.”

Barnard, who is professor of EU law at Cambridge University, said there would be concerns about a plan apparently based on the idea that “any retained EU law is bad”.

“Of course, some of it has worked well,” she said, citing the Equalities Act as an example. The Truss campaign said the Equalities Act would not be included in their plans.

Steve Peers, professor of law at the University of Essex and an expert on EU law, said another issue with a guillotine-like end to any remaining laws would be if some covered taxation. Treasury officials [have called for](#) EU-based tax laws to be exempt from such plans.

While it remained unclear what would happen at the end of 2023, Peers said, there was a risk the exercise ended as “a bonfire of rights” rather than Truss’s promised bonfire of red tape.

“It is a massive undertaking, and you wonder how thoroughly it will be done,” he said. “It does seem to prioritise ideology over pragmatism.

“I wonder if reviewing what I think would be 2,000 laws in 15 months is the right priority during a cost of living crisis, with lots of other things going on. The UK would have voted for most of them anyway. We have already removed hundreds that don’t work since we’ve left the EU, or that the government wanted to change.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jul/22/bonfire-of-rights-truss-vows-to-scrap-remaining-eu-laws-by-end-2023>

2022.07.23 - Spotlight

- 'I'm very pleased we've got the same name' Brian Cox meets Brian Cox
- Dancing diggers The curious case of the Russian JCB dealer and the millionaire
- Blind date 'We filled some awkward silences with small talk, which I hate'
- Sarah Perry's postcard from England 'Cream tea defeats us. It's the best we ever had'

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[Brian Cox](#)

Interview

‘I’m very pleased we’ve got the same name’: Brian Cox meets Brian Cox

[Rich Pelley](#)



The Life of Brians ... prof Brian Cox and the actor Brian Cox.
Photograph: Christopher Lane and Jasmine Hsu/The Guardian

The actor Brian Cox used to be irked by the success of his upstart namesake. Now, for the first time, he and Prof Brian Cox talk science, Succession and what Shakespeare and black holes have in common



Sat 23 Jul 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 16.39 EDT

When anyone mentions Brian Cox, the first question invariably asked is: which Brian Cox are you talking about? Do you mean Prof Brian Cox, physicist, or actor Brian Cox, from [Succession](#)? So imagine how annoying it must be for professor Brian and actor Brian Cox! Which got us thinking: what would happen if we invited both Brians to sit down together for a lengthy chat – something they've never done before?

Oldham-born particle physicist Prof Brian Edward Cox found fame presenting the BBC's [Wonders of the Solar System](#) and [Forces of Nature](#). Before that, in the 1980s and early 90s, he played keyboards for D:Ream, topping the UK charts with future New Labour anthem Things Can Only Get Better in 1994. His new worldwide tour, [Horizons: A 21st Century Space Odyssey](#), returns home to a week-long residency at London's [Royal Opera House](#) in August, and then runs nationwide until October.

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine's biggest features, as well as a curated

list of our weekly highlights.

Dundee-born actor Brian Denis Cox started working professionally in the 1960s, joining the National Theatre in the 70s and the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 80s. His 50-year career in film, TV and theatre has won him Olivier, Bafta and Emmy nominations and awards. He appeared in The Bourne Identity and was the first actor to play Hannibal Lecter, in the 1986 film Manhunter. He currently stars as media mogul Logan Roy in Succession, for which he won a Golden Globe for best actor in 2020.

The two Brians caught up over Zoom for a wide-ranging chat about the universe, Succession, Shakespeare and everything in between. Prof Brian and actor Brian, over to you ...

Prof Brian Cox One of the themes from my live shows is the possibility that we might currently be the only intelligent civilisation in the Milky Way. The challenge is the possibility that we might destroy ourselves – through inaction or deliberate action – because we don't have the wisdom to control our own power. And what a tragedy that would be, given that we might be the only island of meaning in an ocean of 400bn suns.

Actor Brian Cox I think that's incredibly feasible. I was brought up Catholic, but in the last few years have become quite atheist. Religion is confusing because we don't acknowledge who we are as humans. One of the reasons theatre is so very important to me is: why act? Acting is similar to religion, but religion is humanity. Religion is a cul-de-sac because it provides peace, yet we are still dangerously in jeopardy of destroying ourselves.

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Prof Brian Religion is clearly an attempt to explore, explain and understand our place in the universe. So are you saying that acting is the same, but in a more detailed and truthful way?

Actor Brian I think so, Brian. Acting is truthful. Religion is understandable, but we look to God, Muhammad or the pope, but we don't look to ourselves. Shakespeare says it all: hold the mirror up to nature. He describes it very

clearly in Hamlet's advice to the players. It's why Shakespeare is such an extraordinary genius. Religion distracts us by saying: if we follow this path, we'll get salvation. I think it's a crock, quite frankly, and the older I get, the more of a crock I think it is.

Prof Brian It's interesting what you say, Brian – the transfer of responsibility to some external source. [American astronomer] Carl Sagan is one of my heroes. His 1994 book, Pale Blue Dot, reacts to the image of Earth taken from beyond Neptune as a single pixel. One line says: "We have to understand that nobody's coming to save us from ourselves ..."

Actor Brian I couldn't agree with him more!

Prof Brian The word "meaning" doesn't sound like a scientific concept. But it's a property of brains, of consciousness and of living.

Actor Brian That's right.

Prof Brian And what if there is nowhere else within millions of light years for atoms to come together into these remarkable patterns that can think, feel and write like Shakespeare? The idea that meaning comes from us is very important, because it means we have to take responsibility.

Actor Brian Brian, I couldn't have said it better. The human experience is the most responsible thing you can acknowledge. And that's why I act.

There's a moment in Succession where Logan realises how lonely he is, which I found incredibly moving

Brian Cox (physicist)

Prof Brian You refer to Shakespeare as the great genius. What intrigues me is there's an exploration from the playwright or the writer, but an additional exploration from the actor. Of all the characters you've played, who has been the best vehicle to explore the depths of the human condition?

Actor Brian You have to take on the notion of selfishness, because acting is all about confusion. I had a speech yesterday [filming season four of

Succession] as Logan Roy, talking about human beings being economic units. I ask: “What is a person?” but get distracted asking: “Is the cheesecake any good here?” The extraordinary thing about Logan – and why I don’t see Logan the way everybody else sees him – is that he’s a man on a journey of losing it, because he’s aligned himself to something that has failed to give him satisfaction, namely that he cannot deal with his own children. The question I first asked was: “Does Logan Roy love his children?” And [creator] Jesse [Armstrong] said: “Oh yes, he loves them very much.” He constantly gets it wrong, and becomes brutalist. That’s why he’s such a fascinating character; he’s so complex. I had another beautiful moment yesterday – I shouldn’t be giving all this away, but I don’t care – where Logan realises he doesn’t have any other pals and how lonely he is, which I found incredibly moving. Again that’s part of the human condition; that sense of loneliness. That’s why there’s a heroic element to Logan, because he’s in deep struggle with himself. And as you’ve said: the problem is that we are in a constant deep struggle with ourselves.

Prof Brian That complexity in human beings is that we find it difficult to deal with both characters and problems that are multifaceted. If you look to quantum mechanics – the most esoteric bit of all science – you are forced to think about electrons as particles. But they are also extended wavy things that fill the room. Of course, it’s neither; it’s far more complicated. You have to hold those two ideas in your head, even though they seem mutually exclusive.



Cox on the box ... actor Brian in Succession. Photograph: Macall Polay/AP

Actor Brian I can't agree more.

Prof Brian It's like with Logan. It's so easy to say: he's bad.

Actor Brian The rule for the actor is: never judge your character because we don't judge ourselves. We can be harsh on ourselves but we don't say: "This is a villain." If you look at Iago, his reasons may be terribly misguided with terrible consequences but he's locked in a destructive journey. Dramatic art homes in on the complication and contradictions of human experience, because we live in such contradicting paradoxes.

Prof Brian I often make the case for science education from the youngest possible age. Not because you need to know about how many stars there are in a Milky Way, but because of the intellectual tools; nature is multifaceted and complex. Likewise, experiencing Shakespeare can be beautiful, so you're making the same argument for a broad education.

Actor Brian Absolutely. That's clearly why we've got the same name, Brian! It's quite extraordinary and very harmonising to talk to you this way because you realise that regardless of our different pursuits, we're on a very similar journey.

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Prof Brian Science is necessary – but certainly not sufficient – to understand our place in the universe. It's necessary, for example, to know we are not at the centre of the universe. If you go back to the ancient Greeks – they weren't idiots, but they thought the Earth was at the centre of the universe because what they observed was that everything falls towards the Earth.

Actor Brian And that's the terrible thing about ego. Ego makes you think you are the centre of the universe, and that's the curse of the performer. We have to be careful that we don't believe in our own mythology.

Prof Brian So what does it mean to live a finite, fragile life in an infinite, eternal universe? You're not going to find meaning through the eyepiece of the telescope. Music, literature, art, science are different facets of the same attempt to explore what it means to be human.

Actor Brian I think it's the absolute key question, Brian. "Why are we?" is the question man has struggled with as long as we've been alive.

Prof Brian I know you're quite political because often I get people shouting at me on social media for something you've said on Question Time.

Actor Brian Ha ha ha!

Prof Brian You must get this a lot – and I get it to some extent – people say: "Stay in your lane. You're a physicist. Tell me about physics." Do people say: "You're an actor. I like you in Succession, but I don't want to hear your political views."



Star man ... Prof Brian Cox takes his day job to the SSE Arena, Wembley.
Photograph: Nicky J Sims/Nicky Sims/Getty Images/McIntyre Ents

Actor Brian All the time. I'm not supposed to have political views but I do, but that's also to do with my history. I'm filming a documentary at the moment [for Paramount+] on money, because money is the one thing that nobody ever likes to talk about. Like religion, money is the great unifier but it's also the great divider. The wealthy are always defensive but poor people are never defensive about their poverty. The wealth gap is such a painful experience, it is heartbreakingly.

Prof Brian Would you ever consider going into politics? I suppose the great example of an actor going into politics was Ronald Reagan.

Actor Brian Let's not get into Reaganomics because we could be here all day!

Prof Brian I think the most valuable aspect [of work] is the internal process of trying to understand. I've recently been working on black holes that are astonishingly difficult to understand, but it's been a joyous process.

Actor Brian As a musician, you'll know why understanding the process is so important.

To understand black holes you need to understand the deeply hidden structure of space and time

Brian Cox (physicist)

Prof Brian Talking about music, I only discovered [American jazz pianist] Keith Jarrett quite late in life. His [1995] album La Scala is mainly improvised compositions, but ends with this astonishing version of Over the Rainbow. He's like a musical archaeologist; he's dug down so deeply into the music, he's found something that almost didn't exist before. It's the same with Einstein, who has this expression: something deeply hidden. When he was seven or eight years old, Einstein's dad gave him a compass. He looked at the needle pointing north and thought: "There's something mysterious, magical and deeply hidden about the structure of nature." Einstein's theory describes black holes, but to understand them you need to understand the deeply hidden structure of space and time. So is it the same with Shakespeare: when you perform, you might find something deeply hidden that even he didn't know?

Actor Brian I think that's exactly what you do: you go on that journey, to discover the hidden. It's like you asked: are we destined to destroy each other? And would any other civilisation follow the same logic? To question our responsibility to humanism is constant. The hidden aspects are like little flowers that make you go: "Look! That bloomed!" in the same way that Jarrett discovered Over the Rainbow. And that's the miracle of being human. Actually, it's the miracle of our humanity.

Prof Brian Do you remember that time we both nearly turned up to the same restaurant? I think I'd got there first, and I could see the horror on their faces, because they thought they had double-booked. They must have thought: "Two Brian Coxes aren't going to turn up and say: 'Hello. Table for Brian Cox please.'"

Actor Brian It annoyed me initially – but has been such a great lesson – to find someone who is extraordinarily successful with the same name as me. It irked me at first, then I thought: it's not important. I mean, we have the same name, but then something comes into play where you go: "Well, it's only a

name.” So it has been wonderful meeting you, Brian, because it’s proved that name doesn’t matter. I’m very pleased that we’ve got the same name, but ultimately it’s just one of those curiously strange accidents.

Prof Brian We can’t be the only people called Brian Cox? Brian and Cox are pretty common names.

It’s quite extraordinary to talk to you because you realise that we’re on a very similar journey

Brian Cox (actor)

Actor Brian There was a guy who wrote a thing on the Black Papers [a series of articles on British education] called Brian Cox – I think from Manchester originally – who I met years ago, in the late 60s.

Prof Brian And I’m Brian Cox CBE and you’re Brian Cox CBE, so you can’t even differentiate in the honours we’ve received.

Actor Brian We’re both Brian Cox CBE! Anyway, it was great talking to you, Brian. It really was. We must get together again sometime.

Tickets for (Prof) Brian Cox’s Horizons: A 21st Century Space Odyssey are on sale now. See briancroxlive.co.uk. Putting the Rabbit in the Hat, the memoir by (actor) Brian Cox, is available from guardianbookshop.com

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The curious case of the Russian JCB dealer and the millionaire



Dancers at the opening ceremony for the Lonmadi factory, built to assemble and maintain JCB diggers, in Moscow, 2016. Photograph: Lonmadi/YouTube

Questions have arisen over sales of the British diggers in Russia after sanctions over the war in Ukraine descended

[John Collingridge](#) and [Jasper Jolly](#)

Sat 23 Jul 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 07.38 EDT

Guests huddled beneath a leaden Moscow sky as the opening chimes of Tchaikovsky's Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy rang out across a car park. On cue, a fleet of JCBs rumbled into life to begin their favourite party trick: the dancing diggers.

It was October 2016 and JCB, one of the UK's biggest privately owned companies, was celebrating the opening of a 2bn rouble (£25m) factory on the outskirts of the capital. The factory would assemble and service JCBs but had been paid for by its Russian dealer, Lonmadi.

Guest of honour was the Queen's cousin, Prince Michael of Kent, who expressed hope for "fruitful cooperation between the two countries". JCB's chief executive, Graeme Macdonald, also spoke, as did Vadim Khromov, a Moscow city official, noting how the investment had been attracted "despite the sanctions".

Those sanctions from the EU and US were in retaliation for Russia's invasion of Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014, leading to its increasing isolation on the global stage.

The Moscow factory was a gamble by JCB's biggest distributor, a chain of more than 20 outlets across Russia that trade as Lonmadi and Kwintmadi. They are owned by an obscure dealership group called JVM, which is in turn 51%-owned by a reclusive Briton called Max Milne-Skillman. Skillman, who [attended the opening](#) with his family, was betting that the post-Soviet construction boom would continue even as relations between the west and Vladimir Putin's Kremlin crumbled.

Skillman, now 67, his business partner Lina Sokolova, 52, and her sister Tatiana Sokolova, have made multimillion-pound fortunes selling JCBs and other construction gear to the Russian market. Many of those vehicles have

been exported to Russia from Staffordshire, the home of Lord (Anthony) Bamford's digger empire.



Max Skillman, centre, and Lina Sokolova at the factory opening ceremony.
Photograph: Lonmadi/YouTube

Yet even further severe western sanctions, imposed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, do not appear to have deterred Skillman's company.

JCB stopped exporting to Russia in early March, saying it would "pause" operations in the country. But an *Observer* investigation reveals how Lonmadi and Kwintmadi have continued to sell JCBs, even offering customers credit from Gazprombank Autoleasing, an arm of Russian bank Gazprombank, to buy them. [State-backed Gazprombank has been designated for sanctions by the UK](#), including an asset freeze, as have its subsidiaries. The finance deal was offered by Lonmadi on 14 April, three weeks after the bank was blacklisted by the UK, and ran until the end of June.

Lonmadi's Russian accounts on Instagram and Telegram celebrated Russia's Victory Day on 9 May and have promoted 10% discounts on JCB diggers. The webpage advertising the deal with Gazprombank was taken down after the *Observer* approached Skillman and Lonmadi for comment.

Timeline

Lonmadi and JVM

Show

How the Russian JCB dealership's business grew

1991

Lonmadi is born

Russian Victor Sokolov forms Lonmadi.

1998

JVM is born

Max Skillman and a partner found JVM Equipment in the UK.

2001

Merger

JVM buys 51% of Lonmadi for a nominal sum.

2012

Flying high

JVM turnover peaks at £461m, making £47.2m in profits.

2013

Move to Jersey

JVM transfers ownership of all of its subsidiaries to a holding company in Jersey. JVM pays a dividend of £27.5m to its shareholders, Skillman and Lina and Tatiana Sokolova.

February 2014

Crimea invasion

Russia invades Ukraine, eventually annexing Crimea. Lonmadi starts building a new Moscow facility.

January 2015
Production in Moscow

The first JCBs are built in Moscow.

2016
The opening

Prince Michael of Kent attends the opening ceremony for Moscow facility.

24 February 2022
UK ownership transfer

Ownership of JVM passes to UK holding company. Russia invades Ukraine.

2 March 2022
Sanctions regime

JCB says it has “paused all operations, including the export of machines and spare parts” in Russia.

24 March 2022
Action against Gazprombank

UK designates Gazprombank for sanctions, including an asset freeze.

14 April 2022
Autoleasing deal

Lonmadi announces deal to provide finance with Gazprombank Autoleasing.

Was this helpful?
Thank you for your feedback.

The revelations raise questions about whether Skillman, with his controlling stake in the Russian dealership chain, has broken western sanctions. His lawyers said he had not broken them, and that he has had no involvement in the day-to-day operations of Lonmadi or its sales for some time. In particular, they said he was completely unaware of the fact that the company

had made sales to customers financed by Gazprombank Autoleasing. They said Lonmadi was no longer entering into such arrangements.

The revelations also risk embarrassment for JCB and Bamford, 76, one of the Conservatives' biggest donors and a close ally of Boris Johnson. [Bamford accompanied Johnson on his trip to India](#) in April, where the prime minister opened JCB's latest factory, in Gujarat. JCB's expansion in Russia over several decades, principally via dealers such as Lonmadi, has boosted Bamford's wealth, reported by the *Sunday Times* to be £4.3bn.

The findings also highlight the risks western companies and shareholders face in countries run by autocratic regimes such as Russia, and the difficulties of disentangling themselves when things go wrong. Tom Keatinge, director of the Centre for Financial Crime and Security Studies at the thinktank Rusi, said: "This is a good example of the complexity of sanctions exposure for UK companies and underlines that the only way to be sure to avoid Russia-related sanctions exposure is to divest significantly or completely of ownership and control of Russian assets. Staying involved will, inevitably attract scrutiny and risks reputation damage at best, and enforcement action at worst."

A partner specialising in sanctions at a London law firm said Lonmadi's Gazprombank Autoleasing offer meant that, as a UK national, Skillman risked falling foul of sanctions. They said there was a "high likelihood of the UK national to be found to be at risk of being at breach" if a Russian subsidiary controlled by the UK national was found to have transacted with a company or its majority-owned subsidiaries designated for sanctions.

A lawyer for Skillman said his client was "appalled by the events in Ukraine and the tragedy of human suffering which has resulted". Skillman's lawyer denied any suggestion that as the indirect owner of Lonmadi he might be at risk of breaching sanctions through his company's dealings with the Gazprombank subsidiary.

[An interactive showing machinery, thought to include JCB diggers, at Lonmadi's headquarters near Moscow.](#)

Satellite photos appear to show machinery, thought to include JCB diggers, at Lonmadi's headquarters near Moscow, in March and May. (Credit:

Satellite image ©2022 Maxar Technologies)

Lawyers for JCB said it operated independently of JVM and Lonmadi and did not have knowledge or control of its Russian distributors' actions once they had taken possession of its kit. They said any JCB machinery the dealer may have sold since March 2022 was stock it already had in its possession before JCB announced it had "paused" exports to Russia on 2 March.

When the world woke up on 24 February to news that Russian missiles were raining down on Ukraine, the shockwaves were felt 1,600 miles away in Uttoxeter. Bamford's JCB empire, which has its HQ in the Staffordshire town but has been owned by a Swiss holding company since 2020, has made the Russian market a priority in recent decades. Sales have been handled largely via its network of independent dealers, of which JVM is the largest.

JCB sold its first piece of kit in Russia – a backhoe loader – in 1979 as part of the buildup to the Moscow Olympics. In 2013 it described Russia as one of the "jewels in the crown" of its operation. It does not detail how much of its £3.1bn turnover comes from Russia, although its sales in "Europe" plunged 28% to £853m in 2020 from a year earlier. JCB declined to say whether Russian revenues were included in its reported figures for [Europe](#), adding that as a private company it was not obliged to provide such information.

Bamford's business has traded with Lonmadi for about three decades. Lonmadi's website repeatedly applauds JCB's progress, from [Bamford's peerage in 2013](#) to a press release last October featured him and a grinning Johnson promoting [JCB's plans to launch hydrogen-powered diggers](#). Putin's war threatens a big source of business for Bamford, who with his family has donated £8.7m to the Tories since 2002.

JCB has not been sanctioned, nor is it banned from selling to Russia. Lawyers for JCB said it had complied with all sanctions, and that it fully supported the UK government's position on Russia.

The company said: "JCB voluntarily paused exporting machines and spare parts to Russia on 2 March 2022 in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine, a position that remains unchanged."

As outrage at the war grew, Bamford did his bit in solidarity with Ukraine. In May he gave a job to a teacher who had fled Ukraine and donated company properties to house 70 refugee families. It was “the very least” the firm could do, he said. “I think British people are very moved by it and certainly I and my family as well feel [this]. I mean, it is so utterly shocking.”



Boris Johnson and Lord Bamford, right, at JCB’s factory in Vadodara, Gujarat. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

That stance is a marked change in tone from several years ago. Weeks after the EU tightened its sanctions against Russia in 2014, after it was identified as being behind the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine, Bamford labelled the restrictions as “absurd” in an article in the *Daily Telegraph*.

“Russia is a very important market for JCB and has been for more than 30 years,” he said.

“We ship both machines and spare parts to Russia and are the market leader for construction equipment in the country. If sanctions restrict sales of machines and spare parts, there will be obviously be a major impact on JCB, which could put hundreds of British jobs at risk.

“It seems absurd that a leading UK exporter, successfully selling machinery to construction companies and farmers in Russia, could be affected so dramatically by EU sanctions coming out of Brussels.”

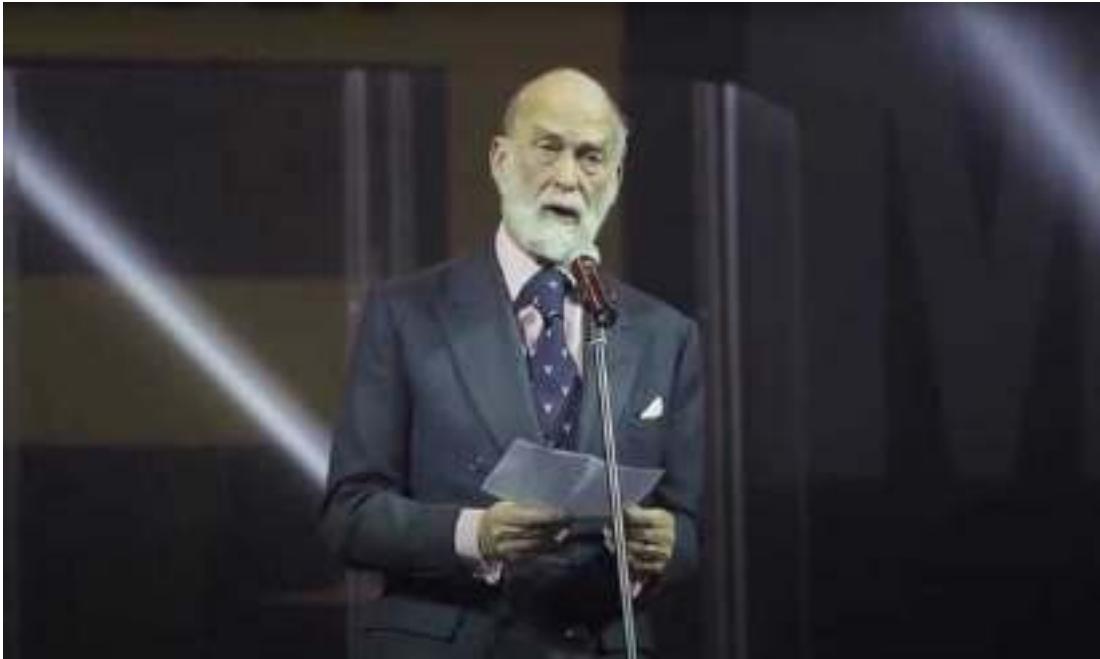
A yellow-and-black sign for JVM at the end of a tree-lined lane in West Sussex gives a clue to Skillman’s multimillion-pound Russian construction fortune. The sign points to a sprawling country pile, complete with swimming pool and tennis court, that doubles up as his home and office.

A reclusive millionaire, who has previously described his interests as hunting and motorcycling, Skillman is said to own a collection of some of the world’s most exclusive and expensive cars, including a

McLaren P1, a LaFerrari by Ferrari and a Porsche 918, known as the “holy trinity” of supercars. His wife rides and owns dressage horses.

Only a few photos of him exist on the internet, including one of him posing in front of a JCB with Bamford and his partner at JVM, Lina Sokolova.

Skillman’s son, Oliver, appears to have worked at JCB for several years, and his most recent role there was a business data analyst, according to LinkedIn. He is also a director of a JVM holding company in Jersey. JCB did not respond to questions about Oliver’s role, and his LinkedIn page was deleted after the *Observer* contacted him. Skillman’s lawyers did not comment on his son’s job and JCB said JVM was a “wholly unconnected third party”.



Prince Michael of Kent speaks at the opening of the Lonmadi plant.
Photograph: Lonmadi/YouTube

Skillman was not always so publicity-shy. In 2011, as JVM headed for its busiest year, the former crane salesman gave an interview to a [trade publication](#) explaining how he had conquered such a tough market. “Unlike their image in some of the media, the Russians are pretty reasonable people and if you play by the rules you’ll be fine,” he said. Skillman was on course to sell 3,500 JCBs in Russia that year and had grown to employ 650 staff.

In April 2013 Skillman appeared in the *Sunday Times* Rich List, debuting as Britain’s 766th richest person, with a £103m fortune, thanks to his 51% stake in JVM. But the following February Russia invaded Crimea. [Sanctions swiftly followed](#), although, crucially, exports of construction equipment, such as JCBs and parts, were not banned.

JVM and its subsidiaries have not been sanctioned, but under [UK laws](#) all UK nationals, and people and companies operating in the UK, are forbidden to “deal with the frozen funds or economic resources” of any entities designated for sanctions, unless there is a licence allowing that transaction.

The UK Treasury’s Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), which polices sanctions, did not say whether any licences applied, saying it

did not comment on individual cases. The London sanctions lawyer said UK authorities could impose criminal or civil penalties for sanctions breaches: “Ignorance of the law (or of relevant facts) is no defence to a breach here, but there will only be criminal liability if the breach was committed with knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect that the activity in question is prohibited.”

Skillman’s lawyer said: “The suggestion that our client, a UK national, might be found to be in breach of UK sanctions merely by virtue of the fact that he owns a UK company which indirectly owns a majority interest in the Russian company Lonmadi is incorrect. We have carefully considered this issue with our client, and are satisfied that any suggestion of sanctions breaches is completely without foundation.”

[Graph showing rise of JVM Equipment sales until the creation of JVM Ltd](#)

Lonmadi’s roots stretch back to the collapse of the USSR. According to its website, it was formed in 1991 by a Russian called Victor Sokolov as a joint venture between the British company Lonrho and Moscow Automobile and Road Construction State Technical University. When Sokolov died in 2004 his daughter Lina took over. She continues to be its chief executive, according to an interview with Russian TV, and with her sister Tatiana owns 49% of JVM.

Skillman co-founded JVM Equipment in West Sussex in 1998, buying 51% of Lonmadi for a nominal sum in 2000 and increasing that to 100% by 2005. Growth was rapid but fraught with complexity. In 2007, company filings warned of “grave concerns about the present political conflict between the UK and Russian government” and the likelihood of “severe impact” on its business. In response, JVM set up a new subsidiary in Dublin that year to handle trading in Russia, and said it was considering moving the whole group to Switzerland, a “politically neutral country … to safeguard the group’s trading capabilities”.

By 2012, JVM Equipment was earning profits of £47.2m on turnover of £461.m, but in December 2013 JVM moved all of its subsidiaries to a new holding company, JVM Ltd, based in the tax haven of Jersey, leaving JVM Equipment as a shell. That shell paid out a combined £32.5m of dividends

for 2013 and 2014, entitling Skillman to £16.6m. The group's ownership was transferred back to a UK company, JVM Group Holdings Limited, on 23 February 2022, the eve of the invasion.

Through his lawyer, Skillman denied moving the domicile of his business in an effort to reduce scrutiny or the risk of sanctions. Skillman's lawyer said Skillman "no longer plays any part" in managing Lonmadi, but said he had been in contact with Lonmadi's management "as a majority shareholder".

Since the war, Lonmadi has continued to trade, but acknowledged difficulties in getting products. On 16 March it posted on social media about "worries about the lack of vehicles", and said there was a "shortage" of mobile generators of the type made by JCB.

Satellite imagery of its factory showed vehicles that appear to include JCBs in its yard. It has reassured customers that its prices are the same. "Everything is in stock," the company wrote on social media.

Prince Michael was contacted but declined to comment.

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Blind date: ‘We filled some awkward silences with small talk, which I hate’



Adeena (left) with Tomi. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Tomi, 25, sustainability adviser, meets Adeena, 24, political consultant

Sat 23 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 05.28 EDT

Adeena on Tomi



What were you hoping for?

Someone who shares my love for Elizabethan architecture, countryside and rhubarb crumble. It was very specific – there was no way he could live up to my expectations!

First impressions?

Very tall.

What did you talk about?

Politics. Law. ESG. And more politics. (good thing we both like it). The most recent book I read. How we're both fans of Blind Date – he said if this didn't work out, the next step would have to be Love Island.

Any awkward moments?

We filled some awkward silences with small talk (which I hate).

Good table manners?

I'd say so. He put his napkin on his lap. Most people I've been on dates with don't do that and it bothers me. But he didn't wait for me to eat or drink first.

Best thing about Tomi?

He said he's a careful driver and I think that's an important attribute.

Would you introduce Tomi to your friends?

No, they would not get along.

Describe Tomi in three words.

Thoughtful. Attentive. Calm.

What do you think Tomi made of you?

At the end of the date he said, "Please be nice in the review," so I don't think he was particularly fond of me.

Did you go on somewhere?

The tube! He doesn't know London well so thought we were going in the same direction. I may have been a bit abrupt.

And ... did you kiss?

I just gave a side hug to be polite.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

Maybe a different restaurant – he said he likes cooking at home and isn't familiar with Italian food. He also said at the beginning that he wouldn't go on a first date at a restaurant again.

Marks out of 10?

5.

Would you meet again?

No. I'm quite busy with work and we didn't have anything in common to do together.

Tomi on Adeena

**What were you hoping for?**

To meet someone like-minded with similar passions and to have a good conversation.

First impressions?

Adeena was very nicely dressed. She was a bit shy but seemed like a very good-hearted person.

What did you talk about?

I thought we shared a lot of similar interests. We chatted about our respective family backgrounds, our cultures and our shared interest in books. We have a similar taste in music and also talked about our passion for politics and our work.

Any awkward moments?

Just a couple of silent moments, so not too bad.

Good table manners?

Very good.

Best thing about Adeena?

Eye contact.

Would you introduce Adeena to your friends?

Yes.

Describe Adeena in three words.

Diligent, smart, devoted.

What do you think Adeena made of you?

She maybe thought of me as quite honest, calm and driven. I think we are both rather reserved but naturally quite humble.

Did you go on somewhere?

No.

And ... did you kiss?

No.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

To sit away from the window. My food got cold quickly.

Marks out of 10?

7.

Would you meet again?

Yes, but at a different location.

Tomi and Adeena ate at [Pastaio, London W1](#).

Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

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Sarah Perry's postcard from England: ‘Cream tea defeats us. It’s the best we ever had’

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Brexit is a mood, not a policy – and Liz Truss captures it in all its delusion

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Rishi Sunak is the leaver of the two, but Truss tells Tory members the right fairytales – and they may reward her for it



Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss during Britain's Next Prime Minister: The ITV Debate last week. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/ITV/PA

Fri 22 Jul 2022 12.18 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 19.50 EDT

There's a conundrum at the heart of the Conservative party leadership election, and I don't mean the question of who will win. The more intriguing riddle is this. We know that Tory party members are overwhelmingly pro-Brexit: [79% of them voted leave](#), according to YouGov. We also know how important "Europe" is for the Conservative faithful, especially when choosing a leader: it's why they were ready to overlook all considerations of experience, qualifications and electability when they picked an obvious dud like Iain Duncan Smith over Ken Clarke in 2001.

Now consider the choice facing the Tory selectorate. Liz Truss [campaigned hard for remain in 2016](#), warning, presciently as it turned out, "just how difficult it would become to do business" if we were outside the European Union, having to "fill in 50 boxes on a form every time we wanted to export something". Rishi Sunak, meanwhile, was an ardent Brexiteer, not just in the referendum campaign but for decades before: he was writing [jeremiads against Brussels](#) when he was 16. Given all that, leaver Sunak should be miles ahead of remainder Truss. And yet YouGov has Truss beating Sunak among Tory members [by 24 points](#). How can that be?

The answer is that Brexit does not always mean Brexit. Or rather, the meaning of Brexit is not confined to its literal definition. There's both more and less to it than mere advocacy of a British exit from the EU. It is, in a formulation first used, it seems, [by the novelist Nick Harkaway](#), more of a mood than a policy. Regardless of her stance on the policy, Truss embodies the Brexit mood. And Sunak doesn't.

It's partly cultural. Sunak could be a mascot for the slick, hi-tech, high-finance, international elite. The billionaire inlaws, the CV, the look. As one Westminster veteran puts it: "He is *such* a Goldman Sachs guy," even down to his personal manner. He can do affable when the cameras are on, but close up, it's full "master of the universe stuff".

Truss's persona is different. The trace of Yorkshire in the accent, the Thatcher cosplay, coupled with her disavowals of her earlier position – she says she was flat "wrong" to back remain – mean she now has a Brexity vibe. Especially when set against Sunak, who, with his non-dom wife and US green card, could have been one of the very "citizens of nowhere" Theresa May had in mind when she uttered [that poisonous phrase](#).

Of course, none of this is fair. One former ministerial colleague calls it "unbelievable cheek" that Truss, who was a cheerleader for the George Osborne austerity programme, which in the ex-minister's view led millions to vote for Brexit, now poses as the tribune of the left behind: "The only candidate who would allow her to get away with that is an international banker."

But there is more to the Brexit mood than motifs of class and culture. For the mood is only partly about hostility to Europe. Mainly it's about hostility to facts. Truss is the true Brexiter in this contest because she subscribes to magical thinking, believing that simply saying something is enough to will it into existence. You just have to close your eyes and wish really, really hard.

Thus she can claim to have "delivered" a solution to the impasse over the Northern Ireland protocol, when in fact she merely introduced a Commons bill that would, if passed, break an international agreement and trigger a possible trade war with the EU. No less hollow is her boast of brokering

dozens of trade deals, when in fact, for most of them, she simply did a copy-and-paste on existing EU agreements and “stuck a union jack on top”, as one backbench critic puts it.

But it’s the fantasy economics that proves Truss has been drinking the spirit of Brexit neat. For the leave campaign was built on the delusion that Britain could put up barriers to trade with its closest neighbours and yet become richer as a result. It relied on the likes of maverick economist Patrick Minford, who said a hard Brexit would magic an [extra £135bn](#) of annual income for the UK economy. In fact, and entirely predictably, the Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that Brexit has caused [an annual loss of some £80bn](#).

True to her new Brexit colours, Truss is offering a fresh set of numbers that don’t, and never could, add up. She wants simultaneously to cut the money coming into the public coffers and increase the money going out: less tax and more spending at the same time. She’ll cancel the national insurance rise and jack up the defence budget. This is pure cakeism, the philosophy for ever associated with Boris Johnson, but which defined the entire Brexit project with its promise of all the benefits of EU membership – “frictionless trade” and the rest – and none of the cost. Truss says the tax cuts will pay for themselves, by boosting growth, and won’t push up inflation. Asked to cite an authority for such an improbable claim, she names … Patrick Minford.

On it goes, a dreamworld untethered to facts or even observable reality. Today alone, there were [six-hour queues](#) at Dover, caused in part by post-Brexit border checks; [legal action by the EU](#) over the UK’s failure to comply with the Northern Ireland protocol; and a government announcement that the divorce bill for Brexit could [rise to £42.5bn](#). But none of that must intrude on the fantasy that it was Truss’s vote to remain that was the mistake.

This is now the divide in the Conservative party: not leave v remain, but rather the one memorably described by the unnamed aide to George W Bush who contrasted “[the reality-based community](#)” with those who inhabited the realm of faith. Once you’ve made the move from the former to the latter, life is so much freer. In politics, especially, so many opportunities open up. You can say whatever your audience long to hear. Which is why some of Truss’s

internal detractors fear that she won't just be "continuity Boris, but continuity Trump".

This is what [Rishi Sunak](#) is up against now, as he urges his party to ignore the "fairytales" and come back to Tory basics, with a return to sound money. But it's too late. He may be the advocate of Thatcherite policy – no tax cuts until inflation is tamed – but Truss is the apostle of Thatcherite mood: all pussy bows and talk of upending the status quo, even when that status quo was forged by a decade of Conservative government. Except now there's the Brexit twist: the flight from facts.

Still, I wouldn't feel too sorry for Sunak, for he is confronting a monster of his own making. Tory members may have forgotten it, but he backed leave. He helped unleash this beast and rode it all the way to No 11. He sat at Johnson's side, as the air grew fetid with lies. If he is struggling to breathe now, he knows who to blame.

Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)[Climate crisis](#)

Melting ‘snowflakes’? How climate change became a new front in the right’s culture war

[Leo Hickman](#)



Forced to accept the truth, the Daily Mail and others have now switched focus to criticising the policy response



‘The rightwing press tend to direct their editorial cannons away from questioning the veracity of climate science and towards criticising the policy response.’

Sat 23 Jul 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 06.17 EDT

On Tuesday, shortly before wildfires swept through parts of south-east England, the Daily Mail published a comment piece by a [writer called Stephen Robinson](#). “Why can’t the Met Office just tell us the weather, instead of spreading alarm and scolding us with doom-laden lectures?” he raged, accusing the UK’s leading centre of climate and meteorological research of being “woke” and “alarmist”.

Who was this author? Every morning, I pore over the world’s media looking for coverage of the climate crisis as part of researching the [daily newsletter](#) for Carbon Brief. I’m very familiar with the various journalists and commentators who are on this “beat”, especially those in Britain. But I’d never heard of Robinson before. So I did a quick search and found his LinkedIn page. It turns out that he’s a “speech writer and consultant” for “companies operating in the energy sector”. How did this person secure such an influential slot in the UK’s bestselling newspaper?

The comment piece is one example of how the rightwing press is now seeking to undermine climate action by framing it as another ripple in the culture wars. The writer portrayed the Met Office's (utterly sensible) warnings about the extreme heatwave as "cod medical advice" and "nanny-knows-best" statements. Elsewhere, the Daily Express [published an article](#) on Monday by James Whale, who claimed that the reason we should all ignore the "climate-fanatic panic" was because "planets move and we have been getting closer to the sun for thousands of years".

On the day that Robinson's article was published, the Mail's [front page](#) drove the point home in huge type: "Sunny day snowflake Britain had a meltdown". Predictably, this hot take didn't survive the day. The following morning, as much of the UK was reeling from a deadly blast of unprecedented heat, with the mercury rising as high as 40.3C in Coningsby, Lincolnshire, the Mail published an altogether different front page. "Nightmare of the wildfires" was accompanied by a tragic photograph of a burnt-out terrace of houses. Even so, the Mail did not make a single mention of the climate crisis in relation to the wildfires other than printing a picture of climate protesters "prolonging the misery".

It's not the first time the Daily Mail has plucked an unknown writer from obscurity to pen a piece of climate denialism. Thirty two years ago, it published a full-page article under the eye-catching headline: "[Global warming](#): Is it all hot air?" It was the first time a national newspaper in the UK had led its comment pages with a polemic seeking to belittle and question climate science. The timing wasn't accidental. Just a few weeks later, in May 1990, the UN's [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) published its first landmark report on the scientific evidence that showed human-caused emissions were warming the planet.

An organised, determined [effort to undermine](#) climate science had already been under way in the US for several years, but this was the point when it spilled over into the British mainstream media. Reading this article again today, it's clear it established the playbook for this type of comment piece. The article promotes the same familiar tropes and false claims that chip away at the political will to act on the climate crisis. The 1990 article does contain one curio, though; it was penned by "Tony Berry". A few years ago I searched the archives to see who this person was. But I couldn't find a single

other article by him. Again, this seemed like a case of the Mail giving a piece of prime media real estate to an unknown writer.

There has been a significant evolution in the genre of climate denialism screeds since then. Until the 2010s, many right-leaning newspapers routinely published articles quoting (or authored by) climate science deniers. One of the most infamous examples was the [front cover](#) of the Daily Express published on 15 December 2009, which falsely and ridiculously screamed “100 reasons why global warming is natural”. Check the date: it was just days before the UN climate summit in Copenhagen [broke down](#) in acrimony.

But in recent years, most of these newspapers have – albeit glacially and begrudgingly – accepted the science and largely ceased promoting these fringe voices. Instead, they have tended to direct their [editorial cannons](#) away from questioning the veracity of climate science and towards criticising the policy response. (Some argue this is still a form of denial, but a policy debate – even if it is at times disingenuous and ill-informed – is progress.)

Now the rightwing media are seeking to frame those who are calling on the government to do more on the climate crisis as “culture warriors” and “woke” activists. One is left wondering when the penny will drop. How much scientific evidence do they need? How many extreme heatwaves, fires and floods do we all need to suffer before they change their minds? Are we really destined to watch satire become reality, as it did recently [on GB News](#), which ran a TV interview that was eerily similar to the film Don’t Look Up?

Some of these newspapers (but notably not the Mail) trumpeted last year ahead of Cop26 that they would be [increasing their coverage](#) of the climate crisis, acknowledging it is a serious threat. One Telegraph columnist was even [allowed to write](#) this week: “I think you must be insane to still deny we have a crisis ... It’s such a profound failure of politics and journalism – and of self – I struggle to understand it.” Another column sat under the headline: “Climate change denial is melting before our eyes.”

Yet all these newspapers still routinely attack the legally binding [goal of net zero](#) – and especially so during the continuing Conservative party leadership race, where they clearly hope to leverage their disproportionate influence on the minuscule caucus of voters who will decide the next prime minister. My long-range forecast for these newspapers? A prolonged, persistent period of wilful misinformation and doubling down followed by an unsettled spell of regret, recoil and recrimination.

- Leo Hickman is the editor and director of Carbon Brief
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

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[Opinion](#)[Coronavirus](#)

This Covid wave may be cresting – now let's prepare for the next one

[Kit Yates](#)

With new variants likely and an NHS already in crisis, there is no room for complacency about decreasing hospital admissions in England



‘So much of our Covid risk is not in our own hands. We also need top-down solutions.’ Photograph: Vuk Valcic/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Fri 22 Jul 2022 10.52 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 13.19 EDT

Last week saw the first week-on-week fall in Covid hospitalisations in England since May. At the peak, in mid-July, an average of about [1,900 people](#) were admitted to hospital with Covid each day in England. This is similar to the 2,100 admissions a day for the previous surge that topped out at the end of March, and the roughly 2,000 a day for the wave at the turn of the year.

The immunity acquired through high levels of infection in the previous two waves has [proved insufficient](#) to significantly reduce the burden of ill-health in this cycle: a reminder, if one were needed, that it makes no sense to get infected in order to prevent future infection.

So, while we may breathe a sigh of relief that this wave seems to be subsiding, we should be aware that “decreasing” prevalence is not synonymous with “low” prevalence. In climbing circles, there is an oft-quoted statistic that 80% of accidents happen on the descent – thanks, in large part, to fatigue and complacency about being over the summit. Peaks of Covid are not the same as mountains, yet there are similarities. We are all tired of Covid, and we can be happy that we are over the worst of yet another wave. The virus receding again is certainly good news, but if you were concerned about the prevalence levels on the way up, you should be equally concerned at the same juncture on the way down.

Looking to the longer term, this is unlikely to be the last wave we experience in the UK. Some scientists think the next variant of concern may be a descendant of an already existing subvariant of Omicron, such as BA.2 or BA.5 – responsible for the UK’s last two waves. The novel [BA.2.75 subvariant](#), for example, is already spreading rapidly in India, and has been detected here in the UK. It has a range of mutations that have some scientists worried.

Others think the next wave will be the result of a variant that will be sufficiently different from the Omicron subvariants to be designated the next Greek letter, Pi. Irrespective of their views on origins, there is a consensus of opinion in the scientific community that there will be more concerning variants to come, and consequently more waves.

Experts have said they expect the next wave to [hit us in the autumn](#). As the temperatures cool and the nights draw in, more people will understandably want to meet indoors more often. This will inevitably increase transmission levels leading to higher peaks – even with similarly transmissible variants. Inevitably, as cases turn into hospital admissions, this will pile further pressure on an NHS already facing an almost [unprecedented summer crisis](#).

Currently, Covid is exacerbating existing healthcare difficulties caused by chronic underfunding. The latest figures suggest that one in nine people in England are waiting for treatment – not one in nine *patients*, one in nine *people* – 6.6 million of us.

Elsewhere in the health service, Covid is making it harder to discharge patients from hospital, meaning they occupy beds for longer. This in turn leads to difficulties in admitting patients, particularly from A&E. Ambulances then struggle to hand over their patients and end up queueing around the block, sometimes for hours. These same ambulances cannot then attend emergencies, causing them to miss response time targets by huge margins. At the acute end of the crisis, people are dying while waiting for ambulances.

At a time when the Conservative government is paralysed by its leadership contest, we desperately need to see leadership on health, and particularly on Covid. There is only so much we can do as individuals. We can wear masks indoors and ventilate our spaces to the best of our abilities. We can try to meet outside as much as possible. We of course should take up the latest booster jabs when available (although many of us have taken all those offered to us and are not being offered more).

But so much of our Covid risk is not in our own hands. We also need top-down solutions. Improving air quality in schools and other workplaces is something that many employers will not do voluntarily unless given the support and guidance from government to do so. Everyone protects everyone else by wearing a mask in shared indoor spaces such as public transport and shops, but without government mandates or strong public health messaging, we have seen that most people are not inclined to do this voluntarily.

The removal of free lateral flow testing has meant that many people are unable to afford to routinely determine whether they have Covid and to act accordingly. While self-isolation is advised, it is effectively voluntary. The onus from many employers is on their staff to come into work even when testing positive for Covid. Sick pay in the UK remains woefully inadequate.

Sadly, the short-termism that has characterised Boris Johnson's government is being felt all the more acutely now as our lame-duck prime minister continues to limp on. My fear is that, even though the conclusion of the [leadership race](#) will spell the end for Johnson, it will only mark the beginning of yet another regime that continues to ignore the health crisis its predecessors have been so influential in creating.

- Kit Yates is director of the Centre for Mathematical Biology at the University of Bath and author of [The Maths of Life and Death](#)
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2022.07.23 - Around the world

- [Extreme weather China braces for ‘big heat’ day with temperatures set to soar](#)
- [Volkswagen VW boss Herbert Diess exits three years early after turbulent tenure](#)
- [Israel Man dies after being sucked into swimming pool sinkhole](#)
- [Tesla Mexico gives dedicated lane at the border to speed up crossing into the US](#)
- [Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira Three charged in Brazil with murders of men](#)

[China](#)

China braces for ‘big heat’ day with temperatures set to soar

Readings above 40C expected on Saturday with some cities at highest alert level and warnings of dam failures due to melting glaciers



Parts of China are set for the return of more heatwaves over the next 10 days, with temperatures set to start spiking on Saturday. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

Reuters

Fri 22 Jul 2022 21.32 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT

China is set for the return of more heatwaves over the next 10 days, with temperatures set to start spiking in parts of the country on Saturday.

Some coastal cities are already on their [highest alert level](#) and inland regions warning of dam failure risks because of melting glaciers.

This Saturday is the day of the “big heat” in the Chinese Almanac based on the lunar calendar.

The hot spell was expected to be similar in scope as heatwaves from 5-17 July, but more regions could be hit by temperatures of 40C (104F) or higher, Fu Jiaolan, chief forecaster at the National Meteorological Centre, told state media.

Some cities in Zhejiang province, home to many factories and exporters, on Friday issued red alerts – the highest in a three-tier warning system – forecasting temperatures of at least 40C in the next 24 hours.

The load on the national power grid could reach a new high this summer as demand for air-conditioning by homes, offices and factories surges, with safe operation facing “severe tests”, the ministry of emergency management warned on Friday.

“For all of the factories in China and in Shanghai we have regulations that need to be followed,” said Leo Zhang, president of chemical product maker Sika China.

“Every year we do things to make the work more comfortable, for example giving workers ice-creams when it gets too hot.”

Zhejiang, as well as parts of Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangxi and the city of Chongqing, also stood at risk of forest fires in the near term, the ministry said.



A medical worker sits with ice blocks at a Covid testing site amid a heatwave warning in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. Photograph: China Daily/Reuters

The western region of Xinjiang on Saturday warned of more flash floods and mudslides and risks to agriculture as heatwaves swept across the region.

Xinjiang's latest heatwaves had been particularly long lasting and widespread, Chen Chunyan, chief expert at the Xinjiang Meteorological Observatory, told state media.

She noted the extreme weather in the south and east of the region – more than twice the size of France – had already lasted for about 10 days.

"Continued high temperature has accelerated glacial melting in mountainous areas and caused natural disasters such as flash floods, mudslides and landslides in many places," Chen said.

The China Meteorological Administration said a day earlier that the glacial melting in Xinjiang posed a high risk of dam failure on a tributary of the Aksu River near China's border with Kyrgyzstan.

Such heatwaves could also impact crops, especially cotton, Chen said. Xinjiang accounts for production of about 20% of the world's cotton, a water-thirsty crop. By some estimates, 20,000 litres of water is needed to produce 1kg of cotton, enough for one T-shirt and a pair of jeans.

The heat in China this summer has been described as extreme. From 1 June to 20 July, the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins – major centres of industry and commerce – were hit by at least 10 high-temperature days more than the norm.

Heatwaves have also scorched other parts of east Asia, western Europe, north Africa and North America, sparking wildfires in many countries.

Scientists caution that climate change will only make heatwaves hotter and more frequent.

The highest-ever recorded temperature in China is a matter of debate. According to Chinese media, the hottest period in the past 300 years was in July 1743 during the Qing dynasty, with a French missionary in Beijing said to have recorded an all-time high of 44.4C.

In 2015, a local news portal reported 50.3C at a weather station near Ayding, a dry lake in Xinjiang's Turpan Depression.

Temperatures in the oasis city of Turpan could reach 50C next week, the China Meteorological Administration said on Friday.

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[Volkswagen \(VW\)](#)

VW boss Herbert Diess exits three years early after turbulent tenure

Porsche's Oliver Blume will take over after difficulties managing electric transition during Diess's four years in charge



Herbert Diess introduces the new electric Volkswagen ID Buzz van in Hamburg in March. Photograph: John MacDougall/AFP/Getty Images

Reuters in Berlin

Fri 22 Jul 2022 17.21 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 17.40 EDT

Volkswagen's CEO, Herbert Diess, is stepping down and will be succeeded by the current head of Porsche, Oliver Blume, Europe's top carmaker has said, after a four-year tenure in which Diess pushed VW's [electric vehicle ambitions](#) and clashed with its work council and board.

Sources with knowledge of the matter said the Porsche and Piëch families, who own over half the voting rights and a 31.4% equity stake in

Volkswagen, pressed for a change at the helm.

“Diess was incorrigible. He significantly changed Volkswagen for the better. But his communication was miserable,” one source said, asking not to be named.

Diess will leave his role on 1 September, three years before the end of his contract in 2025.

Blume, at VW Group since 1994 and chair of Porsche’s board since 2015, will retain his position at Porsche alongside his new responsibilities “including in the event of a possible [stock market flotation]”, a statement said.

Diess’s future at Volkswagen has been in doubt after communication missteps which angered the workers’ council, most recently in autumn last year after he stated a mismanaged transition to electrification could cost the carmaker more than 30,000 jobs. He was also lambasted for his frequent public warnings that [Volkswagen was falling behind Tesla](#).

The instability weighed on Volkswagen’s market value, which has been on a downward spiral since early 2021.

Daniela Cavallo, chair of the workers’ council, had warned that support for the extension of Diess’s contract would depend on whether he could keep Volkswagen at the forefront of Europe’s car industry.

In what could be taken as a warning to Diess’s successor, Cavallo said in a statement on Friday that “job security and profitability” are “equally important”.

In Europe, Volkswagen is ahead on electric vehicle (EV) sales, with roughly 25% of the market share compared with Tesla’s 13%.

But whether it will remain in first place is unclear, with its production times for an EV currently three times longer than Tesla’s and a new electric-only factory not expected to open until 2026.

The German carmaker has struggled in particular with progressing on software, with its two-year-old software unit, Cariad – which Diess took responsibility for on the board in December – far exceeding its budget and years behind on the target of a more developed software platform.

Executives have pegged [a possible float of Porsche](#) in the fourth quarter as a means to fund Volkswagen's makeover as an electrification-oriented carmaker spanning software, batteries and cars, though poor market conditions mean a listing could bring in billions less than originally hoped.

Diess, in a LinkedIn post before Friday's announcement of his departure, said: "After a really stressful first half of 2022, many of us are looking forward to a well-deserved summer break."

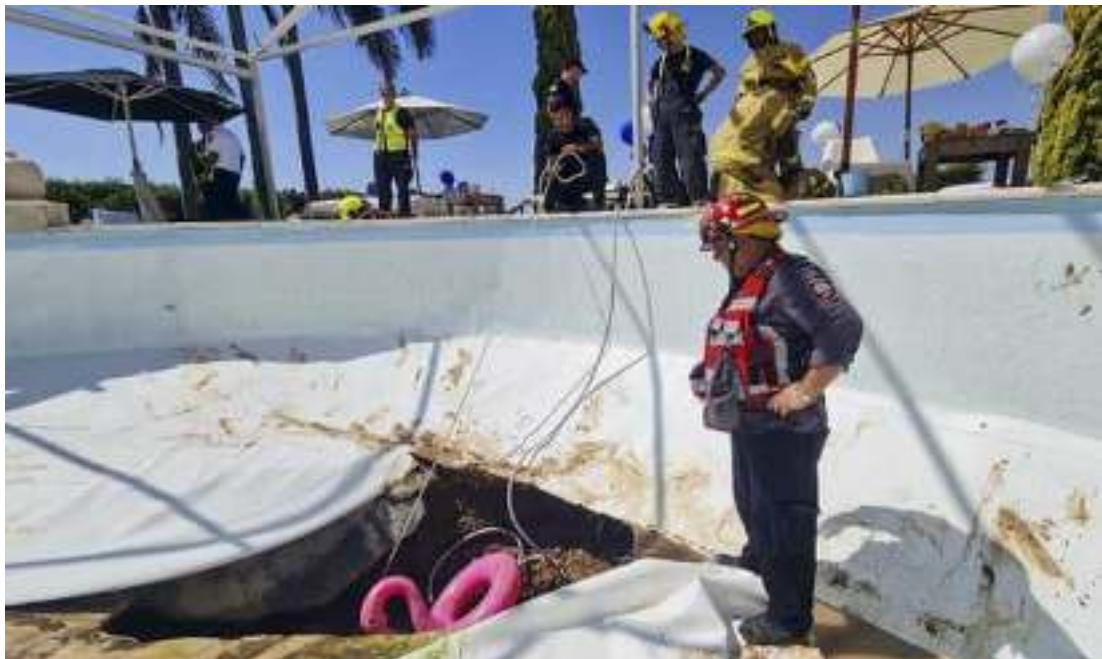
Diess, a native of Bavaria in southern Germany, joined Volkswagen from BMW in July 2015, just months before news broke that [VW had cheated emissions tests](#) in the US.

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[Israel](#)

Man dies after being sucked into swimming pool sinkhole in Israel

A couple are under house arrest after a 30-year-old man died during a private party at a house in Karmi Yosef



The incident happened during a private party attended by about 50 people, local media reported. Photograph: AP

Associated Press in Jerusalem

Fri 22 Jul 2022 12.58 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 13.18 EDT

Police in [Israel](#) have placed a couple under house arrest, a day after a man attending a party at their villa died after being sucked into a sinkhole that formed at the bottom of their swimming pool.

The man and woman, both in their sixties, are suspected of causing death by negligence, police said. They were arrested on Thursday night and a court

decided to release them Friday under “restrictive conditions of house arrest” for five days.

The incident happened during a private party the couple hosted at their house in the town of Karmi Yosef, 25 miles (40km) south-east of Tel Aviv.

Mobile phone video from the scene shows floaties and water being sucked to the bottom, at the centre of the pool, as people sitting by the poolside shout in Hebrew. A man approaches the sinkhole, slips and is almost pulled in before he backs away.

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The police said the victim, 30, was found after a search mission by police, emergency crews and the army.

Israeli media cited witnesses as saying the party was attended by nearly 50 people, of whom six were in the pool, and also reported that the homeowner had built the pool without proper licensing.

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[Tesla](#)

Mexico gives Tesla a dedicated lane at the border to speed up crossing into the US

The exclusive lane, at the remote checkpoint just north of Laredo, Texas, will be for suppliers only, not Tesla owners



Nuevo León has given Tesla's suppliers an exclusive lane at the checkpoint to cross the border into the US. Photograph: Mark Hertzberg/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

[Dani Anguiano](#) in Los Angeles

Fri 22 Jul 2022 16.56 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 17.29 EDT

Tesla has reportedly gained an exclusive lane at a remote [US-Mexico border](#) crossing after Elon Musk recently struck a deal with the “pro-business” state of Nuevo León.

The electric car company's suppliers traveling from Mexico into Texas can use a dedicated lane to speed up their crossing at the Colombia Solidarity site, [Bloomberg reported](#), a less popular checkpoint just north of Laredo. Tesla relies on at least six suppliers in Nuevo León, which borders the US for about 10 miles and is closer to the car company's new headquarters in Austin. The lane is for suppliers only, not Tesla owners.

"It was a simple incentive," Ivan Rivas, Nuevo León's economy minister, told the outlet. "What we want is a crossing that's much more expedited and efficient. And maybe there will be a lane for other companies in the future like there is for [Tesla](#)."

Tesla has its own vehicle lane at Nuevo León border crossing.
<https://t.co/ZNbzF8ov8g> pic.twitter.com/SmWmEhhbVe

— Mexico News Daily (@mexicond) [July 22, 2022](#)

Tesla, which dissolved its press office, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It's unclear what, if any, incentive Tesla offered for the exclusive access or what the rules are for its use. The lane is reportedly only available one way as US officials have said US-managed crossings do not offer a dedicated lane for any company.

"For northbound commercial trucks at the Colombia-Solidarity Bridge, currently there are only the regular cargo lanes and the Free and Secure Trade (Fast) lane, which is for the exclusive use of companies that are enrolled in the CBP-Trade Partnership against Terrorism (C-TPAT) program," a CBP spokesperson told [TechCrunch](#). "There is no separate, dedicated lane for Tesla or any specific company."

Border patrol agents told the outlet that it's unusual to see a dedicated lane for a single company.

Rivas told Bloomberg that Nuevo León is becoming an electro-mobility hub, and that he estimates 5% to 7% of investment in the state will come from the industry this year.

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Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira

Three charged in Brazil with murder of Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira

Prosecutors say two men confessed to killing British journalist and Indigenous expert while third participated

'Defenders of nature': a tribute to Bruno Pereira and Dom Phillips – video

Staff and agencies

Fri 22 Jul 2022 11.42 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 14.15 EDT

Public prosecutors have charged three individuals with the murder in June of the British journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira in the remote western reaches of Brazil's [Amazon rainforest](#).

Phillips – a regular contributor to the Guardian – and Pereira had met Indigenous people near the entrance of the Javari Valley Indigenous Territory, which borders Peru and Colombia, and were travelling along the Itaquai River back to the city of Atalaia do Norte when they were attacked.

Their disappearance generated intense international outcry and pressure for action and, with the help of local Indigenous people, authorities located their bodies hidden in the forest.

Prosecutors presented their charges on Thursday, outlining that two of the men – Amarildo da Costa Oliveira and Jefferson da Silva Lima – have confessed to the crime, while witness testimony indicates Oseney da Costa de Oliveira also participated, according to the statement.

According to the prosecutors, all three are local people and their motive was that Pereira asked Phillips to photograph them when they passed by in a boat. The area is a hotspot for illegal fishing and poaching.

The prosecutors added that they considered this motivation to be “frivolous,” a designation that can make sentences more severe under Brazilian law.

Pereira had had previous confrontations with fishermen when seizing their catch and had received a number of threats. He carried a gun with him, and had left the federal Indigenous affairs agency in order to teach local Indigenous people how to patrol their land and gather geo-tagged photographic evidence of criminality.

On the day they were murdered, Pereira was transporting such evidence to authorities in Atalaia do Norte. He was shot three times. Phillips, who was conducting research for a book entitled How to Save the Amazon, was killed “only because of being with Bruno, in order to ensure impunity for the prior crime”, the prosecutors’ statement said.

There has been speculation that their murder may have been ordered by the ringleader of an illegal fishing network. Police earlier this month arrested a fourth man when he presented false documents, believing he may have some involvement, but no charges have yet been filed.

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- [Conservative leadership Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss set to miss third debate](#)
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Tom Tugendhat out of Tory leadership race as Sunak still leads field – as it happened

Graham Brady announces outcome of third round of race to replace PM, who faced Labour anger during vote of no confidence debate

- [Tom Tugendhat knocked out as Tory leadership race goes to final four](#)

Updated 5d ago

[Nicola Slawson](#) and [Andrew Sparrow](#)

Mon 18 Jul 2022 17.58 EDTFirst published on Mon 18 Jul 2022 04.33 EDT

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Tom Tugendhat knocked out of Tory leadership race – video

[Nicola Slawson](#) and [Andrew Sparrow](#)

Mon 18 Jul 2022 17.58 EDTFirst published on Mon 18 Jul 2022 04.33 EDT

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From 6d ago

[15.03](#)

Tom Tugendhat out of the race as Sunak still leads field

Tom Tugendhat has been knocked out of the Tory leadership race after only receiving 31 votes in the third round of the vote.

Graham Brady said 357 votes were cast in the third round of the vote.

The results for the other candidates are as follows: Kemi Badenoch received 58, [Penny Mordaunt](#) got 82, Rishi Sunak got 115 and Liz Truss received 71.

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Updated at 15.05 EDT

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Show key events only

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[5d ago](#) [17.58](#)

Evening summary

Here's a round up of the key developments from today:

- **Tom Tugendhat has been knocked out of the Tory leadership race after only receiving 31 votes in the third round of the vote.** The results for the other candidates are as follows: Kemi Badenoch received 58, [Penny Mordaunt](#) got 82, Rishi Sunak got 115 and Liz Truss received 71.
- **The government has won tonight's vote of confidence with 349 in support. Meanwhile 248 MPs voted that they don't have confidence in the government.** This result was expected given had Conservative MPs voted that they had no confidence in the government, an early election would likely had to have been called.
- **Boris Johnson has defended his three years in power during a combative speech that hinted at a “deep state” plot to drag the UK back into the EU when he leaves office.** He said some people think his departure will prove the end of Brexit. He urges his party to prove them wrong.
- **Although Keir Starmer's speech was largely focused on Boris Johnson, as well as attacking the prime minister, he also attacked the Conservatives for electing him in the first place, and for sustaining him in office for so long.** Labour fears that, once Johnson leaves, the Conservatives will recover some of their popularity. For Starmer it is important to ensure that opprobrium attached to Johnson sticks to the Tories too
- **Sky News announced it cancelled the Tory leadership debate planned for tomorrow night after Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss said they would not take part.** Conservative MPs are said to be concerned about the damage the debates are doing to the image of the Conservative party, exposing disagreements and splits within the party, Sky News said.
- **The government's emergency committee, Cobra, has been meeting to discuss how to handle the heatwave, but Boris Johnson has not been chairing those meetings himself.** At the Downing Street lobby

briefing the PM's spokesperson defended his decision to leave it to a junior colleague.

- **One of the biggest shocks of the day was Kemi Badenoch, the former equalities minister, firmly, for the first time, committing to the UKs climate commitments and saying she would not row back on net zero.** She previously disparaged the target, causing alarm among green Tories.
- **Pat McFadden, the shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, has written to Nadhim Zahawi, challenging him to provide more clarity about his tax and financial affairs.**
- On Wednesday next week Guardian Live is hosting a discussion on who will be the next Conservative leader. The panel includes my colleagues **Jonathan Freedland** and **John Crace**, and **Salma Shah**, a former special adviser to Sajid Javid. Full details of the event, and how to get tickets, are available [here](#).

We are closing this liveblog now. Thanks so much for joining us.

Our liveblog on the Ukraine-Russia conflict is still live. You can follow along here:

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Updated at 17.59 EDT

[5d ago](#) **17.11**

The government wins confidence vote

The government has won tonight's vote of confidence with 349 in support.

Meanwhile 248 MPs voted that they don't have confidence in the government.

This result was expected given had Conservative MPs voted that they had no confidence in the government, an early election would likely have been called.

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Updated at 17.15 EDT

5d ago **17.05**

Supporters of Liz Truss have said her key rival, Penny Mordaunt, has “topped out” of backers, as the foreign secretary gained ground in the fight for second place in the [Conservative leadership](#) contest.

Mordaunt lost a vote in the latest ballot of Tory MPs’ – a key sign her campaign had stalled after a weekend of bruising attacks – but remained behind frontrunner [Rishi Sunak](#).

But the pressure is still on Truss, who gained just seven MP backers, less than the fourth-placed [Kemi Badenoch](#), who received nine new supporters. Tom Tugendhat, the chair of the foreign affairs select committee, was knocked out of the race.

James Cleverly, the education secretary, said Truss had shown during the leadership debates that she was ready for the job. “This is about day one competence, she is showing she has always had the best depth and breadth of experience,” he added.

The remaining leadership hopefuls will now be hoping to pick off Tugendhat’s 31 supporters. A Truss backer said that Mordaunt’s support was strong, but they believed she and Badenoch would not ultimately be able to overcome their relative lack of experience to win the chance to face off with Sunak in the final two.

Read more from my colleagues [Jessica Elgot](#), [Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Peter Walker](#) here:

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[5d ago](#)[17.02](#)

The MPs in the commons are now voting on the motion of confidence in the government.

It is expected that most Tory MPs will vote that they do have confidence in the government despite many of them resigning from government because they didn't have confidence in **Boris Johnson** less than two weeks ago.

If they don't, there would probably have to be an early general election, which the [Conservatives](#) do not want.

In a highly unusual move, No 10 actually called the vote of confidence in itself after it rejected a Labour motion that singled out Johnson.

More on how the vote came about can be found here:

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Updated at 17.09 EDT

[5d ago](#)[16.56](#)

Fascism does not always “arrive wearing jackboots”, but can come “more subtly”, Green Party MP **Caroline Lucas** has said during the Vote of Confidence debate.

The MP told the commons:

It would be easy to dismiss this government as simply the incompetents that they are. But that would be wrong because the popular style of politics they've inflicted on this country is deeply dangerous.

The risk of a frightening descent into what the honourable member for Paisley and Renfrewshire South (Mhairi Black) bravely and correctly called out in May: fascism. As she said back then, fascism doesn't always arrive wearing jackboots, it can come knocking more subtly than that.

Well, students of fascism have helpfully suggested some of its signs: disinformation, misogyny, disdain for intellectuals, social conformity, suppression of trade unions, threats to human rights, the creation and abuse of hate groups, the rise of militarisation and, of course, racism, which is at the heart of fascism.

Do any of these sounds familiar? There is a pattern here, if only we are prepared to see it. We like to tell ourselves that we live in a mature democracy. Yet this populist government has deliberately set out to weaken the very institutions that define a liberal democracy.

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[5d ago](#)[16.00](#)

Penny Mordaunt, who came second in the vote but lost one of her votes, said:

My vote is steady and I'm grateful to my colleagues for all their support and thrilled to be in second place once more.

MPs know that I'm a strong candidate, running a truly clean campaign and putting forward a positive vision for the party and our country.

Mordaunt, who will be hoping to benefit from **Tom Tugendhat** being eliminated said he was a friend and colleague who she has admired for years and said:

I know that we are both committed to a clean start for our party and I believe he is one of the strongest assets on the Conservative green benches.

It was an honour to stand alongside him in this contest.

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5d ago 15.58

Following the results of tonight's Tory leadership vote, **Kemi Badenoch** tweeted that it was "all to play for" and that she was "in it to win".

She said:

Continued momentum, closing the gap, I am the only change candidate left in the race.

On to the next vote. Thank you to all my colleagues for their support.

It's all to play for. Continued momentum, closing the gap, I am the only change candidate left in the race.

I'm in it to win.

— Kemi Badenoch (@KemiBadenoch) [July 18, 2022](#)

A source for Badenoch's campaign, meanwhile, told the PA news agency:

Kemi is pleased to have taken it to the next vote. She has momentum over both Mordaunt and Truss. It's all to play for and Kemi is in it to win.

She wants to deliver change and is the only candidate in the race capable of delivering it.

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Updated at 16.02 EDT

5d ago [15.56](#)

A source for **Rishi Sunak**'s campaign said the former chancellor had achieved a “good result” in the latest leadership ballot.

They told the PA news agency:

A good result for Rishi after two TV debates and a consistent and sensible message.

MPs are recognising that Rishi has the best experience and plans to deal with the current economic situation. Rishi will rebuild our economy by gripping inflation and getting our economy growing quickly again.

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5d ago [15.36](#)

Full report: Tom Tugendhat knocked out as Tory leadership race goes down to final four

Aubrey Allegretti

Tom Tugendhat has been knocked out of the race to become Britain's next prime minister, with four candidates left in the [Conservative leadership](#) race.

Rishi Sunak remains the frontrunner, with two more votes due to be held by Tory MPs on Tuesday and Wednesday this week to decide the final two candidates.

Sunak gained 14 supporters from the last ballot to put him on a total of 115, trailed by [Penny Mordaunt](#), who lost one, giving her 82.

Liz Truss remained in third place, picking up seven supporters to put her on 71, while [Kemi Badenoch](#) came fourth with an extra nine supporters, giving

her 58.

Tugendhat's allies had been expecting him to poll last in the vote, briefing hours before that it was "ours to lose".

They said they were unlikely to have inherited many supporters from the previous candidate to be knocked out, Suella Braverman.

Though Sunak retained his lead, those MPs who backed Tugendhat and were urged by the former chancellor's team to back him instead, expressed surprise that he was still scrambling to shore up supporters given he seemed all but certain to make the final two.

As the race narrowed further, wavering MPs said the final few rounds were likely to be dictated by the fight between the "Anyone but Sunak" and "Anyone but Truss" factions in a bid to keep one of them out of the final two.

Read more here:

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[5d ago](#)[15.33](#)

After his elimination from the Tory leadership contest, **Tom Tugendhat** said he will listen to what other candidates have to say before deciding who to support.

In a video posted to Twitter, Tugendhat said:

We fought for a clean start because we know that that's what the country is crying out for.

We've seen that in the response to the two debates, we've seen that in the engagement we've had from people.

Now I'm going to be with you, of course, over the next two years, fighting in the council elections and then fighting again in the general election and then long into the future, because we need to make sure that our party, the Conservative Party, is able to deliver a clean start for the country and for ourselves.

But please, I'm not going to be talking about any candidates at the moment, I'll listen to what they have to say and I'll be making my judgment later.

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[6d ago](#)[15.17](#)

Tom Tugendhat, who has become the latest candidate to be eliminated from the Tory leadership contest, tweeted that he was “immensely proud of the positive vision” he and his team put forward during the campaign.

Although it wasn’t to be today, I am immensely proud of the positive vision we put forward for our country.

Thank you to all those who supported me and believed in [#ACleanStart](#). This is only the beginning!
pic.twitter.com/KgODn9xuNx

— Tom Tugendhat (@TomTugendhat) [July 18, 2022](#)

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[6d ago](#)[15.16](#)

Here’s a breakdown of the losses and gains during that vote.

Rishi Sunak gained 14 votes while **Kemi Badenoch** gained nine and **Liz Truss** gained seven. Meanwhile, **Penny Mordaunt** and **Tom Tugendhat** both dropped a vote.

Sunak is only five votes off of a guaranteed place in the postal vote to the wider Conservative party.

Truss will be disappointed to have only taken seven of **Suella Braverman's** votes – especially as Braverman publicly backed Truss after being eliminated– while Badenoch will be pleased to be gaining on her rival on the right.

Mordaunt will also be very disappointed that her momentum has stalled.

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[6d ago](#)**15.03**

Tom Tugendhat out of the race as Sunak still leads field

Tom Tugendhat has been knocked out of the Tory leadership race after only receiving 31 votes in the third round of the vote.

Graham Brady said 357 votes were cast in the third round of the vote.

The results for the other candidates are as follows: Kemi Badenoch received 58, [Penny Mordaunt](#) got 82, Rishi Sunak got 115 and Liz Truss received 71.

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Updated at 15.05 EDT

[6d ago](#)**14.59**

The results of the third round of the leadership ballot is about to be announced. You can watch the livestream of the results above.

It's widely predicated that **Tom Tugendhat** will be knocked out during this round and may already have lost votes to **Penny Mordaunt** during this vote.

Rishi Sunak is not expecting to make much of a gain from the last vote but **Liz Truss** and **Kemi Badenoch** will be hoping for some momentum as they will be hoping to pick up votes from **Suella Braverman**.

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[6d ago](#)**14.55**

Sally-Ann Hart, Conservative MP for Hastings and Rye, said Labour was panicking at the idea of a new Conservative leader.

She said:

With this prime minister gone, what will the opposition do? We can feel their panic from across the floor: their hate fuelled moralistic posturing has made them all vulnerable.

On this side of the house we keep calm and carry on.

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Updated at 14.58 EDT

[6d ago](#)**14.53**

Labour MP **Jess Philips** made a good point during her speech:

She said:

It is unusual being sat here listening to all this praise for their prime minister when they've just got rid of him.

She went on to speak passionately about the government's record on handling sexual assault and harassment allegations.

She said:

When the Labour party was having a leadership election a contest every candidate was rightly asked what they would do to deal with anti-semitism... I'd like to know what Rishi Sunak did when Chris Pincher was appointed deputy chief whip. What Liz Truss did?

I want to know what all the candidates did. And I want to know what the Conservative party is going to do to deal with its institutional inability to deal with complaints about sexual harassment.

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Updated at 14.58 EDT

[6d ago](#)[14.43](#)

A Tory MP was told he should be ashamed of the government's record on LGBT rights during the vote of confidence debate in the Commons – which led to a heated exchange across the Commons chamber.

In his speech, **Chris Bryant** told the Commons:

No I don't have confidence in this government because they are obsessed with all the wrong things. They spend more time and energy protecting statues than protecting women from domestic abuse.

They deliberately drive wedges between people over gender identity and trans rights and ignore the fact that their own equalities minister resigned because he thought the Government was creating a hostile environment for LGBT people.

Bryant then pointed at Tory MP **Chris Clarkson**, who had just finished a speech giving his backing to the government and who is gay, and said:

Which is why he should be ashamed to defend this government.

Raising a point of order, Clarkson asked whether pointing at him was in order, but Deputy Speaker **Dame Rosie Winterton** said it would have been “appropriate” for the Conservative MP to try to intervene in Bryant’s speech instead.

Bryant and Clarkson could later be seen speaking to each other in angry but hushed tones across the Commons chamber, each telling the other they should be ashamed.

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Updated at 14.58 EDT

[6d ago](#) [14.34](#)

Labour MP **Diana Johnson** has tweeted to say the vote of confidence debate is “one of the nastiest” she has ever experienced.

In the House of Commons chamber in the [#VoteOfConfidence](#) debate. It’s one of the nastiest debates I have experienced from the Tories. Personal animosity on show and tempers very frayed. Democracy is better than this. This is what [@BorisJohnson](#) has done to the [@Conservatives](#)

— Diana Johnson DBE MP  (@DianaJohnsonMP) [July 18, 2022](#)

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[6d ago](#) [14.28](#)

SNP MP **Stewart McDonald** told the Commons:

We don't have a government, it's a government in name only, it's essentially now a form of organised Tory hooliganism that squats in these offices of state, that squats in these departments and squats most of all in Downing Street.

Earlier, Conservative MP **Sir Bill Cash** shouted “don't you dare speak like that” after an apparent heckle in response to him raising Johnson's experiences with Covid.

He told the Commons:

On the handling of Covid, from which he nearly died himself, and despite which – don't you dare speak like that – with courage and resilience he battled through.

It was not clear in the chamber what was shouted from the opposition benches, with Cash opting to continue his speech in defence of Johnson.

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Conservative leadership

Sky News cancels third Tory leadership debate after Sunak and Truss pull out

Pair indicated they would not take part in programme after bruising exchanges in earlier debates

- [Politics live: latest updates](#)



Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss clashed during the second leadership debate on ITV on Sunday evening. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/ITV/PA

Peter Walker Political correspondent

Mon 18 Jul 2022 09.03 EDTFirst published on Mon 18 Jul 2022 05.48 EDT

Sky News has cancelled the third scheduled TV debate in the [Conservative leadership](#) race after Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss pulled out of the event following a bruising set of exchanges in the first two debates.

“Two of the three candidates currently leading in the MPs’ ballots – [Rishi Sunak](#) and Liz Truss – have confirmed to Sky News that they do not want to take part,” the broadcaster announced in a statement.

“Conservative MPs are said to be concerned about the damage [the debates](#) are doing to the image of the Conservative party, exposing disagreements and splits within the party.”

Earlier, a source in Sunak’s campaign said the former chancellor had never committed to participating in the debate, adding: “We are very happy to do more debates if we are lucky enough to get to the next stage, including [Sky News](#). ”

Truss’s aides had said the foreign secretary was “unlikely” to take part if all the other candidates did not.

The decision came hours before the third round of voting by Tory MPs, with the backbencher Tom Tugendhat predicted to be the latest candidate eliminated, reducing the field to four.

Speaking to reporters in London on Monday, Keir Starmer said he was “astonished” at the developments.

The Labour leader said: “I can see, based on what I’ve seen in the debates so far, why they want to do so, because this is a party that is out of ideas, out of purpose – they’re tearing each other apart.”

The cancellation follows sometimes brutal exchanges in TV debates on Friday and Sunday over taxation plans, and about social issues such as transgender rights. While Sunak has faced the brunt of the attacks [on the former subject](#), Penny Mordaunt, the international trade minister, has been repeatedly [criticised](#) for being too liberal.

After Sky News cancelled the debate a spokesperson for Mordaunt said: “It’s a shame some colleagues cannot find a way to debate one another in a civil way.” That quote was later deleted, with the spokesperson instead

saying Mordaunt “hopes there will be ample opportunity for such scrutiny later in the contest”.

In the latest personal attack on Mordaunt, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, the international trade secretary, accused her of neglecting her ministerial job to focus on her prime ministerial ambitions.

“Understandably, perhaps, now it’s clear, Penny has for the last few months spent some of her time focused on preparing her leadership campaign, for which I have utmost respect – that’s how this system works,” Trevelyan told LBC.

“There have been a number of times when she hasn’t been available, which would have been useful, and other ministers have picked up the pieces.”

After Monday’s vote, two further votes among Tory MPs, on Tuesday and Wednesday, will whittle the contest down to a final two, with the new leader then being decided by a ballot of party members, the result of which is due to be announced on 5 September.

The fifth candidate is Kemi Badenoch, a former levelling up minister, who is viewed as most likely to be eliminated on Tuesday, although she has been gaining some momentum in the contest.

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In Sunday evening’s ITV debate between the five candidates, Sunak criticised Mordaunt’s idea of allowing the Treasury to borrow for day-to-day spending, not just investment.

Mordaunt said “too many chancellors have had too many fiscal rules that they have then had to ditch because they weren’t able to meet them”, prompting Sunak to reply: “Literally Jeremy Corbyn didn’t think that was the right approach.”

But most of the criticism of Mordaunt has been more personal, notably over her allegedly liberal views.

The Daily Mail, a strong supporter of Truss, has targeted Mordaunt in particular. On Monday, its front-page [headline](#) said that as a minister Mordaunt met the Muslim Council of Britain, despite a government policy of not formally engaging with the group.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jul/18/rishi-sunak-liz-truss-set-to-miss-third-tory-leadership-debate-sky>.

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Conservative leadership

Tory leadership field to be cut to four as IMF warns against tax cuts

Tom Tugendhat most likely to be eliminated after bruising ITV debate marked by Sunak and Truss clashes

‘It’s socialism’: heated Tory leadership debate exposes deep divisions in party – video

Peter Walker Political correspondent

Mon 18 Jul 2022 04.11 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 06.24 EDT

Conservative MPs will cull the five-strong field hoping to succeed Boris Johnson by one more on Monday, as the International Monetary Fund cautioned the candidates over their race to announce sweeping tax cuts.

Following an [often bruising debate on ITV](#) on Sunday night, a third round of voting by MPs will take place on Monday afternoon, with the result announced at 8pm by Sir Graham Brady, the chair of the 1922 Committee of backbench Tories.

Tom Tugendhat, the chair of the Commons foreign affairs committee, who has never held a ministerial post, is seen as most likely to be eliminated. He came fifth in the first and second rounds of voting, with his support dropping between the two votes.

That would leave Rishi Sunak, the former chancellor; Liz Truss, the foreign secretary; the trade minister Penny Mordaunt; and Kemi Badenoch, a former levelling up minister.

Badenoch is seen as most likely to be knocked out in the fourth round of voting on Tuesday afternoon.

Following a final TV debate that evening, a fifth round on Wednesday will whittle down the field to two, with Conservative party members then deciding which of them should be leader, and thus prime minister, in early September.

One of the dominant elements of the race so far has been offers of tax cuts often totalling tens of billions of pounds a year, with Sunak using the debate on Sunday to say this could fuel inflation.

Speaking to BBC News on Monday morning, Mark Flanagan, the UK head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said tax cuts financed by debt would be a mistake at the moment.

“At some point you have to decide, do we want to invest in the climate transition? Do we want to invest in digitalisation? Do we want to invest in skills for the public?” he said. “Well, if you do you need the resources to do it. And the way to realise those resources is to lift the tax ratio a little bit.”

There were clashes between Sunak and Truss in particular during Sunday’s often fractious debate, with the former chancellor saying his colleague was in effect advocating socialism by promising tax cuts worth as much as £30bn annually, suggesting they could be paid for through additional borrowing and faster growth.

Truss told Sunak he had raised taxes to the highest level in 70 years, saying that “will choke off economic growth”.

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Sunak responded by warning about the inflationary effect of tax cuts, adding: “And you know what, this something-for-nothing economics is not conservative, it’s socialism. If we’re not for sound money, what is the point of the Conservative party?”

Kit Malthouse, the government minister sent out on Monday’s broadcast round, primarily to talk about an unprecedented red warning in place over

the UK heatwave, predicted his colleagues would come back together in a “spirit of harmony and love” after the leadership campaign.

Malthouse, who holds the cabinet role of chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, said: “I think it’s good to have a vigorous debate within any kind of political organisation. All political parties are standing coalitions and the Conservative party is the same. A vigorous exchange of ideas, in what is a challenging time for the country, should be expected when you are talking about such important issues and the leadership of a G7 nation.

“If it was just a polite agreement and consensus across the board, there wouldn’t be much point in having a competition at all.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jul/18/tory-leadership-field-to-be-cut-four-imf-warns-against-tax-cuts>

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Conservative leadership

Next Tory leader must have clear plan on net zero, says Alok Sharma

Each candidate to be asked to prove climate credentials at green hustings on Monday, as UK heatwave hits

- [The latest politics news – live updates](#)



Sharma led last year's Cop26 UN climate summit in Glasgow. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent

Mon 18 Jul 2022 04.50 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 05.51 EDT

Tory leadership candidates will have to demonstrate on Monday that they support not only the net zero target but a programme of action to fulfil the goal, the leading climate voice in the cabinet has said.

Alok Sharma, the UK cabinet minister who [led last year's Cop26 UN climate summit](#), will ask each of the five remaining candidates to prove their climate credentials when he chairs green hustings on Monday afternoon in Westminster.

Temperatures are expected to soar as high as 42C (107F) in the UK on Monday, with a national alert in place and experts warning of the [potential for thousands of excess deaths](#).

Sharma said the [extreme heat](#) should alert candidates to what was at stake. “Any candidate aspiring to be our next prime minister who doesn’t think we are facing a climate emergency needs to consider the temperatures we are seeing in the UK, across Europe and beyond,” he said. “No one should be in any doubt about how much worse this could get if we do not have a clear plan and continue to press for action during this critical decade.”

“We are already at 1.1C average warming above pre-industrial levels and we can already see the huge environmental, economic and very human costs being experienced across the world,” he added.

He told the Guardian that the five remaining candidates for Tory leadership, and therefore prime minister, must show at Monday’s hustings that they understood the nature of the climate crisis and were prepared to respond with urgency.

He said: “The question that every candidate needs to answer is do they support the manifesto on which we were elected in 2019, which very clearly sets out a commitment to net zero and to green growth, and that they will continue with this particular agenda and this manifesto commitment.”

This would include the [commitments made under Boris Johnson](#) and a plan to push forward with renewable energy and decarbonising all sectors of the economy, Sharma made clear.

“I hope every candidate will have read our 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution,” he said. “I hope every candidate will have read the government’s net zero strategy, our British energy security strategy. And I

hope when they talk about green levies, they'll also have understood what the makeup of green levies is.”

Although all of the remaining candidates apart from Kemi Badenoch have endorsed the net zero target, there are [doubts over whether they will push forward on the policies needed](#) to achieve that goal. Several have hinted at weakening key policies, such as green levies on energy bills, which Liz Truss and Penny Mordaunt said they would scrap, or at holding back on climate action.

Rishi Sunak warned in the televised debate on Sunday night against going “too hard and too fast” on climate action. Tom Tugendhat appeared to pin his hopes on carbon capture and storage, which experts have said can play only a minor role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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Sharma, speaking before the debate, said the green levies helped to reduce bills rather than increase them, and emphasised the urgency of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. “Some candidates have been lukewarm on this issue. And my response is that this is such a vital issue. Net zero is one of the clearest economic trends we have, and that’s reiterated by businesses in the UK and by businesses internationally,” he said.

Net zero was good for the economy, and for the Tories’ electoral prospects, as well as for the planet, Sharma added. “This is about an environmental dividend, but it’s also about an economic dividend, and ultimately an electoral dividend as well,” he said. “If you look at all the polling that is out there, this is an [issue that matters to all people](#), but also matters very much to people who vote Conservative.”

With the UK still holding the presidency of the UN climate talks, until Egypt takes over in November at the [Cop27 conference in Sharm el-Sheikh](#), Sharma said it would be “incredibly damaging” for the UK’s international standing if the new prime minister weakened in any way on net zero.

Sharma has also warned that if the final candidate chosen by Tory MPs and Conservative party members does not show clear commitment to pushing forward on net zero policy, he could resign. He said: “Anyone aspiring to lead our country needs to demonstrate that they take this issue incredibly seriously. I want to see candidates very proactively set out their support for a net zero agenda for green growth.”

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‘What times we live in that nobody missed her’: the tragedy of Sheila Seleoane



Illustration: Ula Šveikauskaitė/The Guardian

Apparently without friends or family, the 61-year old lay dead in her London flat for more than two years before finally being discovered – and when

neighbours raised the alarm, they were repeatedly ignored. How could this happen?



[Amelia Gentleman](#)
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Mon 18 Jul 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 11.49 EDT

Only two people attended the funeral of Sheila Seleoane in April: her estranged brother and a representative from Peabody, the housing association responsible for the block of flats where she had lived, who arrived very late.

Two months earlier, Sheila's skeletal remains had been found on the sofa in her third-floor south [London](#) flat, where they had lain undetected for an estimated two and a half years, despite repeated attempts by neighbours to persuade the police to break down her door and check on her welfare.

“The priest said she was loved by her friends and family and neighbours – but, when you looked at the audience, there was just one person there,” says Christine, an events manager who lived opposite her (and asked for her real name not to be printed). She had asked Peabody if she could attend the service, but no one sent her the details. Instead, she was later emailed a link

to watch a recording of the event. Sheila, who was 61 when she died, was given a traditional Christian service; pallbearers had placed an arrangement of white flowers on her wooden casket. “It was very sad,” Christine says.

It is now five months since police finally broke down the doors to Sheila’s flat in a modern redbrick block in Peckham. Among her former neighbours, there is rising anger over the way they say that the police and the housing association ignored them when they tried to raise the alarm. A much delayed independent report is due to be published later this week, to coincide with the inquest. Whatever that report concludes, the case already raises questions about whether or not the concerns of social-housing tenants are still routinely ignored, in ways that echo the events that preceded the Grenfell catastrophe. And it has left many wondering about modern isolation, and how a resident of a busy city of 9 million can die and not be missed for years.

Despite enormous media interest in Sheila’s story, little has emerged about her identity. Before her death, none of her neighbours even knew the name of the woman in flat 16. “I’d hear her keys jiggling in the door; I think she had a typical nine-to-five schedule, but I barely saw her,” says Christine. “I probably knew her better than anyone else in the block, but we never really spoke – just hello and that was it. Christine never went inside, but occasionally glimpsed a tidy and well-looked-after interior when she knocked to collect deliveries that Sheila had signed for. It was only after her neighbour’s death that she discovered she worked as a medical receptionist, employed through a temping agency. “It was an admin type of job; she was always dressed in black trousers, court shoes, a white shirt. I was surprised when I found out she was 61 – she looked much younger.”



An ambulance attending the block of flats where Sheila lived. Photograph: SWNS

She doesn't remember ever seeing visitors. "It's so hard to understand why none of her friends or colleagues or her boss missed her. No one came to look for her."

Another neighbour on Sheila's corridor, Donatus Okeke, who works in construction and is originally from Nigeria, says he had politely distant relations with the woman he lived metres from for several years. "She would always greet my children, but I didn't know her name and I never went inside her flat. In this country, you don't communicate with your neighbours."

Sheila's body might still remain undiscovered had it not been for Storm Eunice, which swept through Britain on 18 February, triggering transport chaos and power cuts – and blowing open Sheila's balcony door. Her downstairs neighbour was disturbed by the noise of the glass door banging in the wind and called the police, requesting that they check on the occupant's welfare. That evening, police officers broke down the front door with a battering ram and found her body. A neighbour leaned out of their window to film men, presumably undertakers, wheeling a body bag out from the building and packing it into the back of a car.

Police have said Sheila's death was unexplained rather than suspicious, but tenants remain confused by events since they first became worried about their neighbour. Tired of waiting for the results of the independent report, tenants have been doing their own detective work with the help of Peckham's Labour MP, Harriet Harman. Their research reveals a mystifying contradiction between what the housing association says happened and the reported actions of the police.

There is a quiet irony in the way Sheila's death has brought her neighbours together. Their building is a 20-flat block, with thin walls and flimsy doors, where cooking smells and half-heard voices mingle in the communal corridors. For years, its tenants have lived cheek by jowl with other families that they rarely spoke to. Now, as they try to unpick the truth about Sheila's fate, they have been forced to get to know one another.

Their investigations reveal that the last certain evidence that Sheila was alive was in August 2019, when she paid her rent by debit card to Peabody for the last time. A month later neighbours began calling the housing association, reporting an unpleasant smell in the hallways of the building.

"Flies began coming through my windows, and there were maggots on the windowsill," says Sheila's downstairs neighbour, a woman who has lived in the block for 17 years (she also asked not to be named). "In August or September 2019, I rang Peabody to report it, but they said they didn't deal with flies and I needed to ring a pest control company. I found maggots crawling on the furniture, and had to buy bleach to clean everything." Some time later, she says, she rang them again to ask: "Are you sure no one has died in the block?" She can't remember precisely how they responded, but knows her concerns were brushed off.

Donatus's wife, Evelyn Okeke, remembers having to hold her nose every time she left the flat to take her three children to school. She began spraying air freshener and deodorant all over her home to disguise the smell. According to her diary, Okeke first called Peabody on 10 October 2019. Her husband was so disturbed by the smell that he went to the doctor. "I told the GP I thought someone had died in the flat and the smell was making me sick," he says. "It was a very harmful smell; we couldn't cope with it. We wanted to move out."

In flat 17, which shares a wall with flat 16, an Iraqi-Kurdish family of six, who moved in a decade ago, were also concerned. They started laying old clothes at the base of their front door to stop the smell from the corridor seeping through. The eldest son, now 21, then a university student working towards a degree in construction project management, was worried about what might have happened to his neighbour, who he had often bumped into at the bus stop in the morning. “I think she used to look happy; we’d say hi and bye,” he says. He struggles to remember much else about her. “I think that she walked quite slowly – maybe she had asthma or something.”



The hire bike outside Sheila's flat, which was left there for months.
Photograph: Supplied image

With hindsight, he remembers that some time in late 2019 he stopped seeing her. “We used to hear her through the walls; then that stopped.” After multiple fruitless calls to Peabody, he walked two miles to the Peabody management offices, some time in late 2019, he thinks, to register his concerns. “I sat inside an office with a woman who wrote things down on a computer,” he says. A member of staff came to the block and opened some corridor windows. Some residents were told that the problem was poor rubbish disposal by tenants, or possibly damp, or outside drainpipes.

It was obvious to the other tenants in the block that the occupant of flat 16 was not living there or was no longer alive. Communal cleaners moved her doormat to wash the floor, and left it leaning against the wall, where it stayed for months. Her letterbox in the entrance hall became so full that post started overflowing on to the doormat. Children played with the letters, and some of them ended up in a heap on the bottom of the lift. In early 2020, Christine picked up one of the letters and opened it.

“I know you’re not meant to open other people’s letters,” she says, “but I was worried. It was a letter from Peabody saying she hadn’t been paying her rent since September 2019.” She called the landlords to say that she was concerned; by this point she was buying scented candles and laying towels under her front door. “Sometimes I wanted to gag.” She called the police twice. “I told them my neighbour was missing and there was a bad smell. They came and stood outside the door and said they couldn’t smell anything. They said perhaps she had gone away and left a pet behind, or perhaps some food had gone off and was rotting. I knew she didn’t have a pet; you’re not allowed them in this building. I wanted them to break the door down, but they said they couldn’t without a warrant. They said the landlord needed to deal with it.” The second time she called the police – she can’t remember precisely when – she found their response even less helpful. “They seemed quite annoyed – like we were just a bunch of nosy neighbours. They said they couldn’t do anything.”

It was clear that no one was entering or leaving the flat. In March 2020, engineers came three times to try to do an annual gas safety check, and finally stuck a letter on Sheila’s door, noting that they had been unable to gain access and promising to return to make a forced entry in April 2020. But the Covid lockdown began and the forced entry never happened; the letter stayed up for more than a year until decorators came to repaint the internal corridors and doors; they moved the notice and painted Sheila’s door while it was locked. Someone carried a Santander bike up to the third-floor landing and abandoned it, blocking her entrance for weeks. By now, Sheila’s rent and council tax were heavily in arrears.

Neighbours’ memories of this time are blurred in a Covid-related haze, but they have constructed a timeline of their calls and WhatsApp messages, revealing that by July 2020, they were asking one another why the landlords

and the police were not investigating the “missing or supposed dead person”. Peabody has told Harman that the block’s neighbourhood manager tried to contact the tenant “many times”, but was unable to get a response. It also says that it does not have the right to force entry without police support. The organisation only contacted the police in October 2020, when a tenant’s social worker told the housing association there was “a strong smell like a dead body”. Peabody told Harman that, according to its records: “The police reported back that they had ‘spoken to the resident and that she is safe and well.’” As a result, the request to carry out a welfare check on the resident was closed.

The police confirm that they went twice to the flat in October 2020 “but found no grounds for forcing entry”; their involvement was referred to the Directorate of Professional Standards in March, which ruled that it did not reach the threshold for getting the Independent Office for Police Conduct involved, “due to the likelihood that the resident was deceased before the calls to police”.

“It’s odd – they seem to be saying it doesn’t matter they didn’t do their job properly because she was already dead,” Harman says. She has attempted to get an explanation from the police and Peabody about how officers could conclude that they had spoken to Sheila, when she was almost certainly long dead.

Sheila’s neighbours feel some remorse that their busy lives prevented them from making friends with her, particularly once it emerged that she had no support network of friends or family. Some see it as symptomatic of Britain’s excessive reserve, which they now regret. “In Iraq, people don’t live by themselves like that – they’re less isolated, people check up on each other more,” Sheila’s Kurdish Iraqi neighbour said. “People here don’t invite each other into their flats.”

Sheila left almost no digital footprint. Her Facebook account is empty except for a single entry from 2012, which hints at a deep-rooted loneliness: “I am looking for Jackie Douglas, who I went to school with. I can’t remember your address and made the mistake of not writing it down.” Only two classmates on the Facebook page for Woodberry Down secondary school, in north London, which Sheila attended in the 1960s, were able to recall vague

half-memories of a friend they had forgotten about decades earlier. Valerie Hussey wrote: “We hung out and visited each other for a while but then we lost touch. I hope she is now resting in peace.” Another ex-pupil, Christine Naylor, wrote: “What times we live in that nobody missed her.”

Just one passport sized photo has emerged of Sheila, who was born in London in 1961, to a mother who had arrived from South Africa a few years earlier. Sheila’s closest relative, from whom she was estranged, was her 64-year-old brother. Police traced an older half-sister, Julia Bella Brooms, in South Africa. She never met Sheila, but held a memorial service for her some weeks after the London funeral.

Sheila’s undiscovered death is not unique. Joyce Carol Vincent, whose story was told in the film [Dreams of a Life](#), died in her north London bedsit in 2003 and was also undiscovered for almost three years. Other housing association tenants have told the Guardian about neighbours who were left for weeks before their bodies were found.

But Peabody will face harsh criticism this week, because of its failure to respond to tenants’ concerns. The Peabody trust was founded in 1862 to “ameliorate the condition of the poor and needy of this great metropolis, and to promote their comfort and happiness”, but it has struggled in recent years with a rapid expansion. The housing association took over running the Peckham block, where several tenants are classified as vulnerable, when it merged with the smaller organisation Family Mosaic in 2017; residents say that before the merger they had close personal relations with a block manager who was often present. Peabody has since merged with another organisation and has grown into a vast organisation responsible for 104,000 homes (about a quarter of a million people); tenants who want to register complaints find themselves confronted with a faceless call-centre system.

“The issue of landlords not listening to their tenants is the big takeout from this. Either Peabody didn’t have proper systems or their staff weren’t sufficiently caring and attentive,” Harman says.

A Peabody spokesperson says the findings of the investigation will be shared with tenants after the inquest. “As an organisation and as individuals, we are deeply sorry about the length of time it took us to realise Sheila had

passed away at home. The report shows that, although processes were followed and we tried to contact Sheila many times, there were several missed opportunities to raise the alarm. Since February, we have been supporting Sheila's family, and we are keen to work with residents and others to decide on an appropriate way to commemorate Sheila in the future."

This may not be enough to placate the tenants. All the third-floor residents have requested to move. "We had someone lying dead in our building for over two years," one says. "No one cared. When we complained about it, all they did was add a splash of paint."

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Walt Disney Company

Bewildered, bored, delighted? The Disney classics my kids loved – and the ones they couldn't finish

Not everything has aged well, but the animator's storytelling skills still strike a chord with 21st-century children



Fantasia ... not a hit in the 1940s, and still the least popular of Disney's supposed 'classics' Photograph: Album/Alamy



[Hadley Freeman](#)

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Princesses, overpriced theme parks and a rapacious commercialisation of childhood: these would have been my suggestions if I'd been asked six months ago what I thought were Walt Disney's legacies. Which isn't to say that I'm anti-Disney. At all. Every generation has their Disney, and just as I grew up singing along to Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* and Mrs Potts (so superior to Belle) in *Beauty and the Beast*, so my children are regularly babysat by *Frozen* and *Encanto*. I watched the films on a VHS, my children stream them, but the effect is the same: just one glimpse of the Magic Kingdom icon at the start of a Disney film acts like a stun gun on them, silencing them mid-argument then pinning them to the sofa.

At moments like that, man, I love Disney. At other times, I feel less positively inclined. When I get on my highest of horses, I will argue that Disney has done to pop culture what McDonald's has done to fast food: homogenising it and boiling it down to the most quickly digestible basics, dealing in broad strokes and gender stereotypes. By now, the [Walt Disney Company](#) owns – as far as I can tell – every last bit of entertainment that isn't Amazon or Netflix, and we live in a Disneyfied world, with little girls

wearing Elsa fancy dress and boys opting for Captain Jack Sparrow. But what really is Walt's legacy?

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Maybe it's your three-year-old singing [We Don't Talk About Bruno](#) for the 752nd time in two days, making you want to tear off your own ears and eat them. Or maybe it's harassed parents forking out \$50 a head so the family can eat breakfast with someone in a Goofy suit at the theme parks' (in)famous Character Breakfasts. Or maybe it's the [history of allegations](#) from Disney park employees that they are so badly paid they can barely cover living costs. Given the Disney corporation's energetic promotion of their founder's image as a twinkly eyed benevolent genius, what would he think of the world he created?

A few months ago, the podcast company Novel asked if I would narrate its upcoming 10-part series, Life and Death in the Magic Kingdom, written by Al Horner. It tells the life of Disney through the films made during Walt's lifetime, with each episode dedicated to one film, from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) to The Jungle Book (1967). Despite my lifelong history of watching Disney movies, and a subscription to [Disney+](#) that I came to value during lockdown at least as much as my access to clean water, I knew almost nothing of Walt himself. He was cryogenically frozen? And had a real-life mouse named Mickey? So I said yes, partly out of curiosity. And I learned a lot while working on the series, including about the history of cryonics. I also learned that old Walt himself was no slouch when it came to stiffing his workers.

But, really, I learned about the movies. The main reason I agreed to do the podcast was this sounded like a rare job with which my children could help me. My twin boys are six and my daughter is three so I pretty much live with a Disney test audience. So I sat down with the kids, ignored their wails as I scrolled past all the movies they recognised, and introduced them to old Disney. Vintage Disney. Real Disney.

To all of our astonishment, they actually enjoyed them. I assumed that, as children of the CGI era, they would find the old movies' hand drawings cold and inaccessible, but I underestimated the efficacy of Disney's storytelling. Well, some of the time. Before we proceed, I shall list, in ascending order, how well the original Disney films went down with my kids: Fantasia; Pinocchio; Dumbo; Bambi; Alice in Wonderland; Cinderella; Snow White; Mary Poppins; The Jungle Book.

That kids in 2022 don't like Fantasia – Disney's plot-free film featuring abstract animated interpretations of classical music – is not a massive surprise. Kids didn't like it in 1940 when it was released, and who could blame them? Sure, it looks neat, but your enjoyment of Fantasia generally depends on how much LSD you've ingested that day, which is why the film enjoyed a surge of popularity in the 60s and 70s, and why it did not on my sofa.



Bambi and Thumper ... entertaining kids since 1942 despite *that* scene.
Photograph: Disney/Allstar

“But Pinocchio?!” you cry. “How could your kids not love Pinocchio, that adorable film about a puppet whose nose grows when he lies?” Well, dear readers, you clearly have not seen Pinocchio in a while. Not only is the nose shtick barely a thing in the film (one scene – literally one scene!), it seems to

me to be a film with dark overtones of paedophilia, in which Pinocchio and other boys are kidnapped and taken to a place called – I kid you not – Pleasure Island. My bored and confused children had wandered off long before that delightful plot development, while I quietly gave thanks for the less complicated joys of Paw Patrol.

There were some things they didn't like about the original Disney films. The racism in Dumbo (1941) bewildered them – not so much the crow named Jim (what larks), which went entirely over my six-year-olds' heads, but rather it was the faceless slaves at the beginning who sing merrily about working until “we're almost dead” and address one another as “you hairy ape”. Was this supposed to be happy, because it didn't seem like it, their baffled faces said. Just as well I didn't subject them to Song of the South, a paean to the innate cheerfulness of slaves, which was made five years after Dumbo and which is very much not on Disney+.

Walt Disney took often extremely harsh and strange stories and refashioned them

Then there was the unexpected brutality of the old Disney movies. Sure, the modern films for kids contain jeopardy: is Andy outgrowing his toys in Toy Story? Can Riley get through puberty in Inside Out? Well, old Disney movies see that and raise you Dumbo torn away from his jailed, weeping mother; Snow White in a coffin; Bambi's mother dying in the snow, which turns out to traumatisise children today just as much as it did 80 years ago – thanks for that, Walt. Even Mary Poppins disappearing at the end of her film and Mowgli abandoning his animal family for some eight-year-old minx with a water jug have a degree of poignancy not seen in modern films. Life really was tougher in the old days.

But in the main, my kids loved them. The Jungle Book and Mary Poppins they'd seen before, but Cinderella, Snow White and Alice in Wonderland were huge surprise hits – they genuinely loved them. How could they not? Modern kids' films had trained them to do so, because they themselves had learned from the original Disney films how to tell stories. Olaf the chatty snowman in Frozen? The direct descendant of Jiminy Cricket in Pinocchio. Disney and his team recognised that a chatty sidekick was essential as a

moral anchor in this otherwise extremely weird story, and so moved away from the [original source material](#), in which Pinocchio meets the cricket and, er, murders him. (Seriously, Pinocchio is crazy AF.)

A common theory is that Disney's anthropomorphised animals, especially Bambi, kickstarted the vegetarian movement in the US and, to a lesser extent, environmentalism. Possibly, but more obviously the film mainstreamed the use of cute talking animals in stories for kids, and it's not too hard to trace a line from Thumper and the helpful mice in Cinderella to Bluey and Hey Duggee.

Walt Disney took often extremely harsh and strange stories and refashioned them, removing the brutalism and bloodiness of the 19th century and replacing them with the soft focus of the 20th. That we remember Pinocchio for the nose rather than those dark overtones is testament to Disney marketing (and Disney himself learned his lesson on that movie when the film bombed with audiences due to its darkness). In Cinderella, he skipped over the stepsisters cutting off bits of their feet to fit into the glass slipper, as was in the Brothers Grimm story; in Snow White, he named the dwarves and gave them (vague) personalities. Alice in Wonderland is a pretty trippy movie, but nowhere near as much as Lewis Carroll's book.

Walt Disney "happily ever after-ed" kids' stories, and that some of his films are now hopelessly dated is no surprise; the real shock is that so many are not. Disney reshaped modern childhood, and we still live in his shadow.

Life and Death in the Magic Kingdom, narrated by Hadley Freeman, will air on Radio 4 and BBC Sounds in the autumn.

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Interview

‘If the dustmen sing my songs, I feel honoured!’: Heather Small on 90s pop, racism and embracing her Britishness

[Emine Saner](#)



‘When I used to sing any love song, I’d channel the love I have for my son’
... Heather Small. Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian

The former M People singer overcame shyness to become a national treasure. As she releases a new album, she recalls the early struggles, her years at the top – and being branded a diva



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Heather Small used to tell herself: if she could just have one song that everyone knew and expected her to sing over and over again, she would be happy. That she has many is a real delight. She remembers a group of refuse collectors in their van who spotted her on the street and shouted over to her. “They all started singing Moving on Up,” she says. “I felt like I’d arrived. It was brilliant. It was just so warm, and if the dustmen want to sing my songs I feel honoured.”

That song and others – such as One Night in Heaven and Search for the Hero from her days in the band [M People](#), and her solo hit Proud – are on her [new album](#), largely of greatest hits, rerecorded with the London Metropolitan Orchestra. Proud, especially, has taken on a life of its own since its release in 2000, soundtracking TV montages, being used for the

2012 Olympic bid and appearing in the sitcom *Miranda*; even [Oprah Winfrey](#) used it on her show. Does Small ever get tired of it? “Absolutely not. Hearing the reaction from a crowd to *Proud* brings out the joy because I see how much it means to people. This song means so much to me, and that I’ve been able to translate that feeling, and people have made it their own, is joyous. How could you not give it your best? For some people, it’s the first time they’ve heard me sing. Others have heard me sing it lots of times, but they’re still waiting for that feeling, that connection.” She smiles, lips painted pink. “I’m looking for that connection as well.” It’s why she sings, she says. “You want to feel that love; you want to feel that joy. If you release something, if you put it out there, you’re looking for some kind of approval; you’re looking for people to be your tribe.”

We meet in an office at her record label, and I can’t remember the last time I met anyone so lacking in cynicism, so quick to laugh, raucously, and often at herself. Her songs are warm, upbeat and energising, and Small is the personification of it. She doesn’t take herself seriously, but she always took her work seriously. In the 1990s M People had huge success commercially and critically, winning the 1994 Mercury prize for their second album, *Elegant Slumming*, up against giants such as Blur, Paul Weller, Take That, the Prodigy and Primal Scream. The 1990s pop scene “was fun”, says Small. “So many genres were allowed to coexist, very different but still bringing something very British to the table. I’m proud to be part of that because I own my Britishness now, in a way that I could not earlier in my life.”

How did she deal with the fame and success? “I think you’re cushioned from it because you work so hard,” she says. Small never drank or smoked or took drugs, she says (she has also been vegan most of her life), and only went to one or two parties while on tour. “Mostly I thought: ‘I’m not on holiday. People have paid hard-earned money,’ and this is always my ethos. When the band pick up their instruments, if they’re feeling a bit fuzzy-headed you can’t always tell, but you can tell when a voice is tired, and there’s no hiding.”

She felt it was her mission to impart the M People good vibes. Their fans, she says, “saw that we were having fun, and that we liked each other, and we were just going around the world with [our] friends. Singing, writing songs

and trying to be as happy as you could be, because we all know unhappy doesn't feel good." Are they still friends? Do they still like one other? There is the slightest hint, amid all Small's positivity, that they have moved on. "I don't see them often. I would say my friend is [Shovell](#) [the band's drummer]. He is my son's godfather. We still keep in contact. The other two I don't see so much or speak to. Sometimes you grow apart."



Small with fellow M People (from left) Mike Pickering, Shovell and Paul Heard, in 1996. Photograph: Ilpo Musto/Shutterstock

In 2000 Small released her solo album, *Proud*. Its title single – not an immediate hit but an enduring one – is special to her because she co-wrote it (most of M People's songs were written by their founder member, [Haçienda](#) DJ Mike Pickering). Did she feel pressure to follow it up with another hit? It's not about that, she says. "People would ask me when I was younger, what do you want? I used to say: 'To still be singing.' There's no guarantee, as you get older, that you keep your voice. There's no guarantee that people want to hear your voice. That was always my goal. The thing that hit records do is keep you in the game for a little bit longer. You want something to do well because you just love what you do, but I've never felt the pressure for it to be a massive hit, because first and foremost it has to be a hit with me."

From the start of her career, Small was very clear that she would only record songs she wanted to. As a child, and well into her 20s, she was shy, but it seemed to morph into a guardedness and a steely self-possession that, looking back, probably protected her as a young woman in the music industry. She loved singing and performing but she wasn't desperate to be a pop star, so she wasn't easily coerced, either by predatory men or simply into singing songs she didn't want to. "I've never really done things for the money, so it's quite hard for somebody, because of the character that I am, to sway me in any way," she says.

Being a Black female, people think to themselves: 'You're standoffish' or 'You're a diva'. No, just shy!

As a child, growing up in London, though, Small's shyness meant nobody knew she wanted to be a singer. She would sing in the playground at school, and once her uncle passed her bedroom and heard her singing and told her to keep it up. "That was something that fed me for a long time," she says. When she told a school careers counsellor she wanted to be a singer, they laughed. "A lot of the white teachers laughed at the Black children quite often at school," she says. "They belittled your ideas and tried to belittle your confidence."

She once asked the music teacher if she could join the choir, and he dismissively asked if she could sing. "Nobody else auditioned," she says. "I thought: 'I'll show you', but you shouldn't have to be tough and resilient at school." She would push back at any sense she wasn't being treated equally. Then, she says, "you get in trouble. You're seen as a troublemaker." It was the same later in the music industry, when she could be labelled "difficult" or hard work. "Being a Black female, people think to themselves: 'You're standoffish' or 'You're a diva'. No, just shy! There are some Black women who are shy, but you don't get attributed those kinds of ..." She pauses. "People are quick to believe a negative."

Small's parents had come to the UK in the early 1960s from Barbados. Her father worked as a bus conductor and was "very domineering", she says. "He wasn't a very nice man." But her mother, who worked for a

supermarket, was more loving. Both contributed to her resilience, she says: “Him because of the negative, and my mother because of the total positivity. She made my sister and I feel like we walked on clouds.” It was her mother – who lives with Small in west London now – who counteracted the racism Small experienced at school. “It’s like a flower: you face the light and that’s where you grow. My light was my mother and my sister at home.” Small realised, she says, “You have to find a way to empower yourself. And being shy wasn’t empowering so I had to get over it.”

It wasn’t immediate. In her early 20s, she managed to put herself forward for an audition after seeing an advert in the music paper Melody Maker, and became the singer in the soul band Hot House. They didn’t have much chart success, but did support Barry White at the Royal Albert Hall. Small was terrified. “I didn’t move, and I closed my eyes for the entire thing.” She has battled stage fright throughout her career.



Performing at the National Diversity Awards, in Liverpool, February 2022.
Photograph: Shirlaine Forrest/Getty Images

The band were dropped by their record company three years later and she was devastated. “I thought, I’ve missed the boat. You don’t think you’re going to get a second chance,” she says. “That was the lowest I got and that’s what made me realise that I love singing, but I thought I’d have to do

it on the side.” Instead, she was asked to provide vocals for M People. The idea was that the Manchester dance-pop band would be an ever-changing collective, with different vocalists, but Small fit perfectly and she joined the band permanently (around this time, legend has it she provided vocals for the re-recorded version of Black Box’s Ride on Time, though it has become something of a running joke that she refuses to confirm).

In the 1990s it wasn’t easy to be a working mother in the music industry. Her son was born in 1997, and a few months later she was on tour with a baby. As a solo artist, she also became aware that space for Black female artists was limited. “Back in the day, I’d never be on the bill with another Black female performer. To this day it’s like, you don’t see more than one on the bill. You just think: why is that? Because everyone, especially my contemporaries, we all sound different, we sing different types of songs, and you just think that can’t be an accident. People used to say to me: ‘We got you instead of such and such.’ They tried to foster an air of competition, and I’d be like: ‘We’re friends.’ That stumps everybody: ‘You mean, you talk to each other?’ I’m like: ‘Not only do we talk to each other, we like each other.’”

Romantic love, that can come and go. It paid off singing the love songs to my family and son because they still love me

Small released a second solo album in 2006, and for the next few years she concentrated on raising her son, whose father is Shaun Edwards, the former rugby league player (their son, James Small-Edwards, is a Labour and Co-operative councillor, who was elected for London’s Bayswater ward in May, helping Labour gain control over Westminster city council for the first time). Small and Edwards broke up when their son was a baby; another long-term relationship came to an end fairly recently. There is one single on her new album, Love Me Or Not, that is in her typically empowering style. “I used to shy away from out-and-out love songs,” she says. “When I used to sing any love song, I’d channel the love I have for my son; it would not be romantic love. Romantic love, that can come and go. Sometimes it’s here, sometimes it’s there, sometimes you’re looking all around for it.” She smiles. “Romantic love is not, for me, as present and consistent as family love. It paid off, singing the love songs to my family and son because they still love

me; they're still in my life." She laughs, full-bodied and unselfconscious. "Oh dear, I'm making myself laugh."

At the parade for the Queen's platinum jubilee last month, Small appeared on one of the "national treasures" buses. Even now, at the age of 57, she wondered if she should do it: "I grew up thinking: 'Do I belong?'" She endures constant reminders that the racism she experienced as a child hasn't disappeared, but she is also adamant that you "don't apologise for the space you take up". When her son was born, it was the first time that she actively embraced her Britishness, she says. "I thought, I don't want my son to grow up thinking: 'Where do I belong?' like I did. My son has got ties with Barbados. He goes there; he sees his family there. But he feels British, and he has the right to embrace these streets and be embraced, and if he's not embraced he wants to know why."

So she took her place on the bus because, she says, she thought to herself: "If you don't, when do you accept that you're British?" She smiles. "There are so many things that I am, and I've learned over the years to embrace it all and I think that's where my confidence has come from. Because I know what I am, and I'm proud of it."

Heather Small's new album, Colour My Life, will be [released on 5 August](#)

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[A new start after 60Life and style](#)

A new start after 60: I was looking for a holiday after my husband died – and ended up with a job in Italy

Joyce Faulkner was contemplating trips to some of the couple's old haunts when an inquiry about a house swap led to the owner asking if she could help with her children



Italian job ... Joyce Faulkner who became an au pair in her 60s. Photograph: Supplied image

[Paula Cocozza](#)

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Mon 18 Jul 2022 02.00 EDT

At 67, Joyce Faulkner thought she was looking for a holiday. Her husband, Jim, had recently died and exploring possible house swaps on the Home

Exchange website felt soothing. In the end, it was not a vacation Faulkner found but a job. She left her home in South Queensferry, just outside Edinburgh, to become mother's help to seven-year-old twins in the northern Italian town of Varese. Now she is known as "La Babysitter" or simply "La Joyce."

"Really, when I think of it, it's halfway crazy," she says. "I came on the strength of two emails." A house swap she was interested in didn't work out, but the owner, Rachele, asked: "'Do you know anyone who might help me with the children?' I wrote back and said: 'Tell me what that involves!' She wrote me a little list, and I said: 'I could do that!' She seemed to trust me and I trusted her."

Two months later, Faulkner was on her way to Bergamo airport. The area had been at the heart of Italy's Covid outbreak. When Faulkner arrived in November 2020, the first Italian word she learned was "*tamponi*" – swabs – as she queued for her Covid test.

When she reached the square in Varese, "the dad, Andrea, was walking towards me with the children hiding behind his legs, kind of shy, thinking: 'Who is this woman in a long black coat?' I don't think it was quite Mary Poppins, but the atmosphere was immediately warm and friendly."

You have to take the opportunity when it presents itself

Eighteen months on, Faulkner's job no longer feels like a job. "I just feel like part of the family." They joke: "You think you're going back to Scotland? No, you're staying here!" She gives English lessons, helps with the housework, meets the children from school, plays chess or table tennis with them, and takes them to the park. "It never feels like work," she says. "It has been absolutely the perfect match."

Faulkner's son, Steven, who lives in London, has visited her and they have cycled around the northern Italian lakes. She feels no more distant than when she lived in South Queensferry.

Before she made her move, her sister reasonably pointed out: “‘You’re used to living on your own. How are you going to cope?’ I said: ‘Well, if it doesn’t work out, I’ll make another decision.’”

Even the sight of army trucks taking bodies away from the hospital in nearby Bergamo during the early stage of the pandemic didn’t put her off. “You have to take the opportunity when it presents itself.”

Faulkner says she learned this philosophy from Jim. When they met at a teachers’ conference (they both taught English), they had each previously been married.

“I fell in love with Jim the minute I saw him, the minute I spoke to him,” Faulkner says. “But I was a bit hesitant. He said: ‘Supposing we only get six months out of this relationship? That’s six months worth having.’ I thought: ‘What a great attitude to life. Not ‘what a waste of six months’, but six months to value and appreciate. We were together from 1983 to 2019.’”

Thirty-six years, then.

“Gosh, as much as that?” she says. “So there you go.”

In a funny way, it was Jim who led Faulkner to Italy, because after he died, “almost by mistake”, she arranged five holidays on Home Exchange. “I accepted people’s invitations, and I was to go to Reykjavik, Krakow, Barcelona, Rome, Paris.” Mostly these were places she had been with Jim. “I think I was planning in my head, without consciously doing it, a kind of farewell tour.” Covid intervened. “It made me stop and take stock,” she says.

Faulkner is not yet ready to leave Italy. “I haven’t started on an exit plan,” she says. “I’ll be 70 next January. That looks like a big number when you write it down, but in my head, I’m 30. You think: ‘Really? Seventy? How can that be? I still feel the same person, I still have the same enthusiasm for life, the same interest in people and things. In that sense, I wish I had another 70.’”

[*Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?*](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/jul/18/a-new-start-after-60-i-was-looking-for-a-holiday-after-my-husband-died-and-ended-up-with-a-job-in-italy>.

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2022.07.18 - Opinion

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[Republic of Parenthood](#)[Children](#)

Learning to see myself as both a feminist and a carer is a joyful surprise

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



The work involved in taking care of a baby is unpaid, hard and often overlooked – but I now find pleasure and validation in it



‘To do the work of mothering, but to also want recompense for it is often framed as unreasonable.’ Photograph: Kieran Doherty/REUTERS

Mon 18 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 12.12 EDT

I’m supposed to be writing about joy, but I’ve just been crying my eyes out. Nothing major, just the physical aftermath of illness, sleep deprivation and a baby whose Celtic roots are manifesting themselves in an extreme hatred of hot weather. The thing I am learning about parenthood is that the lows can feel very low, but they are also transient because the joy, oh my God, the joy! It carries you through.

The cult of motherhood, of course, needs no more cheerleaders. The fact that we are all supposed to be so happy-clappy about child rearing has been the source of much maternal unhappiness and frustration. Several women have confessed to me that they didn’t feel that powerful, golden oxytocin high you’re supposed to feel after giving birth. Instead, the joy grew and grew as they got to know their babies, but still they felt guilty.

The trouble is, I am happy-clappy. Literally, I am happy and I am clappy, because I know it, as the song I’ve been singing to him endlessly would have it. The baby is a delight at the moment; having learned to laugh, he is doing these big, wide-mouthed gurgly giggles. When he’s not a delight, he’s

a challenge, but the delight makes the hard parts survivable. It can be hard to feel sorry for yourself for long when a baby is giggling at your silliness.

One of the few things I wasn't told about babies before embarking on this journey was that you are supposed to pump their little legs in a bicycle motion to make the wind come out. That was news to me. I do this while continuously chanting "pumpy pumpy". It is silly and ridiculous and admitting this probably means I will never be considered a writer of Serious Intellectual Importance. But I have come to realise that any parent worth their salt can only maintain a very low level of gravitas in the face of a small child who demands to be entertained. I speak "motherese" now, as linguists call baby talk. It's a term my own mother despises, and she still hasn't forgiven Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker for [giving mothers little credit](#) for a child's language acquisition. But, as I said to my son, because I was changing him while his grandmother and I discussed this: "They are men, so they would say that, wouldn't they, Mr Poopypants?"

I suppose that's the trade-off you make when you have a child. Some people will cease to take you as seriously, especially if you're a woman, but in exchange you also get to not take yourself so seriously. And there is so much happiness to be found in that. I'm still using my brain (why do I feel the need to say this?) but I have found a new freedom in lightness, too.

I have written before that I could have done with a [bit more joy](#) and a lot less fearmongering and negativity during pregnancy. I put this down to an overcorrection of the historical taboo of expressing discontent with the demands of mothering. But I think parents are sometimes circumspect about joy for other reasons, too, especially around people who do not have children but want them. In her 2015 book, *Ongoingness*, [Sarah Manguso](#) writes: "My life felt full before becoming a mother, but I've found that trying to say that I prefer having the baby sounds aggressive. In fact I'd felt affronted, before I was a parent, when parents told me, even in the gentlest terms, that they preferred having their children to not having them."

When I wanted a baby so much that it felt as though the longing for it would suffocate me, other people's joy could feel like a personal slight. It is a very difficult thing, to want a baby and to not have one. In [Claire Lynch](#)'s memoir, *Small: On Motherhoods*, she writes of the "slow agony" of being

unable to conceive, “the stinging blows, the unexpected shock of other people’s happiness” and then “the guilt of getting what you always wanted”, followed by a failure to be discreet about her happiness despite promising herself she would.

The other problem is that care work is work. It is some of the hardest work that I have ever done, and I have prior experience, so it was hardly a shock. But it is also love, and with that love comes joy. The two are so tightly bound together that to highlight one is, in the eyes of some, to detract from the other. It’s bizarre, because you wouldn’t be expected to do any other job for free, even if you love it. Yet to do the work of mothering, and to find joy in it, but to also want recompense for it, and societal support, is often framed as an unreasonable demand – despite our economic reliance on all that unpaid labour. And so the joy gets dampened down, as we make our political demands.

It is only relatively recently that I learned to square the feminist in me with the carer in me. The latter is a role I played for much of my adolescence and, though I have never seen it as unfairly foisted upon me, I never truly appreciated how fulfilling it could be. There is beauty and grace in caring for another person, in tending to their body and their needs. I always saw it in others but I never appreciated it in myself. Now, when my boy is crying and I reach for him and hold him in my arms and see him settle into sleep, I take pleasure and validation in that. And, yes, joy.

What's working

I've given him his first newspaper. It's a crinkly sensory cloth book called The Nursery Times, and all of the stories are about dinosaurs, but you have to start somewhere.

What's not

I'm still angry about the offensive suggestion that the government tax people without children as a response to the declining birthrate. I've been monitoring such [natalist rhetoric](#) for a while now, but it's becoming increasingly disturbing, not to mention reminiscent of the policies of fascist states. We desperately need more women in the conversation.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author
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[**Opinion**](#)[**Conservative leadership**](#)

I grew up where Liz Truss did, attended the same school. She's not telling you the truth

[Martin Pengelly](#)



What does it say about the foreign secretary that she is so prepared to misrepresent her education and denigrate those who helped her?



Liz Truss at the launch of her campaign for the Conservative leadership, London, 14 July 2022. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

Mon 18 Jul 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 11.29 EDT

Liz Truss may trail Penny Mordaunt and Rishi Sunak in the Conservative leadership race, but as the “continuity candidate” to succeed Boris Johnson, she has a hard-right base to please. To that end, she has chosen to repeat old attacks on her home and [her old school](#). She lived and went to school in Roundhay, a leafy suburb of Leeds. I know a bit about it – I grew up there at the same time. I too went to that school.

Truss claims to have grown up in a “[red wall](#)” seat. This is not just a wilful anachronism, it is flatly untrue. Leeds North East, the constituency that contains both Roundhay school and the tall stone houses in which Truss and I grew up, was Conservative from 1955 to 1997 – by which time Truss had graduated from Oxford.

But I think Truss’s claims about her school and schooling, which got her [to Merton college to study philosophy, politics and economics](#), are a more serious matter. Roundhay school is a coeducational comprehensive. I went there at 13. It has grown to include a primary campus, but it still sits amid great green oceans of fields marked out for football, rugby and hockey. Its

buildings, put up a century ago, are grand. If Truss were to say that when we were there in the early 1990s, those buildings were neglected and falling apart, she would be correct.

But to do so would be to draw attention to the fact that when we were at Roundhay, [Conservatives](#) controlled education policy and spending, and how when the school was rebuilt, Labour did. The history of the school's official rating also tells such a tale, from "satisfactory" under the Conservatives to "outstanding" under Labour.

Still, this is not 1992 or 2002 or even 2012. It is 2022, when the candidates to lead the Conservative party of Boris Johnson seem untroubled by truth. Truss left Roundhay in 1993. I left in 1996. Simply put, we were both taught well by the same good teachers, from whose work I have benefited every single day since I left the school – as I am sure Truss has too. Nonetheless, in December 2020, [Truss said](#): "While we were taught about racism and sexism, there was too little time spent making sure everyone could read and write."

That's risible. We were not "taught about racism and sexism" to the exclusion of the basics. We were taught the national curriculum. From what I remember, periods of PSE – personal and social education – were mostly spent catching up on work for other subjects or shooting the breeze with the teacher.

The school had problems with racism and sexism, for sure. Which school doesn't? Roundhay sits on a hill. Climb that hill and you see tall stone houses, a cricket club, a huge urban park – the privileged, largely white neighbourhood where Truss and I grew up. Go down the hill and you are soon in Harehills, Gipton and Chapeltown: much less privileged, much less white. Sometimes there were tensions or clashes between kids from up or down the hill, between Black, brown or white kids, or between kids within whichever group. Most of the time there were not. The school rugby team I played for was very mixed, and everyone worked for each other.

This week, introducing her proposed economic policy, Truss doubled down on Roundhay school, where she [apparently saw](#) "children who failed and

were let down by low expectations”. Perhaps she did. But perhaps she would have seen children failing or being let down wherever she went to school: city or country, state or private, satisfactory or outstanding. Perhaps she is selectively deploying her upbringing, and casually traducing the school and teachers who nurtured her, for simple political gain.

I’m furious, obviously. So are other Roundhay alumni. Here are some of their thoughts. A friend in my year, who also went into politics, says: “It’s a nonsense. To the extent that we were ‘let down’ it was because we were being taught in a building in such a state of disrepair that you could put your fingers through the window frames. Funding, not low expectations, was the problem.”

Another friend who, like Truss, received an education at Roundhay that helped win an Oxbridge place, added: “She made it to Oxford – if people still think that’s worth something – and is in the running to be the world’s worst prime minister no 2. So how bad can it have been?”

“Truss is basically someone with a massive chip on her shoulder who can’t work out what tribe she’s in,” said another friend, from the year below me. “She used to describe herself as brought up in ‘Yorkshire’ (county fairs, moorland, Geoff Boycott), to curry favour with the rural upper-middle classes she wants to be part of in Norfolk. She now claims to be from a Ken Loach film, *T’Red Wall*, in the hope that the 2019 intake of Conservative MPs will like her, or more importantly for her, accept her.”

We are aggrieved. Another who was there in the time of Truss explains why: “These comments are particularly disrespectful to a brilliant team of teachers. My mum worked long hours in a specialist learning unit at Roundhay, helping provide extra support to allow pupils with learning difficulties the same opportunities as their classmates. This was one of very few such services to be provided in schooling at the time, one of the first of its kind. Far from being a school that ‘failed’ students, Roundhay was and still is a great source of pride.”

That’s much more than can be said of Truss, don’t you think?

- Martin Pengelly is breaking news editor for Guardian US
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Why I quitSociety

What happened when I stopped hurrying – and discovered the joy of slowing down?

[Joan Bakewell](#)

After a lifetime of rushing about, I came up with some rules to get a taste of life in the slow lane



Illustration by Eva Bee

Mon 18 Jul 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 14.37 EDT

In our new series, Why I Quit, writers, activists and celebrities talk about something they have swept from their lives, for the better – or worse

I blame the [White Rabbit](#): “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” Pocket watch in hand, glasses perched on nose, the furry figure’s anxiety reinforced the authority figures in my daily life – parents, teachers – whose control over

my tender years convinced me that being late was a crime, a sin, a failing, a fault. The one sure way that a child could incur the wrath of adults. And it could have unpleasant consequences, too: a detention or an outing cancelled. So “hurry, hurry” has always been the mantra driving my way of life, making sure I didn’t miss the train, the curtain-up, the opening speech – life itself.

In later years I realised I didn’t have to obey this inner drive. What made the difference? As I ventured cautiously on to the underground in the weeks after a hip operation, I found everyone rushing. What’s more, they were all rushing at exactly the same pace, keeping up a regular rhythm, keen to get there, wherever “there” was. Someone like myself, treading slowly and purposefully, was simply an obstruction. People swerved and pushed past me: irritated, rude, hurrying to their train, hurrying through life. Not me. I am now the person who takes the lift at railway stations, who defers to pushy people elbowing ahead in the shopping queues. I arrive early for trains and flights, just so I don’t have to hurry. I take pleasure in browsing the concourse, surveying the magazine stall, checking the departure schedules.

The Welsh poet WH Davies [nailed the problem](#): “What is this life if, full of care, / We have no time to stand and stare?” Yes, plenty of care and not enough time, that’s the truth.

How is it that so many of us load our lives with cares? Is it through choice or necessity? In my case I confess to both: I can scarcely pick up a magazine or watch a television programme without wanting to try out that recipe, visit that seashore, rearrange the furniture. Off I rush to buy those ingredients, book the train and shuffle the cushions. None of this is necessary. So it must be choice. But it doesn’t feel like that. It has to be intrinsic to my nature, not planned, and not needed, but a choice that is somehow responding to some deep-seated drive. Hurry up there, hurry along!

As to necessity, well, look around. Urban life is scarcely possible without hurrying to fulfil all that needs to be done. All that washing, dressing, eating, washing up, tidying, cleaning, shopping, gardening, washing – and we

haven't started to earn a living yet. So hurry up! Tumbling into the world, there is all that travelling, arriving, greeting, briefing, ordering, writing, meeting, agreeing, disagreeing (this takes longer). Add on the pleasure element: greeting (different people this time) online, on Twitter, dining, visiting, enjoying, sharing ... when will it ever end? Sleep comes as a blessing.

Lately I have formulated some rules to limit hurrying. Is it seriously possible to do less of everything? Cut out some things entirely, and do essential things in a more perfunctory way. Who needs to iron clothes or wipe dishes? These are the fetishes of a disciplined childhood. Indeed much of urban life is organised to help you: online shopping, bulk buying, bulk cooking and freezing, drip-dry fabrics, Deliveroo. But this brings me up against an unavoidable truth.

Somewhere deep inside I probably enjoy all this hurrying. I even enjoy complaining about it. I suspect that it makes me feel needed, wanted, fulfilled. I could, after all, move to the countryside, and live the simple life of a patch of ground and a few chickens. How unhurried that could be. Following the seasons, watching the stars, measuring each moment in the cycles of nature – buds opening, leaves falling.

But wait! Why not plant some vegetables, keep a sheep or two, pick some hedgerow fruit, make some jam. And if I hurry I can catch the one bus a day into the local town, have tea and scones with those new friends and stay on to catch the choir singing in the cathedral.

Yes, I'm afraid it'll be a hurried life wherever I am.

- Joan Bakewell is a broadcaster, writer and Labour peer
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OpinionHealth

I wanted to know how to increase my life expectancy. Do I really have to avoid everything?

Annie Macmanus

The advice was to limit alcohol, avoid high-sugar foods and decrease saturated fats – but warnings like this are just going to encourage me



‘When I got my results back from the lab, they were extensive.’ Photograph: Sara Sadler/Alamy

Mon 18 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 04.07 EDT

I took a DNA test a few weeks ago. It arrived in the post. I had to prick my finger, squeeze out several drops of blood and put them in a box to post to a lab in Scandinavia.

It's about risk management. For the first time, I'm looking to invest long-term in my body and, to do that, I need to explore what *could* happen in terms of illness. I want to do what I can now, to optimise my chances of living healthily for longer. I want my body and my mind to be aligned; I want to feel strong and supple and capable. I thought it may mean taking a few more supplements. Exercising more. Eating more greens.

But when I got my results back from the lab, they were extensive. I could feel my concentration fading by the time I read to the end of the section on how to read your results. Focus, Annie, focus. I cast my eyes over the column headed "AVOID".

Limit alcohol. I thought I was already limiting alcohol – I only drink on weekends! *Reduce exposure to environmental toxins such as air pollution, pesticides and plastic.* So that rules out living in the city – or the countryside. *Avoid all high-sugar foods and refined grains.* I Google refined grains. No crackers, croissants, toast or cereal. What am I going to smother peanut butter or paté on now? *Decrease saturated fat intake, such as cheese and butter.* Ah, come on, not butter? It gets worse: avoid all trans fats, processed foods, fried foods, commercially made biscuits.

It's the finiteness of it. The "all" in the "avoid all". This morning, I hesitated in front of the bread bin. I can confirm, as I bite into my butter- and peanut-butter-smothered toast, that risk-taking tastes really good.

Annie Macmanus is a writer and DJ (as Annie Mac). Her book [Mother Mother](#) is out now

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/commentisfree/2022/jul/18/i-wanted-to-know-how-to-increase-my-life-expectancy-do-i-really-have-to-avoid-everything>.

2022.07.18 - Around the world

- [Sri Lanka Acting president declares state of emergency ahead of MPs' vote](#)
- [Oil Price rises after Joe Biden fails to secure Saudi output increase](#)
- [Live Oil climbs after Biden fails to secure Saudi output hike](#)
- [Afghanistan Send us a man to do your job so we can sack you, Taliban tell female officials](#)

[Sri Lanka](#)

Sri Lanka: acting president declares state of emergency ahead of MPs' vote

Declaration called 'expedient' as Ranil Wickremesinghe tries to curb unrest over ongoing political and economic crises



Soldiers on guard outside the parliament building in Colombo over the weekend. Interim Sri Lanka president Ranil Wickremesinghe has declared a state of emergency. Photograph: Rafiq Maqbool/AP

Staff and agencies

Sun 17 Jul 2022 23.48 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 06.19 EDT

Sri Lanka's acting president, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has declared a state of emergency as his administration seeks to quell social unrest and tackle an economic crisis gripping the island nation.

"It is expedient, so to do, in the interests of public security, the protection of public order and the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the

life of the community,” a government notice released late on Sunday said.

Wickremesinghe had announced a state of emergency last week, after president Gotabaya Rajapaksa [fled the country](#) to escape a popular uprising against his government.

It was unclear whether that order had been withdrawn or had lapsed, or whether Wickremesinghe had reissued the order in his capacity as acting president, having been sworn in on 15 July. A spokesperson for Wickremesinghe’s office did not respond to Reuters request for comment.

The specific legal provisions of the latest emergency are yet to be announced by the government but previous emergency regulations have been used to deploy the military to arrest and detain people, search private property and dampen public protests.

The country’s commercial capital, Colombo, remained calm on Monday morning, with traffic and pedestrians out on the streets.

Bhavani Fonseka, senior researcher at the Centre for Policy Alternatives, said declaring a state of emergency was becoming the government’s default response.

“This has proven ineffective in the past,” Fonseka told Reuters.

Rajapaksa’s resignation was accepted by parliament on Friday. He flew to the Maldives and then Singapore after hundreds of thousands of anti-government protesters came out on to the streets of Colombo a week ago and occupied his official residence and offices.

Sri Lanka’s parliament met on Saturday to [begin the process of electing a new president](#), and a shipment of fuel arrived to provide some relief to the crisis-hit nation.

[Wickremesinghe, an ally of Rajapaksa](#), was nominated by the ruling party as its candidate to be the next president but protesters also want him gone, leading to the prospect of further unrest should he be elected.

Wickremesinghe was appointed interim president on Friday after informally occupying the role since Wednesday, and the announcement was greeted with anger and frustration on the streets of Colombo.

Wickremesinghe, who has now been prime minister six times, stands accused of protecting and propping up the Rajapaksa family dynasty for years, shielding them from corruption charges and enabling their return to power.

His decision to agree to become a caretaker prime minister two months ago was seen by many as the reason Rajapaksa stayed in power for weeks longer than he would have otherwise.

The public frustration at Wickremesinghe has manifested multiple times, from his private residence being burned down to his offices being [stormed by protesters](#) on Wednesday.

Wickremesinghe will be the candidate for the Rajapaksas' ruling party, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), which still has the largest number of seats in parliament. He stands a high chance of being elected after the vote by MPs in parliament scheduled for next Tuesday or Wednesday.

Wickremesinghe's nomination even appeared to cause divisions with the SLPP. The party chair, GL Peiris, sent a letter to the party's general secretary expressing "amazement and total disbelief" at the statement that it would be backing Wickremesinghe as its presidential nominee.

However, Wickremesinghe will be up against several candidates in the presidential secret ballot next week, including the leader of the opposition, Sajith Premadasa – who has vowed to make sure "an elective dictatorship never, ever occurs" and go after the leaders who "looted the country" – and another SLPP politician, Dullas Alahapperuma, which could split the vote of the ruling party.

Former army chief Sarath Fonseka has also signalled his intention to run.

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[Oil](#)

Oil price rises after Joe Biden fails to secure Saudi output increase

Increase will keep up the pressure at pumps, where drivers have faced record petrol and diesel prices



President Joe Biden meets Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Al Salman Royal Palace in Jeddah. Photograph: Saudi Press Agency/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

[Alex Lawson](#) Energy correspondent

Mon 18 Jul 2022 05.18 EDT Last modified on Mon 18 Jul 2022 06.35 EDT

The price of oil rose on Monday after the US president, Joe Biden, came away from talks in the Middle East without an agreement on raising supply.

Biden had hoped to secure a promise from [Saudi Arabia](#) to increase its output of oil, which could lead to an easing of global supply pressures.

But Brent crude rose 2.6% to \$103.88 (£86.91) on Monday after Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, quelled speculation over an output increase.

He said that officials at a US-Arab summit on Saturday did not discuss oil and that the Opec+ oil cartel nations would continue to assess market conditions.

Naeem Aslam, the chief market analyst at Avatrade, said: “The message is that it is Opec+ that makes the oil supply decision, and the cartel isn’t remotely interested in what Biden is trying to achieve.

“Opec+ will continue to control oil supply, and one country alone cannot determine the oil supply – at least that is the message that traders have taken from Biden’s visit to Saudi Arabia.

The increase in oil prices will keep up the pressure at the pumps, where drivers have faced record petrol and diesel prices. Prices have climbed so high that the government asked the Competition and Markets Authority to study the market and its initial findings [raised concerns over the margins made by refineries](#).

However, Brent crude prices have eased since the highs of about \$130 in March during the early weeks of the war in Ukraine.

Oil prices ended last week lower for the fifth consecutive week. Concerns over the potential for a global recession has sent investors fleeing from commodity markets.

The price of copper – known as Dr Copper as it is considered a barometer for the health of the world economy – [has fallen 25% since its March peaks](#).

Energy traders are also closely watching the price of gas amid a dash for supplies in Europe.

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Countries are racing to fill up their gas storage in case Russia cuts off supplies, including through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which is closed for maintenance.

The chemicals group Ineos, one of Europe's biggest gas users which is run by the billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, echoed comments from the Shell chief executive, Ben van Beurden, that rationing could be introduced this winter.

“It looks pretty dire for this winter now, as to whether we'll get to the targets we need for storage,” Brian Gilvary, the executive chairman of Ineos, told Bloomberg Television. “If Nord Stream 1 doesn't come back, it is inevitable. We will definitely see rationing in Europe.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jul/18/oil-price-rises-joe-biden-saudi-output-petrol-diesel-prices>

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Oil climbs after Biden fails to secure Saudi output hike – as it happened

Brent crude prices pushed past \$100 per barrel after US president Joe Biden failed to secure output hike agreements with the world's top oil exporter

Updated 6d ago

[*Kalyeena Makortoff*](#)

Mon 18 Jul 2022 09.59 EDTFirst published on Mon 18 Jul 2022 03.09 EDT

Key events

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President Joe Biden met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Al Salman Royal Palace in Jeddah over the weekend. Photograph: Saudi Press Agency/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

[Kalyeena Makortoff](#)

Mon 18 Jul 2022 09.59 EDTFirst published on Mon 18 Jul 2022 03.09 EDT

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[6d ago](#)[09.59](#)

Closing summary

After weeks of relative declines for oil prices, Brent crude was on the rise in Monday's session, propped up by a weaker US dollar and US president Joe Biden's failure to secure a supply hike from Saudi Arabia over the weekend.

Further concerns have been brewing in Europe, after the IEA warned that more needed to be done to curb energy demand if European leaders hope to make it through the winter without Russian supplies.

Stocks have not been perturbed, though, with all major equity markets across the US and Europe trading higher in today's session.

That is despite a poor showing by major banks including Goldman Sachs, which saw second quarter profits plunge by 47% due to a slowdown in dealmaking and underwriting for its investment bank.

Deliveroo also spooked investors after downgrading its revenue forecasts on the back of the UK's weaker economic outlook, with consumers having already pulled back on spending with the food delivery firm.

Here are the rest of today's main stories:

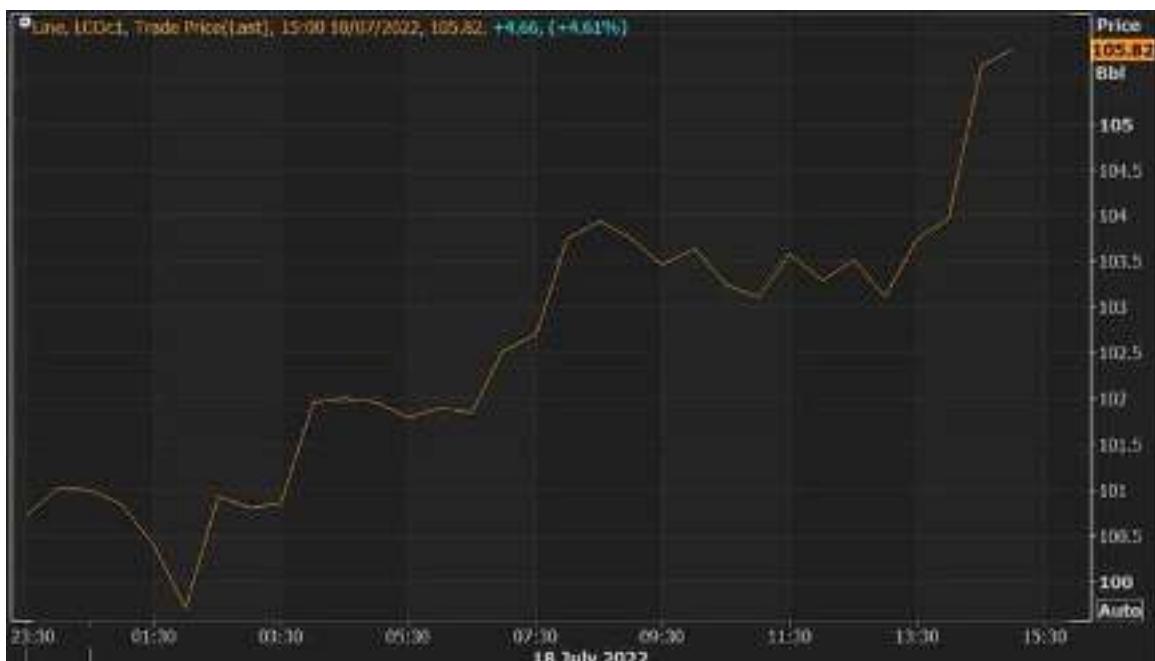
Have a good afternoon, stay cool, and see you tomorrow. KM

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[6d ago](#)[09.45](#)

Oil prices push past \$105 per barrel

Brent crude has continued its climb today, and is now up around 4.6% to more than \$105.50 per barrel



Brent crude prices continue to climb on Monday. Photograph:
Tail1/Refinitiv

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[6d ago](#)[09.14](#)



Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) Fatih Birol during a press conference in Warsaw, Poland, in May 2022. Photograph: Radek Pietruszka/EPA

The IEA's executive director warns that European leaders fail to implement those five actions, "Europe will be in an extremely vulnerable position and could well face much more drastic cuts and curtailments later on."

European governments also need to prepare the people of Europe for what may be coming.

Public awareness campaigns in the context of an energy crisis have been successful previously in reducing short-term energy demand by several percent. Every action counts.

Simple steps such as turning down the heating by a couple of degrees in Europe can save the same amount of natural gas that is supplied over the winter by the Nord Stream pipeline.

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IEA boss Fatih Birol set out five “concrete actions” that European leaders need to take to prepare for the energy crisis this winter:

- 1. Introduce auction platforms to incentivise EU industrial gas users to reduce demand.** It sounds like the model would allow wholesale users to forgo a portion of their contracted energy supply, in exchange for compensation from the highest bidder. Apparently similar models have already been developed in Germany and proposed in the Netherlands.
- 2. Minimise gas use in the power sector** by temporarily increasing coal and oil-fired generation and accelerating deployment of low-carbon sources, including nuclear power where it is politically acceptable and technically feasible, the IEA said.
- 3. Enhance coordination among gas and electricity operators across Europe.** The IEA said this can help reduce the impact of lower gas use on power systems. It should include strict cooperation on the operation of thermal power plants at national and European levels.
- 4. Bring down household electricity demand by setting cooling standards and controls,** which seems to be referring to air conditioner use (and might be a big ask during the current heatwave.) The IEA said government and public buildings should take the lead on this to set an example while campaigns should encourage behavioural changes among consumers.
- 5. Harmonise emergency planning across the EU at the national and European level.** “To get through the current crisis, the EU needs unified action,” the IEA said.

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[6d ago](#)[08.43](#)

IEA warns Europe must slash gas consumption immediately

European leaders are being urged to urgently slash gas consumption ahead of winter in order to make up for cuts to Russian energy supplies.

The International Energy Agency's executive director Fatih Birol said in a report on Monday that the gas crisis had put Europe in a precarious position:

The situation is especially perilous in Europe, which is at the epicentre of the energy market turmoil. I'm particularly concerned about the months ahead.

Birol said he had seen some progress, particularly in terms of Europe's attempts to diversify gas supplies, but warned that not enough had been done to curb demand. He said the next few months would be "critical."

It comes amid uncertainty over whether Russia will resume gas flows through Nord Stream, the biggest single gas pipeline between Russia and Europe, after maintenance of the pipeline is completed later this week.

If Russian gas supplies are cut off completely, the EU would need to have filled its gas storage facilities to above 90% by 1 October to get through the winter. Birol said that is still possible, but Europe needs to "act now to make every remaining day count."

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[6d ago](#)[08.22](#)

Unsurprisingly, Goldman Sachs also slashed banker pay "significantly" amid its relatively weaker showing in the second quarter.

According to its [Q2 earnings presentation](#):



Goldman Sachs said costs were lower thanks to a drop in compensation for bankers. Photograph: Goldman Sachs

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Updated at 08.25 EDT

[6d ago](#)[08.14](#)

Goldman Sachs Q2 profit tumbles 47% as dealmaking slumps



The logo for Goldman Sachs appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

Goldman Sachs said its second quarter profit fell to \$2.9bn in the second quarter, down from \$5.4bn a year earlier, as its investment bank suffered a drop in demand for its underwriting and dealmaking services.

Companies have cooled on deals in recent months as they wait for market jitters, linked to the ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to subside.

The US bank's financial results were also hit by the \$667m it put aside for a potential jump in bad debts in the second quarter, reflecting weaker economic conditions that could put a strain on borrowers' finances.

That compared to a net release of \$92m a year earlier, when most lenders were responding to relief over loosening Covid restrictions in major western economies.

Chairman and CEO David Solomon tried to stay upbeat, telling investors on Monday:

We delivered solid results in the second quarter as clients turned to us for our expertise and execution in these challenging markets.

Despite increased volatility and uncertainty, I remain confident in our ability to navigate the environment, dynamically manage our resources and drive long-term, accretive returns for shareholders.

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Updated at 08.17 EDT

6d ago06.57

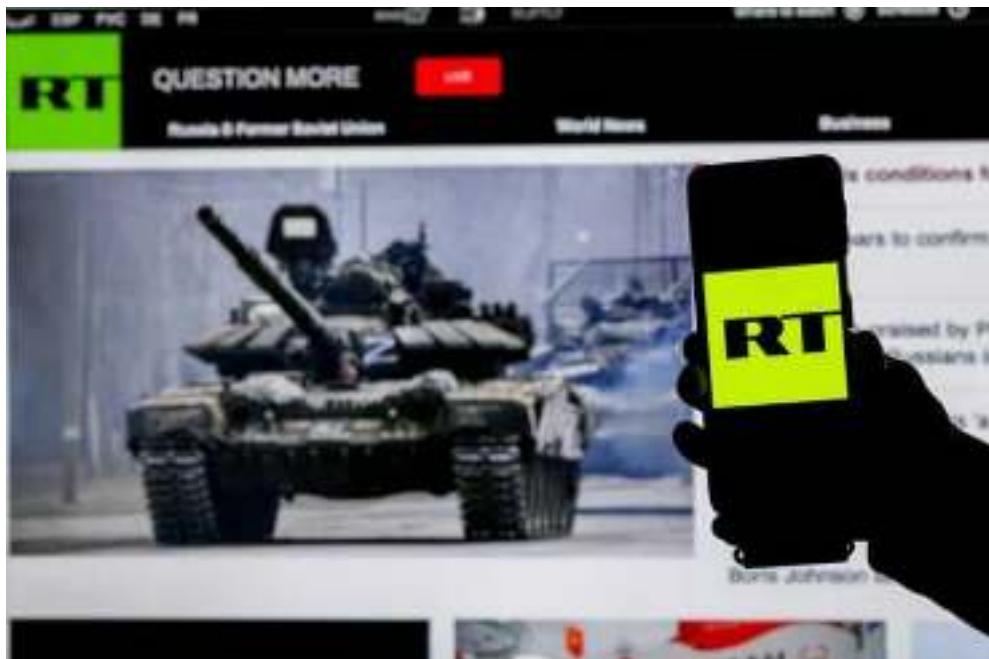


Jim Waterson

Kremlin-backed rolling news channel RT breached British broadcasting rules on 29 separate occasions in the four days after Russia invaded Ukraine, according to a ruling by media regulator Ofcom.

The “serious and repeated” breaches of the UK’s rules on due impartiality are enough to warrant a sanction - but RT has already had its licence to

broadcast in the UK revoked on separate grounds.



RT, formerly known as Russia Today, vanished from European television screens in March after the businesses that provided technical services to the channel were hit by EU sanctions. Photograph: Muhammed Ibrahim Ali/IMAGESLIVE/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

RT, formerly known as Russia Today, vanished from European television screens in March after the businesses that provided technical services to the channel were hit by EU sanctions. Ofcom then later revoked its licence to broadcast in the UK after concluding it was ultimately controlled by the Russia state - and not operated at arms length.

The UK's due impartiality rules do not require equal airtime to opposing views and do allow broadcasting some leeway for politically-biased broadcasting. However, when dealing with matters such as armed conflict, Ofcom requires broadcasters to take additional steps to preserve due impartiality by including and giving due weight to a wide range of significant views.

RT attempted to fight the punishment by saying it made a “sincere desire and effort” to maintain due impartiality in its coverage of the conflict and

staff in the RT newsroom were “constantly reminded of the necessity to pay special attention to maintaining” due impartiality.

However, Ofcom concluded it failed to represent an “appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints” when explaining the war in Ukraine to viewers.

The full Ofcom report [can be found here](#).

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Updated at 07.09 EDT

[6d ago](#)[06.47](#)

Boris Johnson speaks at Farnborough Air Show



Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a speech during a visit to the Farnborough International Airshow in Hampshire. Photograph: Frank Augstein/PA

In one of his last public appearances as prime minister, Boris Johnson has arrived at the Farnborough Air Show, one of the largest trade events for the aerospace and defence industries that is expected to attract more than 80,000 visitors from 96 countries this year.

Johnson used a speech this morning to address the transition of leadership that is expected to take place in September after the parliament's summer recess.

The outgoing PM punctuated that speech with a number of industry puns.

No word yet on how it went over, though he has been criticised for prioritising the show over Cobra meetings that are being held in response to extreme temperatures hitting England today.

Johnson said:

I want you to know that after three happy years in the cockpit, and after performing some pretty difficult if not astonishing feats, getting Brexit done, restoring this country's ability to make its own laws in Parliament.

I am now going to hand over the controls seamlessly to someone else.

I don't know who, but whoever it is, I can tell you this, I can reassure you of this, that the great Rolls-Royce twin engines of this Conservative Government will roar on.

Fantastic public services. A dynamic free market economy. Each boosting the other and developing, what's the word I want, millions of tons of trust.

And there could be no better example of that relationship and that symbiosis between government and the private sector, than the aviation industry.

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6d ago **06.09**

Grant Thornton has been fined £1.3m for “serious” failures in two audits of Sports Direct accounts.



The Sports Direct store in Maidenhead, Berkshire. Photograph: Maureen McLean/REX/Shutterstock

The fine applied by the accounting watchdog, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), relates to two audits in 2016 and 2018.

The fines for 2016 related to Grant Thornton’s failure to assess whether Sports Direct effectively disclose a related party transaction linked to a delivery company used by the retailer.

Meanwhile, the firm’s audit of Sports Direct’s 2018 accounts did not properly assess statements about its website sales, and the provisions put aside for inventory.

However, the FRC said none of the failures resulted in the financial statements being materially misstated. “The respondents’ breaches were limited to discrete areas of each audit,” [the release explained](#).

Jamie Symington, Deputy Executive Counsel to the FRC, said:

The audit failings in this case were serious and relate to fundamental auditing standards.

It is particularly important that auditors follow up with due rigour where they have identified potential related party transactions as a significant audit risk.

Auditors must adopt a mindset of professional scepticism, and exercise good judgment based on sufficient and properly documented evidence.

The package of financial and non-financial sanctions imposed by the FRC on the auditors in this case will help to drive improvements at the firm and the wider industry.

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[6d ago](#)[05.32](#)

BoE's Saunders: expect further hikes to UK interest rates

In his final speech as a member of the Bank of England's rate-setting monetary policy committee, Michael Saunders has warned of further interest rate hikes as the central bank tries to combat surging inflation which has blown past its 2% target and hit 9.1% in May.

Bank of England policymaker Michael Saunders - who steps down after next month's MPC meeting - gives his valedictory speech [@resfoundation](#).

Warns of risks from inflation expectations, underlying pay growth and business pricing strategies and sees more rate rises ahead.
pic.twitter.com/UzdFsUQk8h

— David Milliken (@david_milliken) [July 18, 2022](#)

Saunders said that he had hoped rate rises would take place sooner rather than later, as indicated by his recent votes at the MPC, which voted by a majority to increase its key base rate by 0.25 percentage points to 1.25% in June in response to living costs rising at the fastest annual rate for four decades.

Saunders said he expects further rate rises in the months ahead, and that it was neither “unplausible or unlikely” that interest rates could reach 2% over the next year. He added:

Economic growth has slowed. But, with excess demand and low potential growth, some further monetary tightening remains likely in coming months in my view, to ensure that inflation returns to the 2% target on a sustained basis.

It is especially important at present to lean against risks that recent trends in inflation expectations, underlying pay growth and firms’ pricing strategies become more firmly embedded

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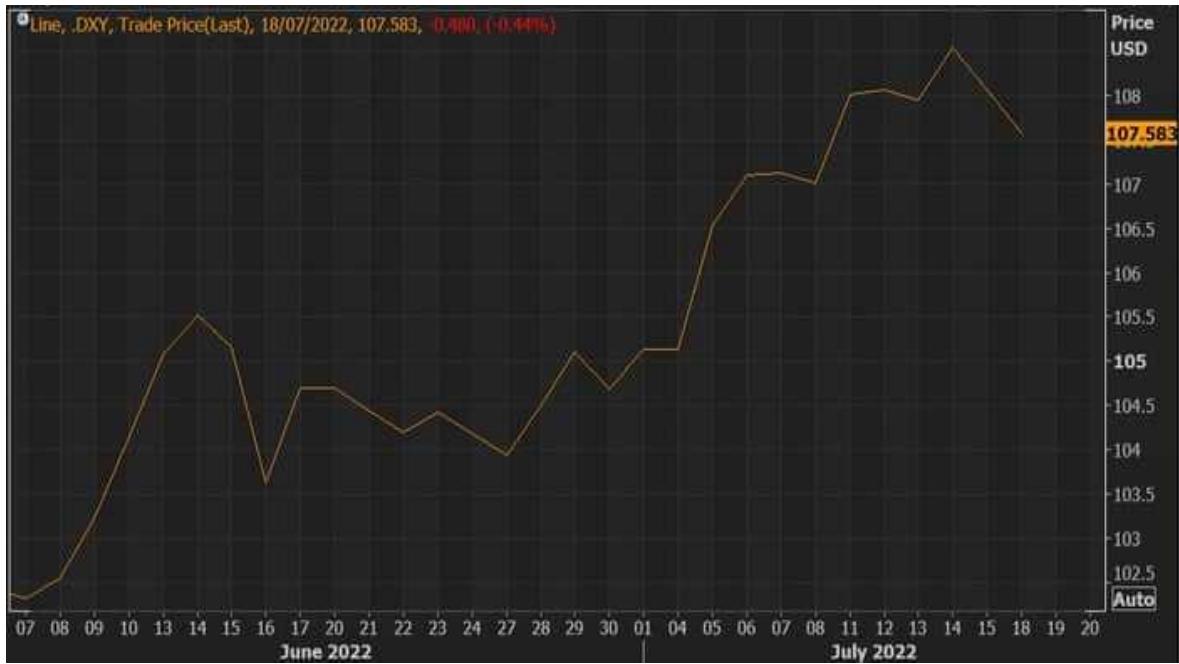
Updated at 05.40 EDT

[6d ago](#)[04.59](#)

The weaker US dollar is also pushing up oil prices this morning.

The dollar was trading lower against a basket of international currencies, after rising inflation in New Zealand pushed the island nation’s and Australian dollar higher on Monday morning.

A fall in the American currency tends to support oil prices, since it makes dollar-denominated commodities like oil more affordable for holders of other currencies.



The US dollar index is edging lower against a basket of currencies.
Photograph: Tail1/Refinitiv

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Updated at 05.00 EDT

[6d ago](#) [04.37](#)



The H&M clothing store is seen in Times Square in Manhattan, New York.
Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

More than four months after H&M paused sales in Russia, the retailer has committed to winding down its operations in the country where it has sold clothes and accessories since 2009.

The retailer said it will temporarily re-open stores for a limited period to sell off its remaining inventory, and that the entire winding down process would cost around 2 billion Swedish crowns (£160m). The costs will be recorded in its third quarter results.

H&M Group CEO Helena Helmersson said in a statement:

After careful consideration, we see it as impossible given the current situation to continue our business in Russia.

We are deeply saddened about the impact this will have on our colleagues and very grateful for all their hard work and dedication.

Furthermore, we wish to thank our customers for their support throughout the years.

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[6d ago](#)**04.20**

We're expecting further travel chaos and some services to be impacted by surging temperatures today. Follow our dedicated UK heatwave live blog today for the latest:

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[6d ago](#)**04.01**



Mark Sweeney

GSK's consumer spin-off Haleon, home to brands from Sensodyne toothpaste to Panadol painkillers, has begun trading on the London Stock Exchange in the biggest European listing in a decade.

Haleon shares started trading on Monday morning at 330p, with a market value of about £31bn.

The demerger marks GSK's [biggest corporate restructure in two decades](#) and will allow the pharmaceutical firm, which failed to develop its own Covid-19 vaccination during the pandemic, to focus on infectious diseases and vaccines.

Haleon's flotation is a litmus test to gauge the financial strength of the City of London and the appetite for new listings, with the company poised to join GSK on the FTSE 100 index of blue-chip shares.

The last stock market listing on a similar scale was the mining and commodity company Glencore, which debuted at a £38bn market value in 2011. It is a boost to the UK stock market at a time when the Cambridge chip designer Arm, owned by Japan's Softbank, is expected to opt for New York for its [return to public markets](#), although it may seek a secondary listing in London after lobbying from the UK government.

[Read more here.](#)

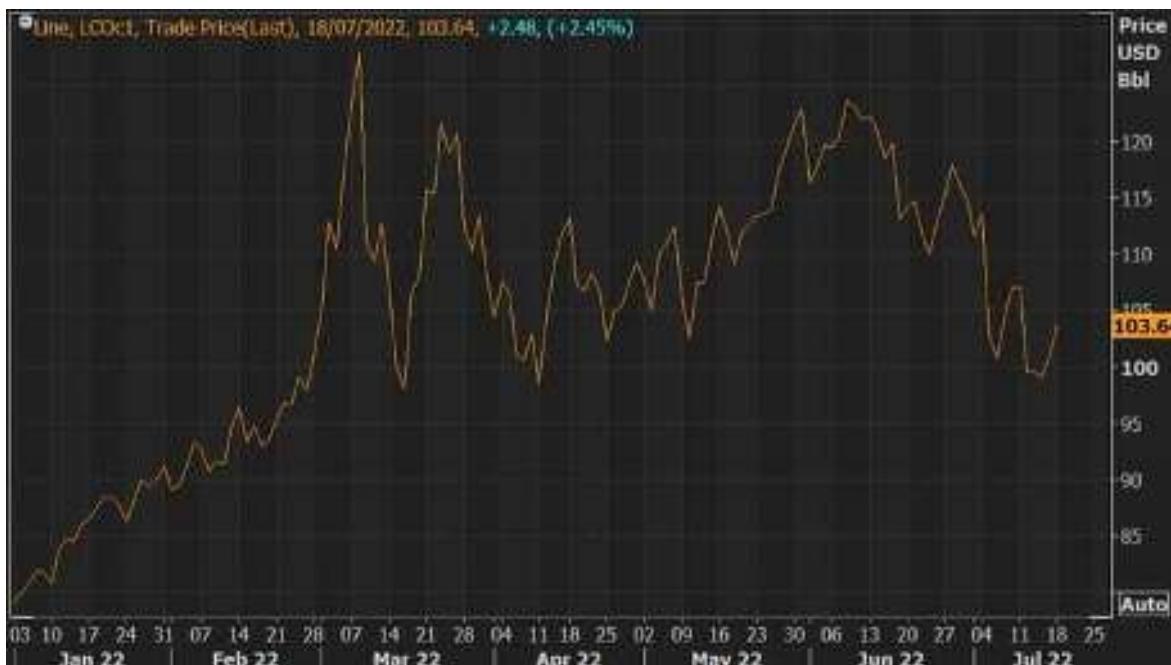
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[6d ago](#)[03.52](#)

While Brent crude prices are climbing this morning, it's worth remembering that prices are still at a lower range compared to the near \$130 per barrel highs they hit in March.

Concerns over weak economic growth and weakening demand have sent oil prices back sharply in recent weeks.

In fact, they've been hovering at their lowest levels since the invasion of Ukraine in February, and actually finished lower for the fifth week in succession last week:



Brent crude is climbing but zooming out, the commodity's price has tempered since February. Photograph: Tail1/Refinitiv

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6d ago03.27

Deliveroo shares plunge 5% after slashing revenue forecasts

Food delivery platform Deliveroo has blamed the UK's faltering economic prospects for hitting its own revenue forecasts.

The group downgraded its full-year revenue growth expectations to between 4-12%, a significant drop from previous forecasts of 15-25%, due to a "more cautious economic outlook".

It came after second quarter revenue growth slid to 2% from 12% in the first quarter, which the company said reflected "the impact of increased consumer headwinds."

Consumers have been pulling back on discretionary spending, including take-out orders, as they try to make up for the cost of living crisis which has taken a bite out of household finances.

GTV growth in constant currency	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	H1 2022
UK and Ireland	12%	4%	8%
International	11%	1%	6%
Group	12%	2%	7%

Deliveroo downgraded its revenue guidance on Monday. Photograph: Deliveroo

Deliveroo said it was prepared to tighten its belt:

Management is confident in the company's ability to adapt financially to a rapidly changing macroeconomic environment, through gross margin improvements, more efficient marketing expenditure and tight cost control.

The news sent shares tumbling 5% at the open, though they seem to have stabilised after the initial drop to trade nearly 15% lower at around 84p per share.

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[6d ago](#)[03.09](#)

Major European stock markets climbed at the open:

- FTSE 100 opened 0.66% higher
- France's CAC 40 rose 0.58%
- Germany's DAX opened 0.5% higher
- Spain's IBEX climbed 0.76%

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[6d ago](#)[03.09](#)

Introduction: Oil prices climb after Biden fails to secure output hike

Good morning, and welcome to our rolling coverage of business, the world economy and the financial markets.

Brent crude prices have pushed past \$100 per barrel this morning, rising more than 2.6% to \$103.88, as traders digested the lack of progress in securing output hike pledges from Saudi Arabia over the weekend.

US president Joe Biden's trip to the Middle East sparked renewed concern about global oil supplies, which momentarily retreated last week as fears grew over a looming global recession that could reduce demand.

It was comments from Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, which dashed hopes over an agreement. He said that a US-Arab summit on Saturday did not discuss oil and that the oil cartel group of exporting countries known as OPEC+ would continue to assess market conditions.

It will continue to pile pressure on households, who have been hammered by rising living costs including energy prices.

Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at Avatrade said:

Traders got one clear message from Biden's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, during which President Biden spoke to a number of Arab leaders.

The message is that it is OPEC+ that makes the oil supply decision, and the cartel isn't remotely interested in what Biden is trying to achieve. OPEC+ will continue to control oil supply, and one country alone cannot determine the oil supply—at least that is the message that traders have taken from Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia.

Brent oil prices crossed above the \$100 price mark earlier today, and if the price continues to trade above this price mark, then it is highly likely that the path of the least resistance will be skewed to the upside.

Otherwise, we'll be keeping an eye on comments from Bank of England officials and bank earnings out of the US.

The agenda

- 10am BST: Bank of England MPC member Michael Saunders speaks at the Resolution Foundation
- 12:30pm BST: Goldman Sachs, Bank of America report Q2 earnings
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Updated at 04.24 EDT

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Rights and freedomAfghanistan

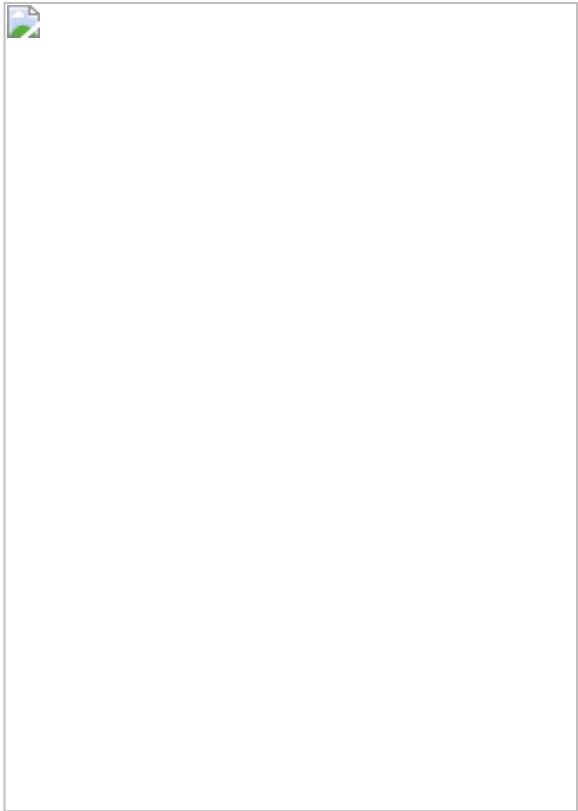
Send us a man to do your job so we can sack you, Taliban tell female officials

As economy collapses, women from Afghanistan's finance ministry say they have been asked to suggest male relatives to replace them



A teacher at a school in Kabul. Only female healthcare workers and teachers can still go to work. Women working in other fields are forced to stay home now. Photograph: Aamir Qureshi/AFP/Getty

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Zuhal Ahad

Mon 18 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 04.45 EDT

The Taliban have asked women working at Afghanistan's finance ministry to send a male relative to do their job a year after female public-sector workers were barred from government work and told to stay at home.

Women who worked in government positions were sent home from their jobs shortly after the Taliban took power in August 2021, and have been paid heavily reduced salaries [to do nothing](#).

But several women told the Guardian they had received similar calls from [Taliban](#) officials requesting they recommend male relatives in their place, because the “workload in the office has increased and they need to hire a man instead of us”, according to one woman who did not wish her identity to be revealed.



Sima Bahous, director of UN Woman. ‘An entire generation is threatened by food insecurity and malnutrition,’ she warned in May. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Sima Bahous, executive director of UN Women, [said in May](#): “Current restrictions on women’s employment have been estimated to result in an immediate economic loss of up to \$1bn – or up to [5% of Afghanistan’s GDP](#).

“There is almost universal poverty in the country,” she added. “An entire generation is threatened by food insecurity and malnutrition.”

Maryam*, 37, received a call from the HR department of the Afghan ministry of finance, where she had worked for more than a decade. She said: “I was asked to introduce a male family member to replace me at the ministry, so I could be dismissed from the job.”

Her voice quivering with frustration, Maryam, said she had worked her way up over many years within the ministry to head of the department. “How can I easily introduce someone else to replace me?” she asked. “Would he be able to work as efficiently as I have for so many years?

“This is a difficult and technical position I was trained for and have years of experience in. And even if he could do the same work eventually, what would happen to me?

“Since they came [to power], the Taliban have demoted me and reduced my salary. I cannot even afford my son’s school fees. When I questioned this, an official rudely told me to get out of his office and said that my demotion was not negotiable.”

Several attempts by the Guardian to seek a response and clarification from Taliban officials at the ministry went unanswered. It is not clear if women from other state departments have also been asked to send male relatives to do their job. However, Maryam said she was aware of at least 60 female colleagues from the finance department who had received similar calls.

“The Taliban have a history of eliminating women, so hearing this is not surprising or new,” said Sahar Fetrat, assistant researcher with the women’s rights division at Human Rights Watch (HRW), which has documented extensively the Taliban’s atrocities against women since they took over Afghanistan.

In a report this year, [HRW investigated the loss of women’s jobs and livelihoods](#) in Ghazni province since August 2021, when the Taliban seized power in Kabul. “Nearly all the women interviewed who previously had paid employment had lost their jobs,” an interviewee said in the report.

“Only female healthcare workers and teachers can go to work. [Women](#) working in other fields are forced to stay home now.”

Fetrat said: “Within the Taliban’s misogyny, women belong to men, as a property and an object representing the honour of the family.

“Therefore, in some cases like this they give women’s jobs and titles to women’s male relatives, and in other cases like the hijab, they punish women’s close male relatives for women’s public conduct and clothing,” she added, referring to an [earlier ban that criminalised women’s clothing](#). According to the decree, issued in May, the male “guardians” of women who appeared in public “uncovered” would be fined and jailed for the offence.

Fetrat said these policies imposed new standards of “harmful behaviour in society, and that is normalisation of the objectification of women. It has a clear message for men, and especially younger men, that they ‘own’ women in their families and they must act as a moral authority and actively police women’s conduct.”

Maryam and her colleagues are mobilising to protest against Taliban policy. “We do not accept their order and we will try to get them to change it,” she said.

“We have created a group of female employees of the ministry. We are negotiating now, and we will demonstrate if they don’t hear us,” she added, urging the international community to extend support and solidarity.

The country is in the grip of a severe economic and humanitarian crisis. According to [the UN](#), 20 million people now [face acute hunger](#), more than 9 million have been displaced since the Taliban took power, and severe drought has affected farming.

* Name has been changed to protect her identity

Additional reporting by Ruchi Kumar

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- [Tory leadership Truss claims she wanted Johnson to stay as she pledges to rip up plans](#)
- [Sunak v Truss All you need to know about PM contenders](#)
- [Rishi Sunak MPs' favourite faces challenge to win over members](#)

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Tory leadership race: Rishi Sunak calls himself 'common sense' Thatcherite – as it happened

Former chancellor says UK 'needs to control borders' and again references Margaret Thatcher

- [Sunak would not cut taxes before autumn 2023](#)

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[Nadeem Badshah](#) (now) and [Andrew Sparrow](#) (earlier)

Thu 21 Jul 2022 15.42 EDTFirst published on Thu 21 Jul 2022 04.38 EDT

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Tory leadership candidate Rishi Sunak arrives at a radio studio in central London. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[Nadeem Badshah \(now\) and Andrew Sparrow \(earlier\)](#)

Thu 21 Jul 2022 15.42 EDTFirst published on Thu 21 Jul 2022 04.38 EDT

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Sunak says Tories must 'make Rwanda policy work' to gain control of borders

Sunak, who voted for Brexit, says the Tories have to “make our Rwanda policy work”.

“We do need to have control of our borders. When my grandparents came over, it was because the government decided they should come here. “At the same time we welcome the best and the brightest, we [need] to get a control of our borders. “The Rwanda policy gives us the opportunity to solve that.”

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Updated at 13.40 EDT

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2d ago**15.42**

Thanks for following the blog with us today, we are closing it now but you can read all our UK politics coverage [here](#).

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2d ago**15.40**

A summary of today's developments

- A YouGov poll of Conservative party members suggests Liz Truss is on course to beat [Rishi Sunak](#) by 62% to 38% in the contest to decide the next prime minister.
- Rishi Sunak says the Tories have to “make our Rwanda policy work”. He told LBC: “We do need to have control of our borders. When my grandparents came over, it was because the government decided they should come here. “At the same time we welcome the best and the brightest, we [need] to get a control of our borders. “The Rwanda policy gives us the opportunity to solve that.” The former chancellor also described his economic plan as “common sense Thatcherism” despite wanting to raise corporation tax for businesses with the exception of smaller firms.
- The UK’s Brexit divorce bill could soar to £42.5bn after the Treasury increased its estimate of the payments owed to the European Union by more than £5bn, PA Media reports.

- The [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) thinktank published an assessment of the tax and spending policies of Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak. It says we know a lot about Sunak's plans, because he was chancellor until very recently, but that Truss's intentions are quite different, and less clear. It says that Truss's plans ultimately imply public spending would be cut.
- Labour MP Stella Creasy has accused [Liz Truss](#) of wanting to take women "back to the 1950s" with her transferable tax allowance plan.
- Ministers will have a year to prepare before cross-examination at the UK's Covid-19 public inquiry, its chair, Heather Hallett, announced, as she opened what is likely to be one of the broadest statutory investigations in the country's history.
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[2d ago](#) [15.35](#)



Heather Stewart

Rishi Sunak has launched his strongest attack yet on his rival Liz Truss's economic policies, claiming her £30bn plans for unfunded tax cuts risk stoking inflation and pushing up interest rates.

His attack came as a new poll of Tory party members gave Truss a commanding lead in the race to become prime minister.

Tax and spending has become the key battleground in the hard-fought contest, with Sunak insisting that cutting taxes immediately, as Truss has promised, would risk exacerbating the cost of living crisis.

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[2d ago](#)[15.32](#)

Rishi Sunak said the [Conservatives](#) have to “make our Rwanda policy work” when asked about the controversial immigration policy during an interview with Andrew Marr on LBC.

Rishi Sunak says Tories must 'make Rwanda policy work' – video

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[3d ago](#)[15.28](#)

Here is more from [Rishi Sunak](#) telling LBC “one of the first” things he would do as prime minister is appoint an independent ethics adviser.

The post is vacant after Lord Geidt dramatically resigned in June, accusing [Boris Johnson](#) of proposing a “deliberate” breach of the ministerial code.

Lord Geidt said he had been narrowly clinging on to his role over partygate but ultimately quit after being forced into an “impossible and odious” position by the Prime Minister over steel tariffs.

He was the second ethics adviser to resign during Johnson’s tenure as Prime Minister.

Speaking on Tonight With Andrew Marr, former chancellor Sunak said: “I definitely will reappoint an independent ethics adviser and it will be one of the first things I do.”

Asked if he would bring back Lord Geidt, he said he “probably” would because he thought he did a good job.

“I haven’t spoken to him about it so I don’t want to put him in an awkward position,” he said.

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[3d ago](#)[15.06](#)



Phillip Inman

Liz Truss claims her economic agenda of tax cuts and public spending will revitalise the UK economy, but it is not just her rival prime ministerial candidate [Rishi Sunak](#) arguing that the measures will be self-defeating.

Economists have lined up to warn that her £30bn package – including the reversal of this year’s national insurance rise, the suspension of green levies on power bills and the cancellation of a sharp rise in corporation tax in 2023 – will increase inflation and leave the government with higher debt bills.

The foreign secretary and frontrunner in the race for the Tory leadership has criticised the Treasury’s economic record during her opponent’s time as chancellor, saying it has been timid and “contractionary” when it should have been promoting growth.

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[3d ago](#)[14.26](#)

A watchdog’s report exposing failures in the response to migrant crossings are a “damning indictment” of government policy, according to critics.

Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration David Neal found the Home Office’s performance was “poor” and said the system was “overwhelmed”.

Labour’s shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper said: “This report is a truly damning indictment of a Conservative Government which has badly lost control of border security.”

She branded findings which revealed fingerprints and photographs were not taken from every migrant that arrives in the UK as “flabbergasting”, saying that if people can disappear without any biometrics checks this puts “national security at risk and encourages criminal trafficking gangs”.

The Home Office claimed much of the report was now “historic character and the criticisms identified reflect processes and procedures not now followed under the new operation”.

But Neal rejected this, highlighting examples of practices continuing even in May.

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[3d ago](#)**14.06**

The Channel 4 investigation also claims evidence from documents filed with authorities suggests the US hedge fund Sunak co-founded managed funds in tax havens including the Cayman Islands and compensated partners with assets in those tax havens.

The programme asked Sunak whether he earned assets offshore and, if so, what happened to them. He did not deny that he received assets in tax havens. But he said any assets he had were subject to US tax which was paid in full.

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[3d ago](#)**14.01**

A Channel 4 News investigation has raised new questions about Rishi Sunak's personal fortune after the programme found evidence suggesting that he and other partners in his former hedge fund were paid with assets in tax havens.

A profile of the prime ministerial candidate, to be broadcast from 7pm, also reveals he never received a scholarship to Winchester College in Hampshire - contrary to claims repeatedly made by his parliamentary supporters in recent weeks. And it reveals how his multi-million pound property portfolio was kickstarted by a £105,000 interest-free loan from his parents helping him to buy his first flat in Kensington, West London, aged 21.

Sunak's campaign team told the programme: "Rishi is the product of a lot of hard work, kindness and sacrifice.

“His father was a GP who worked and his mother was a pharmacist, and he used to help out on the weekends.

“They both worked all hours to ensure they could give their children the best education they could because they value that above all else. “He is dedicated to this country because of the opportunity it gave to him, his parents and his grandparents who moved here for a better life.”

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[3d ago](#)[13.32](#)

Sunak says he is a practising Hindu and those are his roots and what drives him is this country welcoming his family 60 years ago.

And that concludes the LBC interview.

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Updated at 13.36 EDT

[3d ago](#)[13.31](#)

Sunak said he would bring an ethics adviser back and would bring Lord Geidt back but he hasn't had a conversation with him about that prospect yet.

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[3d ago](#)[13.30](#)

When asked about his lack of popularity with Tory members and accusations of being a backstabber, Sunak replied:

“I worked closely with the PM for two and a bit years. I am proud of many things we have achieved.

“I am sorry I had to resign.

“Now I am looking forward and I believe I can bring change.

“It got to a point when enough is enough.

“Everyone saw with the Chris Pincher situation and the economy.”

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[3d ago](#)[13.29](#)

On why he registered the domain name Ready for Rishi back in December, he said “I didnt do that, people register trade names all the time.”

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[3d ago](#)[13.27](#)

On whether he has struggled for money, the former chancellor reverted back to his earlier anecdote about doing the books at his mother’s chemist.

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[3d ago](#)[13.26](#)

On his environmental plans, Sunak says “windfarms onshore are tricky, but windfarms offshore” have been found to save money.

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[3d ago](#)[13.24](#)

When asked if he has ever opened funds in an offshore tax haven, Sunak replied “No.”

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Conservative leadership

Truss claims she wanted Johnson to stay as she pledges to rip up plans

Tory leadership candidate details her proposals to cut taxes that she voted for as part of Johnson's cabinet

- [Politics live: latest updates](#)

Liz Truss: 'My tax cuts will decrease inflation' – video

Tobi Thomas

[@tobithomas](#)

Thu 21 Jul 2022 05.26 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 08.11 EDT

The Tory leadership candidate Liz Truss said she would have liked [Boris Johnson](#) to continue as prime minister, despite promising to tear up the economic plans he presided over.

Speaking to BBC Radio 4's Today programme Truss said her plans to cut taxes that she voted for as part of Johnson's cabinet would "decrease inflation", despite concerns from some leading economists.

She said that as prime minister she would "keep taxes low", and when asked whether borrowing more than £30bn to fund the tax cuts would increase or decrease inflation, Truss said: "My tax cuts will decrease inflation."

She added: "We have had a consensus of the Treasury, of economists, with the Financial Times, with other outlets, peddling a particular type of economic policy for 20 years. It hasn't delivered growth. People are struggling with the cost of living, it is wrong to be increasing their taxes at a time when it is difficult for them to pay their bills."

But when asked whether she could name a chancellor or governor of the Bank of England or leading economist that would agree with her view, Truss could only name Patrick Minford of Cardiff University.

On her tax plans, which have been described as a gamble, she said: “It’s not a gamble, it’s an economic reality that the higher taxes you have the more growth is choked off.”

She added: “What is the gamble is what we’re doing at the moment, because currently the United Kingdom is projected to head for a recession. So we need to do something different in order to get growth going, in order to put money in people’s pockets.”

The interview came on the day after she and the former chancellor [Rishi Sunak became the final two candidates in the running](#) to become the UK’s next prime minister. In the vote among MPs selecting the final two, Sunak retained his lead with 137 votes. Truss, the foreign secretary who had trailed Penny Mordaunt throughout the previous rounds, took 113 votes, just above Mordaunt’s 105.

Paying tribute to Johnson, Truss said she had wanted him to carry on as prime minister. “I think he did a fantastic job with the 2019 election, and that he delivered Brexit and the vaccines. Regrettably we got to a position where he didn’t command the support of the parliamentary party.”

Truss also made clear she was “completely committed” to fulfilling the government’s promise to increase spending on the NHS. When asked if she would still commit to proposals to increase healthcare funding if her planned tax cuts did not increase growth, Truss said: “I’m completely committed to that NHS spending, to the hospitals, to the doctors.”

Robert Jenrick also appeared on the Today programme, in support of Sunak’s leadership campaign. When asked why he was supporting Sunak, Jenrick said: “No one has disputed the fact that Rishi is the most able candidate to be our next prime minister.”

He added that he believed Sunak was the candidate “with the real vision and ability to lead the country forward”. Commenting on Truss’s tax cuts pledges, Jenrick said: “It is the antithesis of Thatcherism to be going around making unfunded tax pledges merely to win a leadership contest.”

Appearing on Sky News, Theresa Villiers, another supporter of Sunak, said he was the best candidate “to get us through this inflation crisis”. “I think Rishi has demonstrated he’s got the track record and he’s got the plan to do that.”

Britain’s new prime minister will be announced by 5 September after Conservative party members vote on the two candidates chosen by MPs.

Despite Truss coming second among MPs, she is the favourite among Conservative party members, according to polling, with Sunak described as the underdog. About 160,000 fee-paying members – half aged over 60, 97% white and a large proportion male and from southern England – will have the chance to vote next month.

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Rishi Sunak v Liz Truss: all you need to know about PM contenders

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Conservative leadership

Tory MPs' favourite Rishi Sunak faces challenge to win over party members

Analysis: missteps mean he trails Liz Truss in polls, and he will need to sell himself as a safer electoral bet



Rishi Sunak leaving his campaign office in London on Wednesday.
Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor

Thu 21 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT

Rishi Sunak may have won the leadership ballot among Tory MPs but he will now face a different audience, who have so far seemed largely immune to his charms – 160,000-odd grassroots Conservative members.

Sunak has consistently struggled in polling among party activists. The latest ConservativeHome survey last weekend showed him losing a head-to-head

battle with Truss by 42% to her 49%. YouGov polling of Conservative members showed him trailing the foreign secretary by an even wider margin, 54% to 35%.

Tim Bale, who co-authored a recent book, *Footsoldiers*, about political parties' members, said Sunak's shaky hold on the membership probably stemmed from political missteps earlier this year.

"I think you have to go back beyond his resignation from the government and look at, for example, the really poor reaction to his [spring statement](#), which went down like a cup of cold sick with Conservative members as well as MPs," Bale said.

"The non-dom issue really hurt him as well," he added. Sunak's wife agreed to pay UK tax on her considerable worldwide earnings after news reports pointed to her [non-dom status](#).

Another potential black mark for Sunak in the eyes of the Conservative party in the country may be his [role in defenestrating Boris Johnson](#).

No 10 have made little secret of the fact that the prime minister blames his former chancellor for plotting against him – though Sunak was not even the first cabinet minister to resign, trailing Sajid Javid by a few minutes.

At his campaign launch, Sunak paid tribute to Johnson, presumably to placate those MPs and party members cross about the prime minister's demise. The outgoing PM may be "flawed", Sunak said, but he has a "good heart".

Back in April, one-third of the ConservativeHome panel of party members thought Johnson should resign, while more than half thought he should not.

Truss's loyalty to Johnson to the end – sitting alongside him at his [final PMQs](#) on Wednesday – may score her some points with members.

Her policy stance of immediate tax cuts may be less of a clincher, despite the stereotype of Conservative members as rightwing ideologues.

A recent paper for the thinktank UK in a Changing Europe, co-authored by Bale, suggested that on economic policy at least, Tory members are actually considerably less rightwing than the party's MPs. "Rather than being closer to the average voter, Conservative MPs sit to the right of party members, councillors and activists," the research said.

Meanwhile, [qualitative polling of party members by YouGov](#) published this week suggested policies are less important to them in picking a leader than personal qualities.

When asked to specify in their own words "what are you looking for in the new leader of the Conservative party?" more than half of those surveyed (52%) named personal attributes, such as honesty, intellectual strength or leadership skills, while 32% chose qualities that YouGov categorised as "conventional Conservatism," such as supporting lower tax and spending, or patriotism.

"One party member told us they were looking for 'someone with honesty and integrity, who is willing to tell the truth without fear of the consequences. Someone who is not in it for personal gain and sees it as a duty to serve. Someone who is committed to all parts of the country but willing to be realistic about what government can actually do and what we should do personally,'" wrote Patrick English, YouGov's associate director. "Meanwhile, another kept it short and sweet, telling us they wanted 'honesty. Integrity. Trustworthiness. Leadership.'"

With years of cabinet experience at the highest levels, it is hard to imagine that party members do not already have a firm view about the personal qualities of Sunak and Truss. But the polling suggests that to take the lead the former chancellor will need to stress his leadership qualities, as well as just scrapping over policy, which has formed the centrepiece of his campaign so far.

Despite many members' misgivings, Bale believes Sunak may ultimately win through if he can convince enough of them that he is a better bet for winning the next general election.

Both remaining candidates were already hammering home the line that they could beat Keir Starmer shortly after Wednesday's result confirmed their places in the final two – though Labour says it is not concerned about either of them.

“If you look at the surveys of where their priorities are, winning the next election is top. I suspect over the course of the next month the members will come to the view that Sunak has a better chance of doing that than [Liz Truss](#), and maybe will act accordingly,” said Bale.

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- [Song of the summer 2022 Our writers pick their favourite tracks](#)
- ['Vote me, get Thatcher' Why the Tories are still obsessed with the Iron Lady](#)
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‘The deepest silences’: what lies behind the Arctic’s Indigenous suicide crisis

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Music

Song of the summer 2022: our writers pick their favourite tracks

From Beyoncé to Bad Bunny to Jungle, Guardian critics recommend their most played songs of the season



Sky Ferreira, Beyoncé and Bad Bunny. Composite: Shutterstock/Getty images

[Kate Hutchinson](#), [Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#), [Rob LeDonne](#), [Laura Snakes](#), [Adrian Horton](#), [Kyle Mullin](#), [Tshepo Mokoena](#), [Michael Cragg](#), [Jim Farber](#), [Benjamin Lee](#) and [Bryan Armen Graham](#)

Thu 21 Jul 2022 01.27 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 09.20 EDT

Skeng – London

Go down a Hackney backstreet or stroll along the River Lea this summer and at some point you're likely to hear this gnarly celebration of the city

blaring from a car or loudspeaker. Skeng is a rising and yet controversial dancehall rapper from Jamaica whose sound is far darker and more menacing than his peers; it shares stylistic touchstones with popular London-centric rap styles like UK drill and similarly to many of those artists, Skeng raps about the realities of street life and has been accused of glamorising weapons and gang violence.

It's hardly a picnic tune but this track – which he apparently wrote in celebration of his first UK tour here in spring – hints at his comedy chops. It has a whiff of the People Just Do Nothing About it, opening with the line “Hello mate (bloody hell)”, while the video shows Skeng and friends waving around bottles of bubbly on quad bikes in a London park. The rest is, as they say, pure fire: though Skeng’s patois is distinctly thick and fast, it unfolds with serpentine precision over the instrumental’s plucky strings; the guttural purr of its refrain – “Lon-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun” – lingers for days.

Kate Hutchinson

Bad Bunny – Yo No Soy Celoso

Bad Bunny didn’t just try to make the song of the summer but the album, saying Un Verano Sin Ti should be played “in the summer, on the beach, as a playlist”. Free-pouring tequila into your friends’ mouths, making eyes at people in swimwear, brooding at the pink-ening sky: there’s a song for every mood on this all-inclusive record, and thanks to Bad Bunny’s similarly broad vocal range – from breathy entreaties to barked orders – all are kept as buoyant as a long volleyball rally.

Tucked amid the brilliant reggaeton, mambo and more is this gem, with a bossa nova-adjacent rhythm picked out on acoustic guitar and a drum rim; a wistful early-evening track cut with small-hours melancholy. Bad Bunny doth protest too much on a song whose title translates as I Am Not Jealous, as he surveys his ex with someone he doesn’t like, but even if you don’t know Spanish his pain is so palpable in the wounded “ouch, mi corazon” that ends the chorus: chest-out bravado caves to reveal a hurt little boy, in one of the musical moments of the year. Someone get the lad another caipirinha, stat. *Ben Beaumont-Thomas*

Jungle – Good Times

Kicking off with a celestial-sounding intro before exploding into what could become the hit of the sweltering summer of '22, the rollicking Good Times strikes a perfect balance between throwback jam and modern day smash. The brainchild of production duo Jungle, the moniker of British music makers Josh Lloyd-Watson and Tom McFarland (perhaps best known for their 2014 sleeper Busy Earnin'), it's Good Times that should solidify them as dance floor staples.

There may be bigger hits and starrier artists during this summer music season, but with the song seemingly a sonic cousin of Glass Animals' smash Heat Waves, could Good Times follow a similar underdog single to mainstream hit trajectory and be absolutely everywhere as the days slog on? To be frank, we're all well aware there's both plenty to fret and celebrate worldwide. But with Good Times, we're urged to enjoy what we can and, at least momentarily, put blinders to the rest. Let's face the music and dance.

Rob LeDonne

Sky Ferreira – Don't Forget

Please, "[feral girl summer](#)" all you want, but I personally will be hewing to "vengeful wraith summer" and taking Don't Forget as my villainous anthem. Although Sky Ferreira's booming comeback single seethes directly at her record label – an [enduring cause of strife](#) for the 30-year-old cult pop icon – it also suggests an appreciably wide range of applications.

"Tears of fire in the sky," she snarls, and with dangerous heatwaves and wild fires raging, we might cock a snook in the direction of the governments and corporations casually letting the planet burn; as Ferreira sings of betrayal and exploitation by paternalistic forces, perhaps a few supreme court justices might come to mind. Surging with rage and towering above the earth on storm clouds of reverb, Don't Forget is a full-blooded offensive against letting your heart harden during another successively hellish summer. *Laura Snapes*

Beyoncé – Break My Soul

Break My Soul, the first single off Beyoncé’s upcoming album Renaissance, soft-landed in the last week of June, fresh yet familiar. The elastic house track – which nods to, if not outright samples, Robin S’s 1993 dance floor touchstone Show Me Love – is not the swaggering [Beyoncé](#) of Lemonade. Having conquered almost all genres (and Coachella), Beyoncé is in sublime restoration mode: “I just fell in love, and I just quit my job / I’m gonna find new drive, damn they work me so damn hard,” she coos, in a gesture to her non-billionaire fanbase that lands sweeter than it should.

This is multi-purpose sustenance – an upper on the dance floor, a salve in the baking sun, a mood stabilizer for daily life amid overlapping, unending crises. If there has been a sound, for me, that summons the fun out of this sputtering summer, it’s Beyoncé tumbling down “oh baby baby” into the chorus, or the mantra offered by New Orleans bounce legend Big Freedia: “release your trade, release the stress, release your love, forget the rest”. The Queen bid bliss, and I keep listening. *Adrian Horton*

Bartees Strange – Wretched

Just try to sing along. Don’t worry if you can’t. Yes, the chorus of Bartees Strange’s Wretched sounds inscrutable at first. But the Ipswich, England born, Oklahoma raised rising star’s rush of heartfelt exuberance will make his verbose performance stick in your mind and on the tip of your tongue all summer long.

It’s, ahem, strange (no need to forgive the pun) structuring eschews the condescending summer song formula. And that’s what makes it so essential. That and, of course, the propulsive keys and percussion, and Strange’s genre-enigma guitar playing. Together with its soft-loud verse-chorus pattern, those elements will make Wretched defy its title for post-lockdown festival crowds hankering a pogo-and-holler worthy anthem. And after the song’s galvanizing tone sets in, delving into its fountainhead gush of lyrics is an equal delight on subsequent listens – especially its themes of steadfast,

rescuing friendship in this era of echo chambers and self-isolation. *Kyle Mullin*

Charli XCX – Used to Know Me

There's a scene in season two of acerbic comedy [Hacks](#) that cuts to a slow-mo montage of day party joy, on a lesbian cruise. This song blares, its Euro-house synths grinding. As Charli XCX hoots out the titular hook, Hacks protagonist Ava practically ascends (watch the show if you haven't already, on Prime Video). Back on dry land, a layered story underpins the track.

Charli XCX's final album from her five-album Sony deal sees her lunge almost comically towards pop, cosplaying the standard major-label star she refused to be. Here, she sings about being "finally free from your control". Is that only a post-breakup reflection, or two fingers flicked towards her label? It's a wink, a dance floor banger and that ideal song of the summer candidate: one that's been out since March, with time to percolate. Real heads will notice she joins Beyoncé in interpolating Robin S's Show Me Love (Stonebridge Mix), sampled here throughout. *Tshepo Mokoena*

Flo – Immature

Summer anthems can't all be breezy beach-based frolics, chat-up lines over barbecue smoke, or escapist lyrics mixed with vodka-sloshed oonts oonts beats. Sometimes they need some grit. Everyone's irritable as temperatures rise and patience is usually the first thing to go.

On Immature, Renée Downer, Stella Quaresma, and Jorja Douglas, AKA hugely promising British girlband Flo, have basically had enough. Riding an elasticated, low slung beat that recalls early 00s Timbaland – complete with cut-up baby cries a la Aaliyah's Are You That Somebody? – the trio remonstrate with a mute man whose signals are misfiring. "Say you want my body, body / But you ain't never do a thing about it" Douglas shrugs nonchalantly on the chorus, before the trio nail that sun-assisted, life's-too-short-let-me-check-what-else-is-out-there frustration with a curt, "I'm tryna understand your point of view / But you fucking with me, fucking with me."

That it's all delivered with the honeyed finesse of peak Brandy at least offers a dash of summer warmth to the long overdue kiss off. *Michael Cragg*

Sofi Tukker – Original Sin

Great summer songs make us feel liberated. The new one from the inventive dance duo Sofi Tukker goes further. It makes us feel redeemed. *Original Sin* is an anthem of absolution, ear-worming its way into your consciousness to alleviate guilt right as it lures you to a place tailor-made for transgression: the dance floor. “So, I think you’ve got something wrong with you/Something’s not right with me too,” the duo sing. “But the state you’re in is innocent/what the fuck’s original sin anyway?”

The song, which undulates more than pounds, has been a club favorite for months, building a buzz that deserves to serenade us through the whole warm season. The insinuating flow of the rhythm pulls you in, while the vocals of the duo – Sophie Hawley-Weld and Tucker Halpern – beguile. There’s great play between the wit of his deadpan delivery and the care in her tone. The song itself couldn’t be simpler, repeating the same verse over and over, leaving just a few breaks for its lilting chorus. But that sublime combination makes the song’s sweet message go down easy. *Jim Farber*

5amDiaries and Jackson Homer – SOFA

Watching Netflix on the sofa might not be one’s first go-to activity in the summer months (unless of course, it’s *this* tortuously hot summer and there’s an effective A/C setup) but in little-known rapper 5amDiaries’ little-known new song, he makes it sound like the only place to be. Employing a sly, of-the-season 90s beat, courtesy of Jackson Homer, he proceeds to tell a simple, easily relatable tale of using the guise of checking out “a cool show I wanna show ya” to get tipsy and fool around instead. Who among us ...

It’s hard to listen without getting *off* the sofa to move around though (Spotify in the kitchen?) and harder not to smile at his barely contained annoyance over his date’s bad manners (“knocking bare shit over, she don’t use a coaster” he says, head presumably shaking, eyes rolling) and while the

song has made something of a hushed debut, it's harder still to imagine this one not entering heavy summer party rotation by the end of the season.
Benjamin Lee

Cardi B ft Kanye West and Lil Durk – Hot Shit

It's been four years and a lifetime since Invasion of Privacy, Cardi's all-conquering hood-epochal major-label debut that remarkably saw [all 13 tracks chart platinum](#) or better. Since then, the wildly charismatic South Bronx pop-rapper has mostly kicked the can while the anticipation for her long-awaited follow-up has only built, giving birth to a couple of babies with Offset and a string of non-album singles including ubiquitous chart-toppers Up and WAP.

Hot Shit might not have the juice to match those dizzying heights, but our girl's first single as a solo artist in 17 months is an earworm of a posse cut that will go off in the club – well, Cardi's verse at least (that Electric Boogie sample!) – and throttle your car's subwoofers to their limit. Durk has shown better during his meteoric rise than his middle verse, Kanye sounds like he needs a vacation despite a welcome return to cussing, and producer Tay Keith won't be accused of overreaching with the now-familiar bass-heavy trap beat that sounds like so much of his previous work. But Hot Shit – which has been positively unavoidable on Hot 97 from the first of July when it dropped – is a good example of a track that rises above the sum of its parts on an artist's sheer magnetism. *Bryan Armen Graham*

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‘Vote me, get Thatcher’: why the Tories are still obsessed with the Iron Lady



Illustration: Andy Watt/The Guardian

The Conservative leadership candidates can't stop comparing themselves to their ex-leader – while happily ignoring the truth about her time in office



[Zoe Williams](#)

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Thu 21 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT

With the Conservatives having whittled their [list of leadership hopefuls](#) down to two, one thing is clear: this lot are obsessed with Margaret Thatcher. They dress up as her, do impressions, genuflect before her memory and – where they think the membership might not get it – lay it on with a trowel. Leaving it to others to unpick why [Liz Truss](#), after such an underwhelming start, beat [Penny Mordaunt](#) and the rest to make the final with Rishi Sunak, it might be useful to ask: what does Thatcher still have over this party?

Her period in office ended more than 30 years ago – and it ended in ignominy. Her context was so dramatically different from ours that, even if Truss et al managed to approximate Thatcherism in policy terms, those policies would make no sense. In popularity terms, she was always more Marmite than Nutella, and this was particularly apparent within her party.

So why, decades after her departure from Downing Street, do so many seek to reanimate her? Have they forgotten what she was like? Or does Thatcher

represent something elemental and timeless about what it means to be true blue?

Generally speaking, the Iron Lady impressions of this contest have leaned heavily on vibe. The journalist, broadcaster and author Peter York was the essayist of the Thatcher age (he co-wrote *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook*, which came out in 1982). He notes three Thatcher traits that have been distributed among this year's candidates.

Kemi Badenoch has “a way of presenting her ideas – ‘I’m an engineer, I could strip this down and put this right’ – that is very much channelling Thatcher the practical, the Thatcher who reworked Joe Lyons’ ice-cream technology, the chemist and lawyer”. Thatcher was direct and robust. “She believed what she said she believed and she enjoyed debating,” says York. This has passed into lore as honesty, even if it was a bit more complicated than that.

Penny Mordaunt launches Conservative leadership campaign – video

Mordaunt, meanwhile, employs Thatcher’s “breaking the fourth wall”, York says. “She is saying: ‘You out there must be finding this all a bit incestuous, but I’m on your side, I know the real problems.’” Mordaunt has also worked hard on that low-voiced, calming, strict-mother shtick – see [her campaign launch video](#) – that was a distinctive draw of Thatcher in rightwing politics, certainly by the height of her term. This comes out most strongly when you look at 80s satire: how *Spitting Image* portrayed Thatcher with dominatrix overtones; how political cartoons covered policies with captions such as: “Give generously to Mumsy now.”

The more preposterous it is to summon the spirit of Thatcher, the more brazenly Mordaunt does it. When she unveiled her new anti-trans position, she did so saying: “I think it was [Margaret Thatcher](#) that said that every prime minister needs a Willie; a woman like me doesn’t have one.” It was hailed as clever wordplay in the circles that would have found Thatcher’s line clever (she was talking, of course, about her deputy, Willie Whitelaw). It was, in fact, a clumsy pick-me play: “I’m so close to the spirit of Margaret that I can simultaneously channel her and common sense.”

Truss's approach is to play Thatcher dress-up. This started ages ago: [Truss in a tank](#), Truss in a fur hat, Truss in last week's Channel 4 debate [wearing a pussy-bow shirt](#). The latter was theatrical and ham-fisted – and she completely got away with it.

Part of what has made this contest fascinating and depressing in equal measure is the quality of cosplay: [Tom Tugendhat](#) as a soldier, Mordaunt covered in medals, Truss as the new Thatcher, the messages thin and half-witted. Thatcher wasn't like that, York says. "You could not but be aware, in however difficult or conflicted a way, that she respected intellectuals and those who could translate other intellectuals for her. She would take an hour's tough interview and enjoy it."



The ties that bind ... Truss and Thatcher. Composite: PA; Alamy

Perhaps the legacy they have all found toughest to emulate is Thatcher's economic one. The writer and broadcaster Steve Richards is driven to distraction by the shallow understanding of Thatcher's economic programme. "She didn't say: 'You just cut taxes by magic.' She wasn't a con artist. It was very explicit in the 1979 manifesto that they were going to switch from direct to indirect taxation – in other words, there would be income tax cuts, but they would be paid for by increases in other taxes."

It was all quite softy, softly, catchee monkey. “It took them eight years to get to Nigel Lawson’s budget of 1988, which modern Tories all revere, including Sunak,” Richards says. “And this didn’t lead to magical economic growth. That was never her argument. She never said: ‘Tax cuts lead to growth.’ Many people think it triggered a recession.”

In other words, Truss might think she is a Thatcherite, and may have support in that view among tabloids and MPs including Jacob Rees-Mogg, but she is much more Reaganite: treat pandemic debt like first world war debt and pay it back over 50 years, while lowering taxes to create fantasy growth. All the other candidates were in accord on this “shallow, politically immature position”, Richards says, except Sunak, whom he considers “the true Thatcherite – no tax cuts until we’ve worked out how to pay for them”. Sunak tried to take up this mantle, telling the Telegraph: “We will cut taxes ... and we will do it responsibly. That’s my economic approach. I would describe it as commonsense Thatcherism. I believe that’s what she would have done.”

Thatcher spent many years forging ahead in isolation, followed by many years dodging a stab in the back

Yet he struggles to get this message across. Even were he prepared to don a pussy-bow, it probably wouldn’t transmit, because Thatcher, this fairly cautious, mid-century economic thinker, has been re-engineered in the Tory imagination as a fiscal Boudicca, slashing and burning on faith alone. Her support for the single market has been similarly swept away – for goodness sake, [she wore it on a jumper](#) – as the candidates try to prove their authentic Thatcherism by saying how much they hate the EU.

Yet even if the candidates’ supposedly Thatcherite positions *did* look anything like Thatcherism, Richards says, “she was absolutely rooted in the economic problems of the late 70s and early 80s and they just do not apply now. There was chaos in the last years of [Jim Callaghan’s] Labour government, so she targeted the state in a particular way, both as a political and economic act. This lot have been in power for 12 years; they just cannot say: ‘The state isn’t working.’”

For the former foreign secretary [Margaret Beckett](#), this collective amnesia and myth-making is most aggravating in what it omits altogether – the fact that Thatcher largely balanced the books with the North Sea oil windfall. “The Norwegians have a national wealth fund; we haven’t got one because she used it to save herself financially. At one point, we were getting something like £32m a day out of the North Sea. That was at a time when you could buy a full district hospital for £32m. It was the greatest opportunity the nation ever had – and she used it to steer away from problems of her own making.”



Europe or bust ... Thatcher campaigning for the single market in 1975.

This did not go unremarked in her own party – the MP and diarist Alan Clark intended to write a book about how the frittering away of oil profits constituted a “betrayal of the country”, but he died before he could, Beckett says. The orthodoxy we are witnessing now – Thatcher as the one true Conservative, who led the country into prosperity with judgment that was at once magical and replicable – is a relatively recent development. It was niche even in her final years and has gathered pace since her death in 2013.

The broadcaster Iain Dale told me about a dinner at the Savoy in London in 2002, at which Thatcher, who was soon to publish her book *Statecraft*, was the guest of honour. “My task was to prevent her from getting to the

microphone,” he says. “They were frightened that, if she spoke, she’d have a heart attack.” (It wasn’t an idle concern – she had had a stroke three weeks earlier.) “So, she was scheduled to leave before the end, but, on the way out, she was up like lightning and straight to the microphone. It was like a Nuremberg rally. People were shouting: ‘10 more years!’” But nobody took this seriously as a barometer of her standing in the party, least of all Thatcher herself, who replied: “That’s the kind of reception only an ex-prime minister can get.”

As formidable as Thatcher may have been in her prime, anyone with a memory knows how underwhelming she was before 1979, as leader of the opposition. “She was appalling,” Beckett says. “She had the high squeaky voice, she moved very badly, she had this thing, when she started to speak, of going very fast. Our lot would shout: ‘Faster, faster!’ and she’d go faster. It was really embarrassing.”



The true Thatcherite? Rishi Sunak during last week's ITV debate.
Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/ITV/PA

But the blue-on-blue attacks in the early days were far more vindictive. Ted Heath, her predecessor as leader, was openly cruel from the start. Before her first speech in parliament as leader of the opposition, he reserved the seat next to her and then failed to show up, so that when she looked around for

support there would be no one there. Colleagues privately called her a “cultured pearl” – low-quality, not the real thing. “I used to warn them: ‘Once she gets into office, she won’t owe anything to any of you lot,’” says Beckett. “‘Although you may have elected her, you’re treating her like shit. If she doesn’t owe you anything, she’ll be able to do what she wants.’ And that’s what happened: once she got her feet under the table, she was away.”

This figure the party now lionises – visionary, messianic and unifying – is at odds with the reality. Thatcher spent many years forging ahead in isolation, followed by many years dodging a stab in the back. But this false image – that a leader once existed who was so pure in her Conservatism that the fractious coalition constituting the party was set at peace – is at the heart of these present-day impressions.

One thing that isn’t a myth? She was popular with the so-called “aspirational working class”, for reasons practical and atmospheric. Selling off council houses may, in the long term, have created a bloated landlord class and a housing crisis, but at the time it seemed to reflect a true understanding of the life and dreams of the ordinary Joe. This can’t be replicated, since social housing, like North Sea oil, was an asset that she exhausted. She was, Dale says, “so in tune with what middle England and the aspirational working classes wanted” and genuinely loathed by elites. York says: “Old toffs found her style pretty emetic. They were always calling her clothes ghastly and her voice grating,” even after her elocution transformation. “That will have endeared her to 99% of the population.”

This dynamic has been pivotal to Conservative strategy and rhetoric for the past six years. The elites in their towers want to tell you how to think, but you, the authentic, raging Briton, will always follow your own destiny. It worked over Brexit, but was always ersatz and decontextualised, since it derived from this Thatcherite era in which “elite” meant something: an aristocracy trying to act as the gatekeeper of public life through inherited wealth. “Elite” doesn’t mean that now – it means academic or expert, latte-drinker or snowflake. It is a confected category without roots or coherence.

It has been interesting to watch all the candidates fall apart as they try to describe what liberal elitism means to them. Does it mean objecting to *It Ain’t Half Hot Mum* or failing to laugh hard enough at *Friends*? Many have

used transgender rights as the proving ground of their anti-wokeness; as disheartening as that is, it highlights an important discontinuity with Thatcher, whose homophobia was ideological – she genuinely saw homosexuality as corruption. She wasn't trying to instrumentalise it to range herself with the masses against the establishment. Who knows, maybe some of the modern Tory Thatcherites are as anti-trans as they make out. But if, as I suspect, it is just a populist pose, I would be surprised if they manage to pull it off.

Richards is looking forward to what happens when the curtains come down. “We’re going to have this Thatcher parade for another few weeks. And then one of them will win and have to start spending money. The first thing that will happen is that [Martin Lewis](#) will pop up saying no one can pay their energy bills. They’re not going to cut spending on the NHS in the run-up to the election; they’re not going to cut spending on defence.” Whoever wins, even if it is Sunak, will be fighting an election on the promise of a Thatcherism that never existed, with a platform that Thatcher would have despised.

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Childcare

‘It feels like a sinking ship’: inside Britain’s struggling nurseries

With soaring fees for parents and staff leaving to take better paid work in supermarkets, the early-years education sector is crumbling – and it is putting our children’s futures at risk



‘It’s the kind of work that is hard to leave behind at the end of the day’ ... a nursery assistant plays with a child at Central Children’s Centre in Grimsby.
Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian



Sally Weale

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It is 9am and nursery manager Michelle Shaw is in her office, eating toast at her desk as a buzzer repeatedly blares. She reaches above her head to lift a phone receiver. “Push the gate,” she says between bites, as parents begin to drop off their children for the morning session. The buzzer goes again. “Push the gate,” she says. And again. “Push the gate”, “Push the gate”, her words now so rapid they are indecipherable.

Shaw has been working in early-years education for 32 years, and says she still loves her job. Petite and restless, she is constantly on the move, spotting and solving problems, responding to staff queries and requests, and engaging with parents and children – including a serious little boy clutching a handful of dinosaurs, who is forever finding his way to her cluttered office and into her arms.

This is the Central Children’s Centre on Edward Street in the north-east Lincolnshire coastal town of Grimsby, part of a chain of 13 nurseries run by an organisation called For Under Fives. Shaw’s staff work with allotted children, wearing earpieces fitted like bouncers, bags slung across their bodies to carry tablets on which they keep records and take photographs to

share with families. Set in an old primary school, the nursery, with its well-worn toys, busy playground and pet guinea pig, is a vital hub for the community it serves.

In the main nursery space, a little girl with a ponytail dances to Billy Joel's Uptown Girl, while a withdrawn boy with long hair walks around holding a large plastic butterfly. Elsewhere toys are upturned, trolleys are pushed at speed, shoes are thrown off and an old piano gets a fair bit of attention. At a table, a member of staff hands out pieces of toast to children who stand silently eating around the table. Some will not have had breakfast.



Michelle Shaw: 'Covid has had a big impact. You can see it straight away with these children that something needs addressing and that puts extra pressure on staff.' Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

There are constant, quiet exchanges between staff. Who needs changing? Who has fallen over? Has the accident been logged? Can you check those bruises? Some of the children are vulnerable, their families affected by poverty, substance abuse and domestic violence. It's the kind of work that is hard to leave behind at the end of the day. "I do worry about them," says one member of staff.

They are also seeing first-hand the impact of lockdowns and social isolation on children's development. Speech and language are delayed, more children appear to have special educational needs, they are taking longer to get out of nappies – some are still not toilet trained by four – and many of them have found it hard to learn how to play with their peers. Shaw is worried some of them simply won't cope with the move to primary school in September.

On the wall in the corridor there are weekly timetables with lists of goals for each child – one child has “to skip, hop and stand on one leg”, someone else has to help water the plants in the garden and feed the guinea pig, another child's challenge is to “talk about emotions and recognise when happy or sad”, another needs to “use longer sentences of four to six words”. In the staff toilet, the door is plastered with information on how to get an “outstanding” Ofsted rating.

Yet for all the commitment and care in the nursery, Shaw says the outlook for the sector has never felt so bleak. Nurseries around the country are losing staff to better paid work in [Aldi](#) and Amazon, and recruitment has dried up.

These are women who are earning £735 a month. Nursery supervisor Sharon Biglin, who has a degree in early-years education, is earning just £11,000 a year. She stays because she loves the work, but others can't afford to.



Sharon Biglin with the children. She stays because she loves the work, but others can't afford to. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

The problems stem from a shortfall in government funding. All 72 children on roll – who are predominantly white British with a small number of Latvian and Polish children – are funded by the government's free 15-hour childcare offer as most parents are unemployed (working parents with three and four-year-olds get 30 hours a week of government-funded childcare over 38 weeks). The government pays Shaw £4.41 an hour for each three- and four-year-old, and £5.37 for every two-year-old, but it costs her £5.90 a child an hour to run the nursery. Other early-years settings in the area are helping to cover the shortfall by introducing an additional “consumable rate” of £7 a day to cover snacks and drinks. “We can’t do that,” says Shaw. “Our parents can’t afford to pay.”

The nursery only gets by because it is part of a chain which includes settings in more affluent areas where charges for extra hours, food and drinks bring in additional money that can be used to subsidise poorer settings. Others, however, are going to the wall.

According to government figures published in June, between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, [there was a net overall decrease of approximately 4,000 childcare providers](#), including childminders, nurseries and other providers of care for 0-5-year-olds – this was the largest decline since 2015–16. Since August 2015, the number of providers has fallen by 19,100 or 22%. A campaign group called [Champagne Nurseries on Lemonade Funding](#) set up to highlight problems in the sector is garnering support from nursery owners and managers across the country. The government, they say, wants a high-quality early-years sector, but is not providing sufficient money to fund it.

Heneage ward, where the Central Children’s Centre is situated, is among the most deprived 10% of wards in England. Much of the terrace housing that surrounds the nursery is rundown and poorly maintained, and many families depend on food banks; the staff room at the nursery is littered with bags of donated food, snacks and drinks from the [FareShare](#) charity.

A basket of groceries is left in the corridor for parents to pick up extras – Shaw times it carefully to make sure everyone who needs it gets something.

She and her team are not just nursery workers, they're counsellors, social workers, benefits and housing advisers and a shoulder to cry on.



‘We are not doing what is best for our children’ ... two young boys play at Central Children’s Centre. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

One mother of three, who was forced to flee a relationship because of domestic violence, said life had become very hard with soaring bills and food costs. Picking up her child, she said her gas bill has jumped from £95 a month to £170. “It’s hard. Sometimes, it does get you down. This is one place I know I can come to for help. But I don’t like asking. I would rather struggle than ask.”

Lunch is £2, which some parents still struggle to afford. A US charity called [Vitamin Angels](#) has been a godsend, supplying more than £100 worth of fruit and vegetables every week, which keeps food costs down. Anything left over is put in the parents’ basket.

Beatrice Merrick, chief executive of the British Association for Early Childhood Education, said the problems in the childcare sector are complex and long-running. “The pandemic has exposed underlying weaknesses in a sector, that was just about getting by, and it’s the straw that is starting to break the camel’s back,” she says.

The early-years education sector in England spans a huge range of providers. There are the expensive, privately run daycare centres in affluent areas, such as the exclusive Maggie & Rose chain, which has nurseries in London (the Kensington nursery charges £490 for five morning sessions 8am-2pm), to local authority-run nurseries with long waiting lists, voluntary-run settings, and then the vast numbers of small, privately run nurseries. It's here, says Merrick, "where there is huge amounts of precariousness and closures".

For parents, it's a minefield – and one that is forcing mothers to leave the job market. As nursery overheads go up, with increases in energy costs, national insurance and minimum wage, fees are also rising and many families can no longer afford them. Elsewhere, nurseries that are struggling to recruit are reducing the number of children they take or closing with little or no warning.



'There are weekly timetables with lists of goals for each child.' Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

Emma Hull, a mother of three from Surrey, had her youngest son down for a local nursery until fees were put up for September and she realised she would be paying more for his care than she would be earning. Soon after, the nursery notified parents that they were having to close with immediate effect as they had lost too many members of staff. "Imagine the chaos for those

families with kids at that nursery,” says Hull, who has since found a childminder to look after her son.

“It feels a bit like a sinking ship and everyone’s scrabbling to get hold of something they can afford,” she says. Another mother says: “I am about to go through the process for requesting part-time hours and if my company don’t give them to me I am going to quit, because I can’t afford the childcare.”

The campaigning charity [Pregnant Then Screwed](#) says some women are even seeking abortions because of childcare costs. The charity surveyed 1,630 women who have had an abortion in the past five years: 60.5% said the cost of childcare influenced their decision to have an abortion, while 17.4% said childcare costs were the main reason they chose to have an abortion.

The government [recently announced plans](#) to relax nursery staff-to-child ratios – from one adult looking after four two-year-olds, to one adult to five instead – to try to reduce the cost of childcare. It claimed that increasing the number of children each childcare worker is responsible for could save parents as much as £40 a week. Yet this has been dismissed as “incorrect” by the Early Years Alliance, a charity that supports members to deliver care and learning in England, and “absolute rubbish” by Pregnant Then Screwed.

“Childcare costs are pushing families into poverty and forcing women to terminate wanted pregnancies,” says Joeli Brearley, founder of Pregnant Then Screwed. “The UK has the most expensive childcare in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as a proportion of women’s earnings, and the recent government proposal to increase ratios will have little to no impact on costs; instead it will only serve to create a lower quality system, further deterring women from using our childcare provision.” Shaw and her team agree it’s simply not viable.

The first three or four years of a child’s life are the most important

Michelle Shaw

On the opposite coast from Grimsby is Monkton nursery school in Liverpool, which was set up in 1980 by owner Sue Poole. The parents here are professionals – doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers – and the fees they pay fund eight qualified early-years teachers, with the nursery open 51 weeks a year to help working parents, and offering luxury extras such as birthday and Christmas gifts for every child, acrobats, gymnasts and a visiting farm. Yet Poole is seeing costs soar too, which she will – reluctantly – have to pass on through increased fees. “I don’t know whether we will lose parents,” she says.

Like Shaw, she is concerned about the increasing number of children with special educational needs coming through. They need more one-to-one support but getting additional funding through education, health and care plans (EHCP) is difficult and time-consuming. Once an EHCP is approved, it can still take months of chasing to secure the funding to which a child is entitled.

“Covid has had a big impact,” says Shaw. “Children didn’t go to groups during lockdown, they were not seen by health visitors or children’s centre hubs. Things that would have been picked up earlier were not picked up. You can see it straight away with these children that something needs addressing. And that puts extra pressure on staff.”

Purnima Tanuku, chief executive of the National Day Nurseries Association, is stark in her assessment. “The early-years sector is in crisis,” she says. “Although nurseries have been struggling to recruit for many years, the situation is now dire and getting worse. As the workforce shrinks, existing staff are becoming more stressed and overstretched. We are hearing of skilled workers leaving for jobs such as supermarket roles due to better pay and less responsibility. Many of our members are already having to turn away children for sessions if they don’t have enough staff.

“The answer is simple: governments must invest sufficiently in early-years education and care. It improves children’s outcomes, saves money in their later education, boosts the economy and gives every child the best chance in life.

“Reducing staff ratios makes no sense at a time when these same children are coming into nursery with delayed language and social skills resulting from pandemic restrictions and lockdowns.” she says. “Not only will this not save costs, it could result in these children having less support, rather than more.”

A government spokesperson, however, defended the Conservatives’ record on early-years education: “We have spent more than £4bn in each of the past five years to support families with the cost of childcare. The number of childcare places available is stable and thousands of parents are benefiting from this support.

“We know there are challenges facing the sector, which is why we are increasing funding to support employers with their costs, investing millions in better training for staff working with preschool children, and have set out plans to help providers run their businesses more flexibly.”

Shaw is frustrated by the government’s posturing. “We are not doing what is best for our children,” she says. “Children are supposed to be the most precious things you can have. The first three or four years of a child’s life are the most important. But we aren’t paying the people who are looking after them what they deserve – we are paying people who work in Tesco and Aldi more.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2022/jul/21/it-feels-like-a-sinking-ship-inside-britains-struggling-nurseries>

2022.07.21 - Opinion

- How a great English city sold itself to Abu Dhabi's elite – and not even for a good price
- They're calling it a 'hot strike summer' in Britain. But are the unions up to the task?
- British drugs policy is punitive and contradictory. And now it'll go backwards
- I am a taxi service for my teens – and I love it

[**OpinionManchester**](#)

How a great English city sold itself to Abu Dhabi's elite – and not even for a good price

[Aditya Chakrabortty](#)



Manchester's Labour council let Sheikh Mansour buy up acres of public land for seemingly a fraction of its worth – how was this allowed?



Illustration: Bill Bragg

Thu 21 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 06.58 EDT

London is one giant pantomime this summer. Just look to the politicians and journalists, hot-breathed with excitement, horse-trading and haggling over who gets to be the Tories' next head prefect. But if you want the truth about how power and money operate in the UK today then ditch Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss, and head to Manchester. Yes, Manchester: the comeback city that traded cotton mills for skyscrapers, and is now [cheered by the Financial Times](#) and [George Osborne](#). The metropolis that taught the world so much about industrial capitalism 200 years ago now offers another harsh lesson about its 21st-century, financialised version.

Go a few minutes east of the city centre, and walk from New Islington into Ancoats. Block follows block of newly built and freshly converted flats and houses, many lining a lovely marina that glistens in the July sun. You can rent or buy these places right now, as long as you don't mind how much some look like [pile-em-high student boxes](#) and that they all [cost a packet](#). This is what post-industrial regeneration looks like, right? Redbrick in tooth and claw. But note something: almost 1,500 of these homes come from just one developer, and in that lies an entire sobering story.

Launched in 2014, [Manchester Life](#) was hailed as a “£1bn deal” between the city council and the Abu Dhabi-based owner of Manchester City football club. The local authority had swaths of brownfield and Sheikh Mansour, the club’s owner, ranked among the richest men on the planet. Working together, the result would be homes for people who desperately needed them and pots of cash. The council’s then leader, Richard Leese, promised “a world-class exemplar of regeneration”.

Meanwhile, human rights groups warned Manchester council about its powerful new business partner. The Abu Dhabi United Group investment fund is formally separate from the kingdom, but its owner, Sheikh Mansour, is the deputy prime minister of the United Arab Emirates and brother of Abu Dhabi’s ruling crown prince. In April, journalists at Der Spiegel magazine published documents suggesting that the state of Abu Dhabi had [facilitated payments](#) to Manchester City. At the very least, the investment fund is closely linked to what [Amnesty International has described](#) as “one of the most brutal police states in the Middle East”. To dissent in the UAE is to rot in jail, in a regime with proportionately more political prisoners than anywhere else in the world. Low-paid migrant nannies or builders are, Human Rights Watch says, “[forced labour](#)”. Yet such facts did not deter the council’s Labour leadership from going ahead.

It was a huge advance for Sheikh Mansour who had, only half a decade earlier in 2008, bought a [struggling football club](#). Now his investment fund was entering a joint venture with the British state (albeit at local level), getting its hands on prime real estate and shaping the city’s very geography. Those of Vladimir Putin’s oligarchs who trousered chunks of London could never dream of such a glittering prize.

As one of the rulers of an autocratic kingdom that has an appalling reputation for repression and an addiction to oil revenues, Sheikh Mansour stood to gain so much from this partnership. It was the council that held almost all the cards: the hectares of publicly owned land, the planning regime, the public subsidies. Yet somehow, according to new research shared exclusively today with the Guardian and authored by academics at Sheffield University, it was Sheikh Mansour who pocketed [almost all the winnings](#). The report says that nine sites were sold to the sheikh at a fraction of their value, and well below what other plots nearby fetched (the council

says it used independent experts using standard valuations, although it won't give any more details). They were on leases lasting 999 years, well beyond the norm. And the fund shifted what had been public assets to companies registered in Jersey.

That walk along the water from New Islington into Ancoats now passes blocks of privatised land owned in an offshore tax haven, which yields millions upon millions for a key member of the wealthy elite running a [surveillance state](#) halfway across the globe. One of the greatest cities in the world has sold itself to a senior figure in a brutal autocracy – and not even for a good price.

This is the devastating implication in the first thorough study of the Manchester Life scheme, which is a product of months poring over company accounts and planning applications. The city council is sometimes keener to criticise its critics than to hear what they have to say: Leese, its leader for 25 years until 2021, [once responded](#) to those calling for more affordable housing as “middle class tosspots and I hate them”. So let us knock on the head any personal attacks: the experts have all lived in the city for decades, I am one of the independent and unpaid advisers on the advisory panel, and this is a report issued squarely in the public interest.

Among a political establishment still scratching its head over [how to level up](#), Manchester is celebrated as a pioneer. Its Labour leadership has been praised by Conservative administrations, while Osborne called its chief executive, Sir Howard Bernstein, “[the star of British local government](#)”.

Bernstein ran the council for nearly two decades until 2017, and sat on the board of Manchester Life. Yet its success has come at a high price for the little people who just happen to live in the city. Not only have the assets they owned been sold cheap, they have got little back. The nine developed sites have no social or affordable housing, which the council's planning officers justified with statements such as: “There is already a high level of affordable housing in the immediate area.” The same council admitted earlier this year that nearly 4,000 of the city's children sleep each night in [temporary accommodation](#).

At the Manchester Life developments, a two-bed flat is considered a bargain if it goes for £369,000 – a price that puts it off limits to [couples working full-time](#) on an average salary. As for tax, the sums paid to the Exchequer seem risible. One of its main subsidiaries earned more than £26m in the five years to 2021, but, the researchers found, paid less than £10,000 in tax – an effective rate of just 4p on each £100 of revenue. Manchester Life told me that its subsidiaries “pay all UK corporation or income tax due on rental income and profits”. It would not, however, disclose how much tax it pays or on how much revenue.

It is right to say that New Islington and Ancoats are vastly more pleasant areas than they were even five years ago – but the big question is who has won from redevelopment and who has lost. Putting hard numbers on that is tricky when so much of the information about [Manchester](#) Life – a venture using public assets and public subsidy with a public authority – is kept strictly private.

I asked the report’s authors to calculate how much the council could have earned from this deal. Looking at examples of other land deals and other local councils, their conservative estimate is £33m, plus up to £1.7m a year in rent. Both the council and the joint venture described that sum as “speculative”. The council also said it expected more money to come through an overage or profit-share arrangement, although it did not provide any details of this agreement nor are they on public record. But for comparison, that £33m would [more than cover](#) what the city pays in a year to put up families in temporary housing.

Sheikh Mansour will presumably know exactly how much Manchester Life is netting him – and can look forward to 10 centuries of rental income from the land in this great city. He seems content with the arrangement. A few months after Bernstein retired from the council, he was appointed as the senior strategic adviser for City Football Group, owned by [Sheikh Mansour](#). I asked the council what procedures it followed on Bernstein’s subsequent appointment with such an important business partner. It could not tell me.

Perhaps the nicest of the Manchester Life developments is Murrays’ Mill, a conversion of one of the world’s first steam-powered cotton mills into flats.

It stands in the heart of Ancoats, alongside Bengal Street. My family is originally from Bengal, a region that once wove the best textiles in the world, muslins so fine that the French sighed over their perfection. It was the East India Company's entry point into the riches of south Asia.

To look at such names carved on to brick is to remember how Manchester came to its industrial wealth and Britain to global preeminence, from cotton picked by enslaved people and through destroying foreign industrial competition, even criminalising the sale of Indian textiles. But today it symbolises something else: a country celebrating its receipt of capital from other states under the shabbiest of terms as a triumph. The difference is that Indians were under no illusions about what had befallen them.

Aditya Chakrabortty is a Guardian columnist

This article was amended on 21 July 2022. An earlier version described the effective tax rate paid by a subsidiary of Manchester Life as “four pennies on each pound”; it is actually 4p on each £100.

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OpinionIndustrial action

This summer's strikes are already working – unions, set your sights even higher

[Polly Smythe](#)

With spiralling inflation and a tight labour market, workers' power is on a high. But that doesn't guarantee success



RMT members rally at London's King's Cross Station last month.
Photograph: Vuk Valcic/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Thu 21 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 12.41 EDT

The strength of the trade union movement, the historian Eric Hobsbawm once wrote, cannot be fully understood by looking at curves on a graph that show membership. Instead, there are “jumps,” “leaps” and “explosions” in activity. For him, these unpredictable peaks and sudden moments of upsurge

are produced by “accumulations of inflammable material which only ignite periodically, as it were under compression”.

Britain is experiencing a moment of ignition right now. Welcome to what many have already dubbed “hot strike summer”.

Clearly, what’s happening to our pay packets is a big part of the story. If you take inflation into account, wages are set to [shrink by £1,750](#) over the next two years. The only group of workers whose wages are [rising in line with prices](#) are those earning more than £170,000 a year.

But that’s not all. For the first time since records began, a shrinking of the labour force [has meant](#) there are more job vacancies than there are unemployed people. Struggling to attract individuals into unfilled roles, some employers have sought to impose compulsory overtime on their existing staff – this has been one of the [disputed matters](#) in the Caterpillar strike in northern Ireland.

Then there’s the pandemic. While it disrupted and reorganised our patterns of work, Covid-19 was also laying the foundations for today’s unforeseen uptick in workers’ self-confidence. Pandemic fights over [fire and rehire](#) tactics and the [reopening of schools](#) provided workers with an opportunity to flex their muscles and build their collective confidence. A key point of leverage in many of the disputes we’re seeing now – the Communication Workers Union action against [Royal Mail](#) and the [BT Group](#), [RMT action](#) against Network Rail, or the [number of actions](#) by [outsourced](#) hospital cleaners and porters – is the idea of the “key worker”. In the face of excessive hours, the stresses of pandemic work and rapidly eroding workplace conditions, those deemed “essential” were repeatedly told they deserved better. But, as the CWU’s deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger recently stated: “We don’t get what we deserve. We get what we negotiate.”

Industrial action is now at its [highest level](#) in five years, although the average of recent decades is [low](#) in historical terms. The RMT’s industrial action in June was the biggest on the rail network for more than 30 years. The CWU secured a 97.6% vote on a 77% turnout for strike action against the Royal Mail, making it the biggest mandate for strike action since the

implementation of the 2016 Trade Union Act. In the 10 months since her election as Unite general secretary, [Sharon Graham](#) has overseen 63,000 Unite members entering disputes. If workers are made to “[pay the price for inflation](#)”, she has warned there could be hundreds more disputes.

At present, industrial action is largely concentrated in the public sector. This is due in part to a discrepancy in the [average pay growth](#), which in the current year sits at 7.2% for the private sector and only 1.5% in the public sector. It’s also down to a discrepancy in membership: the [most recent data](#) shows that, while 51.9% of public sector employees belonged to a trade union, only 12.9% of private sector employees did. But it has the effect of giving the strikes an explicitly political dimension, since public sector pay is ultimately determined by elected representatives. Add to this the way unions have been introducing analysis and ideas into the public discourse that the Labour party has largely shied away from – think of the [demands on profit restraint](#) to tackle inflation, instead of suppressing wages – and you can see why even relatively small strike actions can have an outsized influence.

But those excited about the current moment should be cautious. Where the strike wave exists in the private sector, it hasn’t made much headway beyond the formerly nationalised industries – for instance, British Airways or the railways. And, as feelings of injustice swell into ones of militancy, it’s far from clear that trade unions are up to the task of realising them. In June, as the RMT defiantly took strike action in response to Network Rail’s [2% pay increase](#), the supermarket workers’ union, Usdaw, saw having negotiated a 2% pay increase for Morrisons workers as a victory. When the pay deal – which one unionist [called](#) the “highest basic pay rate in the supermarket sector” – was put to a ballot of Morrisons Usdaw members, they voted to reject it.

What we’re faced with now, in the words of US labour scholar Kim Moody, is “opportunities, not certainties”. While this year’s conflicts so far are impressive and significant, they are also defensive: the fight is largely to prevent conditions getting worse still, even if the rhetoric is more ambitious. The surprise arrival of economic circumstances that are amenable to worker power – high inflation, a tight labour market and supply chain interruptions – can also bring the risk of complacency. There is [much that’s promising](#) in

the increased willingness of both the rank and file and leaders to act, but circumstances, which are liable to fluctuate, do not guarantee success.

As Hobsbawm noted, there's a difference between the accumulation of inflammable materials and their ignition. But when workers see each other fighting back, sparks can begin to leap.

Polly Smythe is labour movement correspondent at Novara Media

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[Opinion](#)[Drugs policy](#)

British drugs policy is punitive and contradictory. And now it'll go backwards

[Kojo Koram](#)

While other countries are abandoning a failed ‘war on drugs’, in its final days the Johnson administration is doubling down



‘It’s impossible for the police and courts to try to criminalise everyone caught in possession of drugs.’ Photograph: Stephen Barnes/Alamy

Thu 21 Jul 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 10.06 EDT

Despite the irrepressible love that Boris Johnson’s government has shown for [illegal parties](#), it is now taking the opportunity to tighten drug laws on its way out of the door. There is perhaps no more fitting tribute to the hypocrisy of this government than the latest drugs proposal from the Home Office.

“Swift, Certain, Tough: New consequences for drug possession” is a word-salad of a white paper and a last-gasp attempt to codify the Johnson government’s preoccupation with punishing “[middle-class coke-heads](#)” and recreational drug users. The only certainty is that the prime minister and home secretary behind the paper will have been evicted from office by the time it progresses through the legislative process.

But we shouldn’t downplay the significance of this attempt to penalise drug users. This style of punitive politics has become increasingly characteristic of the British state, at the same time as our politicians are failing to find answers to the big economic and constitutional questions of the day. While countries such as Georgia, Germany, Uruguay and the US have all been moving away from the failed “war on drugs” strategy forged in the 1970s, which sought to prohibit drugs and criminalise drug users, the Johnson administration has spent much time trying to breathe new life into these discredited policies.

Research shows these policies disproportionately affect [the poorest](#) and most vulnerable communities and [racial minorities](#), and contribute to higher rates of imprisonment among these groups. Yet the government has spent the last few years taking every opportunity to insist that drug prohibition would magically work if it instead targeted “middle-class” drug users. The white paper was meant to be the moment when we found out how this new plan would be achieved. Perhaps arresting someone for drug possession would now be followed by a test of their middle-class credentials: could they distinguish the salad fork from the dessert fork? What’s their reaction to Mumford & Sons? In the end, it turns out that the strategy for attacking “recreational users” is just a mix of tough language and overt cruelty wrapped around a tacit recognition that the mass criminalisation of drug users is utterly pointless.

One of the ideas here is to give fixed-penalty notices to first-time offenders, and refer them to drug-awareness courses. There isn’t much difference between this proposal and [Sadiq Khan’s plan](#) to pilot “diversion schemes” for cannabis possession in Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley. Similar schemes are already being run by a number of police forces, including Durham and Avon & Somerset. They allow police officers to divert people

from the criminal justice system and towards rehabilitation or counselling programmes. Yet when Khan announced his plans in London, Priti Patel condemned the London mayor and said he “[has no powers to legalise drugs](#)” (diversion schemes do nothing of the sort).

The basic argument behind diversion schemes is that it’s impossible for the police and courts to try to criminalise everyone caught in possession of drugs. In the white paper, the government seems to accept this obvious premise. Even so, the paper includes a pointless, punitive directive that people should be made to pay for rehabilitation courses. And just in case anyone mistakenly thought this policy showed compassion towards drug users, the paper even explores the feasibility of setting the payment for rehabilitation courses “[above cost](#)”, meaning those attending would be paying more than it costs to run the programme, and the government would be profiting from their misfortune.

These new proposals also include a “three-tier” system of escalating punishment, which echoes the notorious “three strikes” system in the US that resulted in waves of incarceration during the 1990s. This white paper policy is less extreme but nonetheless draconian: if the offender doesn’t pay the fixed-penalty notice or attend the drug-awareness course, they could be prosecuted. If arrested a second time, they’re issued with a caution alongside another drug-awareness course and a period of mandatory drug testing. Finally, if caught a third time, the offender would be charged and, if convicted, subject to new civil court orders that could exclude them from bars, confiscate their passport or driving licence and place them in ankle tags to monitor their blood for drugs. Any failure to comply could result in prison.

This paper is a mess of contradictory objectives: it attempts to increase the punishments imposed on drug users while also diverting drug users from the criminal justice system. It reflects the utterly confused approach that Britain’s politicians show towards drugs. They know the system doesn’t work, but can’t let go of it because they have little to offer voters beyond promises to be “tough on crime”. They want to speak to the persistence of inequality but are unwilling to implement reforms that would reduce the wealth gap so instead proffer an attack on “middle-class” drug users. This is cynical, performative politics: the government has no intention of dealing

with the problems afflicting Britain, so instead it produces soundbite policies that play to public fears while leaving the status quo untouched.

In reality, making drug users pay to undertake drug-awareness courses will mean the wealthy dodge the three-strike system, while those without the means to pay will face further punishment. Meanwhile, any rise in stop and search that results from this punitive approach to drug possession will affect poor and minority communities far more than “middle-class” users. In short, if these policies become law, they will lead to the incoherent punishment of a small minority. It’s an appropriate last will and testament for the Johnson regime.

- Dr Kojo Koram teaches at the School of Law at Birkbeck, University of London
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[Opinion](#)[Parents and parenting](#)

I am a taxi service for my teens – and I love it

[Adrian Chiles](#)



A psychologist once told me that ferrying my kids around was the only time I'd get them to myself. How true that turned out to be



Proper conversations are easier in the car somehow. Maybe it's to do with being side to side (posed by models). Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

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I once went to a talk by a psychologist at my daughters' school about how to raise teenagers. There was a fair amount of tosh talked, mainly by parents seeking advice on how to make sure their babies got exam results good enough to get them to Oxbridge. Not many of them seemed that concerned about, you know, happiness and stuff.

There must have been value in the exercise, though, as some of the wisdom dispensed resonates even now my girls are almost out of their teenage years. For example, the psychologist said the single most important factor in the raising of happy, healthy children was how much sleep they got. Forget about messy bedrooms and all other such irritations, she said. Just make sure they get plenty of sleep, as all good things flowed from that.

And that's true for all of us, I suppose. She also said that today's teenagers have a historically low sense of responsibility, which would be bad enough if it wasn't accompanied by their correspondingly high sense of entitlement. Discuss.

The thing that rang the truest, though, was what she said about ferrying your kids around. “I’m sure you’re sick of being a taxi service, but don’t underestimate the importance of the time you have with them in the car. Increasingly it’ll be the only time you get them to yourself.” How very true that turned out to be.

Don’t get me wrong. Even mindful of this advice, driving them around could be a wildly unrewarding experience. At our lowest points, both of them would have headphones on, listening to whatever suited them, while I was banned from turning the car radio up lest it interfered with their audio experience. Communication was limited. If I built up the courage to ask them something, I would have to nudge them. This elicited rolling of eyes and the removing of headphones in a manner that suggested it required great effort to do so and was a great inconvenience. Eventually we settled on a more formal system, which involved me raising my hand to indicate my desire to ask a question. They would either assent to this or not, in which case I’d get a shake of the head.

On the other hand, there were good times too. There was the sheer magic of the moments when they pricked up their ears at some music I was playing. “What’s that?” they would ask, albeit in a tone suggesting it wouldn’t be the end of the world if I didn’t tell them. I can still remember, with what will be lifelong fondness, the tracks with which I captured them. Here’s three: Oedipus by Regina Spektor, Fall Break by Aim, and Barney Rubble by the Twang. And then there are the ones I got from them. Dancing With Character by Rae Morris, whose name sounded like it might belong to someone my dad went to the pub with. I said this, and they laughed. And I loved that almost as much as I loved the song. Also [NO CD by Loyle Carner](#) and about 2,000 Taylor Swift tracks. How’s that for embarrassing dadness?

Most importantly, there were, and continue to be, the best – if not only! – proper conversations. They are easier to have in the car, somehow. I suspect this is something to do with being side by side, not face to face. And also, let’s be honest, that they are in effect trapped. Locked in a tin can with the ones who love them most, being raised in captivity.

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Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka braced for more unrest as new president vows crackdown on ‘fascist’ protests

Popular opposition to Ranil Wickremesinghe’s election by MPs could spill over into violence as he picks an old schoolmate as PM



Crowds protest in Colombo after the election of Ranil Wickremesinghe as Sri Lanka’s new president on Wednesday. Photograph: Abhishek Chinnappa/Getty Images

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) in Colombo

Thu 21 Jul 2022 00.58 EDTFirst published on Wed 20 Jul 2022 20.32 EDT

Sri Lanka was braced for more unrest after newly appointed president, [Ranil Wickremesinghe](#), vowed to crack down on the protests that toppled his predecessor, condemning them as “against the law”.

Speaking after MPs picked him as successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Wickremesinghe made it clear he would not tolerate those he perceived to be stirring up violence.

“If you try to topple the government, occupy the president’s office and the prime minister’s office, that is not democracy; it is against the law,” he said.



Ranil Wickremesinghe is sworn in as the new president of Sri Lanka on Thursday. Photograph: Reuters

“We will deal with them firmly according to the law. We will not allow a minority of protesters to suppress the aspirations of the silent majority clamouring for a change in the political system.”

Wickremesinghe, 73, was sworn in as the eighth president of Sri Lanka at a small ceremony on Thursday morning. He took his oath of office before chief justice Jayantha Jayasuriya at the tightly guarded parliament complex in Colombo, a statement from his office said.

Sri Lanka’s police chief and top military brass stood behind the new president as the oath was administered in the presence of parliamentary speaker Mahinda Abeywardana. Among the MPs who gathered afterwards

to congratulate him was the former president and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is the older brother of Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Wickremesinghe was expected to name the leader of the parliament and old schoolmate Dinesh Gunawardena as prime minister. Gunawardena is known as a strong Rajapaksa loyalist, and served as a cabinet minister when Mahinda Rajapaksa was president, and then again when Gotabaya Rajapaksa was president.

In recent days, Wickremesinghe, who [declared a state of emergency](#) this week, had made statements calling protesters “fascists” and indicating he would not be afraid to crack down on the demonstrations.

Less than an hour after he was declared president on Wednesday, a court order was issued prohibiting anyone from congregating within a 50-metre radius of a statue that stands at Galle Face in Colombo, where protesters spurred by the country’s economic collapse have been camped out for months.

However, people defied the order and dozens gathered on the steps of the president’s offices, which are still occupied by the protest movement, to shout rallying cries of “deal Ranil” – a reference to Wickremesinghe’s reputation as a scheming politician – as well as “Ranil bank robber”, referring to a bank bond scam he was implicated in. Hundreds of police and military stood on the periphery but did not interfere in the rally.

After being selected by MPs as president, Wickremesinghe called on the opposition parties for an “end to division” and said he wanted to “bring everyone together so that a national consensus is formed as to the way forward”.

But questions remain over whether Wickremesinghe would be able to put together a cross-party unity government acceptable to the people, after the major opposition parties had pledged their support for the presidential candidate he defeated.



Sri Lanka's newly elected president Ranil Wickremesinghe talks to reporters in Colombo on Wednesday. Photograph: Arun Sankar/AFP/Getty Images

Wickremesinghe has been prime minister six times and is close to the Rajapaksa family. Protesters fear that he will protect the Rajapaksas from being held accountable, as he has been accused of doing in the past, and would not instigate the constitutional change being demanded by the protest movement, including an end to the system of executive presidency.

Wickremesinghe is due to serve for the rest of Rajapaksa's term, until November 2024.

"Ranil will be chased away, he is a crook and he doesn't have a mandate," said Anura Goonaratna, 53, a toy exporter. "This protest movement is going to get worse. There has to be an end to this and the only ending we will accept is throwing Ranil out, whatever it takes."

With recriminations swirling in Sri Lanka about the country's implosion, the head of the CIA weighed into the debate on Wednesday by blaming "dumb bets" on high-debt Chinese investment.

Speaking at the Aspen security forum in Colorado, America's spy chief Bill Burns said: "The Chinese have a lot of weight to throw around and they can make a very appealing case for their investments."

But he said nations should look at “a place like Sri Lanka today – heavily indebted to China – which has made some really dumb bets about their economic future and are suffering pretty catastrophic, both economic and political, consequences as a result.

“That, I think, ought to be an object lesson to a lot of other players – not just in the Middle East or South Asia, but around the world – about having your eyes wide open about those kinds of dealings.”

China has invested heavily in Sri Lanka – strategically located in the Indian Ocean and off India, often seen as a rival of Beijing – and worked closely with former president Rajapaksa.

However, analysts have disputed the China debt-trap narrative in Sri Lanka. China only accounts for 10% of Sri Lanka’s debts, most of which were concessionary loans and the repayments only accounted for less than 5% of the country’s annual foreign debt servicing.

A much greater drain on the country’s foreign exchange reserves were international sovereign bonds, much of which are from the US, which were borrowed by the country at high interest rates. It was these bond repayments – which were due to total over \$1.5bn in 2022 – that drained Sri Lanka’s reserves and ultimately forced them to default in May, as the country was virtually bankrupt.

Rajapaksa fled the country and resigned last week in the face of mass protests over dire economic conditions, with the island nearly exhausting its supply of food and fuel as it no longer has foreign currency to pay for crucial imports.

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Mario Draghi

Italy's Mario Draghi expected to resign as prime minister

Former European Central Bank chief had failed to secure support from coalition partners in confidence vote



Mario Draghi attends the debate at the Senate in Rome on Wednesday.
Photograph: Gregorio Borgia/AP

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Wed 20 Jul 2022 15.05 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 00.16 EDT

Italy's prime minister, [Mario Draghi](#), is expected to confirm his resignation after three key parties in his broad coalition did not participate in a confidence vote on the conditions he set for his government continuing.

The former European Central Bank chief told the senate earlier on Wednesday that the survival of his unity administration hinged on

“rebuilding the pact of trust” and spirit of cooperation of its early months, and asked for a vote on this basis.

[Draghi offered his resignation last week](#) after the Five Star Movement (M5S), a key component of his broad coalition, snubbed a vote on a €26bn cost of living package.

His resignation was rejected by the president, Sergio Mattarella, who asked him to address parliament in an attempt to avert what would be the collapse of Italy’s third government in three years.

The move instead widened the rifts between the squabbling parties, with Matteo Salvini’s far-right League and Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia demanding a new Draghi government without M5S.

Draghi has said several times that he would not lead a government without M5S, but would also not accept ultimatums.

As tensions mounted throughout the day, the League and Forza Italia said they were “surprised” when Draghi announced his government’s fate would be determined with a confidence vote on a resolution requested by centrist senator, Pier Ferdinando Casini, that called for the approval of Draghi’s conditions.

Both parties said they would not be present for the vote. M5S then followed suit. “Over the past 18 months all of our measures have been dismantled,” M5S senator Mariolina Castellone said. “Let’s remove the inconvenience.”

The vote passed in the senate on Wednesday evening but even though Draghi still has a majority, he will likely confirm his resignation.

“I think it’s over,” said Wolfgang Piccoli, co-president of the London-based research company, Teneo. Draghi will address the lower house of parliament on Thursday morning, where he is expected to announce his resignation as an act of respect towards parliament, before going to Mattarella. Piccoli said: “Barring a miracle, that’s the outcome.”

He added: “It’s not a question of a majority at this point because he always had the majority – the question here is about the politics, meaning there was no movement from the political parties to meet his conditions to create a new sense of trust, so what we’ve seen is three parties turning their backs on him.

“All the speeches by the League, M5S and Forza Italia today were pre-election speeches.”

Draghi’s potential resignation would come despite a groundswell of public support for him to remain in the post. There have been declarations from more than 1,500 mayors from across the political spectrum and various labour unions, a signal of public support Draghi said was “unprecedented and impossible to ignore”.

He had also urged unity so that the government could face key challenges, such as the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, social inequality and the enactment of reforms needed to obtain the next tranche of the €200bn Italy is due to receive from the EU’s post-pandemic recovery fund. He also rebuked his coalition partners for infighting and point-scoring over recent months.

If Draghi confirms his resignation then Mattarella could ask him to stay on as interim prime minister. However, analysts say that Mattarella would most probably dissolve parliament and call elections for as early as the end of September.

A report this week on recent surveys said that in the event of early elections, a coalition led by the far-right Brothers of Italy and including the League and Forza Italia could easily secure a majority.

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Taliban

Taliban presiding over extensive rights abuses in Afghanistan, says UN

Allegations include 160 killings of ex-government officials and security forces, torture and punishments



Members of the Taliban stand guard as people gather for prayers at a mosque in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Photograph: EPA

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#) in Kabul

Thu 21 Jul 2022 05.29 EDT Last modified on Sat 23 Jul 2022 05.31 EDT

Taliban authorities have presided over widespread human rights abuses since they took control of [Afghanistan](#) last August, the UN said, including 160 killings of former government officials and members of the security forces, and dozens of cases of torture, arbitrary arrests and inhumane punishments.

A [UN report](#), released on the day an Australian journalist said she had been detained in Kabul and forced to tweet a retraction of her reporting, also

detailed a broad assault on the press. In total 173 media workers were affected by abuses including detention, threats, ill-treatment and assault.

“[The United Nations] has documented persistent allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and ill-treatment carried out by the de facto authorities,” the report, titled Human Rights in Afghanistan, found.

“De facto authorities” refers to the Taliban government that has not been recognised by any member of the international community nearly a year after [taking control](#).

The UN said it was “concerned about the impunity” with which [Taliban](#) members appear to have carried out human rights violations. A sweeping crackdown on critics, targeting media, protesters and civil society activists has exacerbated the problem.

“The human rights situation has been compounded by the measures taken by the de facto authorities to stifle debate, curb dissent and limit the fundamental rights and freedoms of Afghans,” the report said.

Although civilian casualties fell sharply when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan and fighting has stopped in most of the country, the new government was not able to guarantee security for its citizens, particularly religious and ethnic minorities.

Armed conflict killed 700 civilians and injured more than 1,400 between 15 August 2021 and June this year, the UN found. Most died in suicide attacks by Islamic State fighters, and from unexploded weapon remnants left behind when fighting ended in much of the country.

Between 1 January and 14 August 2021, in the final months of intense battle, more than 2,000 civilians were killed and more than 5,300 injured.

The UN also highlighted inhuman punishments and killings of Afghans accused of so-called moral crimes including sex outside marriage.

A Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, criticised the report as “propaganda” and said the incidents documented were not true. “There is no arbitrarily kill or arrest in the country. If someone kills or arrests arbitrarily, the one is considered criminal and will face the sharia law,” he said in a statement on Twitter.

The UN, which required three independent sources on a human rights abuse to include it in the report, detailed some cases where the Taliban had arrested individuals accused of human rights abuses. The UN also “appreciated the level of engagement to date” from Taliban authorities.

In an apparent swipe at the UN findings, Mujahid also hit out at a Facebook ban on the national broadcaster Radio Television Afghanistan and the official Bakhtar news agency. “Now, you will understand what the west calls the freedom of media!? Blocking the social media accounts ... shows impatience and intolerance,” he wrote.

Late on Thursday, the Australian journalist Lynne O’Donnell [said](#) she had been “detained, abused and threatened” in Kabul and forced to tweet a retraction of previous reporting, some about a year old, before being allowed to leave the country.

The Taliban’s foreign ministry spokesperson, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, said O’Donnell had been denied accreditation in Afghanistan “due to her open support for armed resistance and falsifying reports”. She was taken for questioning after she was “discovered hiding in Kabul” after being refused accreditation. She herself had offered to tweet the retraction of her stories, he claimed in response to her statements.

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“She was informed that she will be able to stay and operate in Afghanistan if she can produce evidence to substantiate any of the claims in her report ... The new Afghan government remains committed to the principles of freedom of press.”

The UN report raised particular concerns about the Taliban's intelligence service and the ministry for the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice. The latter has produced many of the harsh directives [limiting the lives of women](#) and girls in Afghanistan.

They are now excluded from "most aspects of everyday and public life", the UN said, including secondary schools and government positions, in a major assault on their human rights.

It also highlighted the devastating impact of the economic collapse that followed the Taliban takeover, fuelled in part by sanctions on the new leadership and an abrupt halt to foreign aid that had funded a large part of the government and public services. Over half of Afghans now need humanitarian aid.

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January 6 hearings

January 6 panel to show Trump violated law by refusing to stop Capitol attack

The committee will demonstrate the ex-president was ‘derelict in his duty’ to protect the US Congress as supporters mobbed building



Pro-Trump supporters storm the US Capitol following a rally by President Donald Trump on 6 January 2021. Photograph: Samuel Corum/Getty Images

Hugo Lowell in Washington

Thu 21 Jul 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 21 Jul 2022 09.41 EDT

The January 6 House select committee is expected to make the case at its hearing on Thursday that [Donald Trump](#) potentially violated the law when he refused entreaties to take action to stop the 2021 attack on the US Capitol by a mass of his supporters, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

The panel will demonstrate that the former Republican president was “derelict in his duty” to protect the US Congress and might have also broken the federal law that prohibits obstructing an official proceeding before Congress, which had gathered [to certify](#) Democrat [Joe Biden’s victory](#) in the 2020 presidential election.

Trump could have called on national guard troops to restore order when he saw on TV the melee unfolding at the Capitol, the panel is expected to argue, or he could have called off the rioters via a live broadcast from the White House press briefing room, but he did not. Or he could have sent a tweet trying to stop the violence far earlier than he actually did, during the 187-minute duration of the Capitol attack.

The former president instead only reluctantly posted a tweet in the afternoon of January 6, hours after his top advisors at the White House and Republicans allies in Congress repeatedly implored him to intervene, the select committee will show.

And the panel is expected to reinforce that Trump’s inaction directly contributed to the extended battle between the US Capitol police and rioters, who outnumbered them, since many rioters dispersed after he tweeted the now-infamous video asking them to leave the Capitol.

The sources described what the select committee sees as [potential legal culpability](#) for the former president, speaking on the condition of anonymity ahead of the prime time hearing.

Among the witnesses for the eighth hearing – characterized by the panel’s members as a “season finale” with more hearings after the summer recess – include Trump’s former deputy national security advisor Matthew Pottinger and former Trump press aide Sarah Matthews.

The two witnesses with inside knowledge of how the West Wing operated on January 6 are expected to narrate how that day unfolded, starting with how desperately Trump did not want to return to the White House after delivering his speech at the rally at the nearby Ellipse, where he had [urged supporters](#) to “fight like hell” to overturn [his election defeat](#).



President Donald Trump speaks at a rally on 6 January 2021, post which his supporters attacked the Capitol. Photograph: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Former Trump aide Cassidy Hutchinson testified in a previous hearing that Trump was so determined to go to the Capitol alongside his supporters that at one point, infuriated, he [attempted to wrestle control](#) of the steering wheel from the Secret Service in the presidential vehicle as they insisted he return to the White House.

The Guardian has learned, according to a person directly familiar with the matter, that in a previously unreported incident, the fracas about going to the Capitol, after Trump told his supporters at the rally to go to Congress [and](#) ["I'll be there with you"](#), continued when he arrived back at the White House, and the argument spilled into the West Wing driveway.

Pottinger and Matthews are expected to testify about what happened when Trump was back at the White House, including details on Trump in his dining room off the Oval Office, where he watched the Capitol attack erupt on TV, transfixed by the images as rioters [overran police and rampaged](#) through the halls of Congress, the sources said.

The select committee will show through videotaped testimony from the Trump White House counsel, Pat Cipollone, and other aides, that the former

president ignored repeated entreaties from advisers to help stop the Capitol attack, the sources said.

Hutchinson previously testified that she tried to get Trump's White House chief of staff, Mark Meadows, to lobby Trump – only for him to tell her that the former president “wanted to be left alone”.

The select committee will also show that Trump never once called the national guard or other law enforcement, the sources said.

With Trump unwilling to act, the panel is expected to describe how the duties of commander in chief were effectively assumed by then vice-president Mike Pence, who was sheltering in a loading-dock on the Senate-side of the Capitol after lawmakers had to flee the chamber amid the violence.

“Trump gave no order to deploy the national guard that day, and made no effort to work with the Department of Justice to coordinate and deploy law enforcement assets,” the panel’s vice-chair, Liz Cheney, previously said. “But Mike Pence did each of those things.”

The Guardian has also learned, according to another person directly familiar with the matter, that then first lady Melania Trump appeared to choose not to intervene with her husband or try and stop the Capitol attack herself.

That day, the person said, Melania Trump was conducting a photoshoot for a new rug for the White House residence and when her then chief of staff, Stephanie Grisham, asked if she wanted to tweet condemning the attack, Melania responded curtly: “No.”

Meanwhile, Cipollone told top aides that Trump might have legal liability, the sources said. And the hearing may present more details of the calls that mounted after the insurrection for Pence to convene the Cabinet and remove Trump from office through the 25th Amendment.

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January 6 hearings

January 6 hearings return to recount 187 minutes of chaos at the Capitol

Capitol attack committee provides detailed account of insurrection and confirms this will not be final hearing

The biggest moments from the Jan 6 hearings – video

[Joan E Greve in Washington](#)

Thu 21 Jul 2022 20.48 EDTFirst published on Thu 21 Jul 2022 02.00 EDT

The January 6 committee returned to primetime on Thursday night, as the House panel investigating the [Capitol insurrection](#) held its eighth and final – for now, at least – public hearing.

Like the first hearing, Thursday's event took place in the evening, as the panel sought to capture the widest possible audience for its presentation. The first hearing, which was held last month, was watched by at least 20 million people.

The eighth hearing set out to detail the 187 minutes that passed from the end of Donald Trump's speech to supporters on January 6 until he finally told insurrectionists to "go home". In the intervening three-plus hours, a mass of Trump's more extreme supporters overran the US Capitol in a vain attempt to disrupt the congressional certification of [Joe Biden's victory](#) in the November 2020 presidential election. The violence at the Capitol left [several people dead](#).

Democrat Elaine Luria, who was chosen to co-lead the Thursday hearing with fellow panel member and Republican Adam Kinzinger, said the committee would show how Trump refused pleas from his advisers and family members to call off the mob. Instead, Luria said, Trump "sat in his dining room and watched the attack on television".

“For hours, [Donald Trump](#) chose not to answer the pleas from Congress, from his own party, and from all across our nation to do what his oath required,” said Liz Cheney, the Republican vice-chair of the committee. “He refused to defend our nation and our constitution. He refused to do what every American president must.”

Kinzinger said Trump violated his oath of office during the attack.

“Our hearings have shown many ways in which President Trump tried to stop the peaceful transfer of power in the days leading up to January 6, with each step of his plan, and betrayed his oath of office, and was derelict in his duty,” Kinzinger said in his opening remarks.

One central committee member, Democratic chair Bennie Thompson, did not attend the hearing in person. Thompson [tested positive for coronavirus](#) on Monday, but chaired the hearing remotely.

Two former Trump White House aides who resigned shortly after January 6, Matthew Pottinger and Sarah Matthews, appeared before the committee to testify on Thursday.

Pottinger served in the Trump administration for four years and resigned as a deputy national security adviser, while Matthews was a White House press aide.

When she announced her resignation last year, Matthews expressed dismay about the events of January 6, and she has continued to criticize Trump.

After former [White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson appeared](#) before the select committee last month, Matthews came to her defense, even as some of Trump’s allies dismissed the shocking testimony as “hearsay”.

“Anyone downplaying Cassidy Hutchinson’s role or her access in the West Wing either doesn’t understand how the Trump [White House] worked or is attempting to discredit her because they’re scared of how damning this testimony is,” Matthews said on Twitter at the time.

Anyone downplaying Cassidy Hutchinson’s role or her access in the West Wing either doesn’t understand how the Trump WH worked or is

attempting to discredit her because they're scared of how damning this testimony is.

— Sarah Matthews (@SarahAMatthews1) [June 28, 2022](#)

Hutchinson's testimony was expected to feature prominently in the Thursday hearing. In her appearance before the committee, Hutchinson, a former adviser to Trump chief of staff Mark Meadows, painted a damning picture of an increasingly chaotic White House led by a president determined to hold on to power, even after he was repeatedly told he had [fairly lost the election](#), including [by his own](#) attorney general, William Barr.

According to Hutchinson, Trump [was aware](#) that some of his supporters were armed on January 6, yet he still encouraged them to march to the Capitol after he spoke at a rally near the White House.

Hutchinson also provided a secondhand account of Trump grabbing for the steering wheel of a vehicle in a desperate attempt to go to the Capitol with his supporters, [having said](#) at the rally "I'll be there with you". Instead he returned to the White House.

Trump tried to grab car's steering wheel to go to Capitol Hill, former aide testifies – video

Some of Hutchinson's testimony relied on comments she heard from Pat Cipollone, Trump's former White House counsel. Cipollone privately spoke to the January 6 investigators shortly after Hutchinson testified, and the committee was expected to show more of his interview during the Thursday hearing.

The committee had also hoped to gather more information from the US Secret Service before the Thursday hearing, about Trump and Pence's movements on the day, but that effort is proving far more difficult than anticipated. After receiving a subpoena for all agency communications on January 5 and 6, the Secret Service turned over [just one text message](#) to the select committee, an aide to the panel confirmed.

The committee has promised to continue collecting information from important witnesses as it works to compile a comprehensive report on the Capitol attack by this fall, and Thompson confirmed Thursday that the panel would hold additional hearings in September.

“But as that work goes forward, a number of facts are clear. There can be no doubt that there was a coordinated, multi-step effort to overturn an election, overseen and directed by Donald Trump,” Thompson said. “These facts have gone undisputed. And so there needs to be accountability.”

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Tory leadership race: Kemi Badenoch eliminated as Rishi Sunak tops poll of MPs – as it happened

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Tue 19 Jul 2022 13.17 EDTFirst published on Tue 19 Jul 2022 04.51 EDT

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Kemi Badenoch knocked out of Tory leadership race – video

[Andrew Sparrow](#)

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Tory leadership ballot result - snap verdict

Rishi Sunak is almost certain to be on the final ballot for party members, and he is more likely to be facing Liz Truss than Penny Mordaunt, these results suggest. (See [3.03pm.](#)) But nothing is certain from these numbers – other than the fact that Kemi Badenoch, the former equalities minister, is now out of the contest.

Sunak is now only one vote away from the point where he is guaranteed a slot on the final ballot. Previously 120 (just over a third of the total electorate, 357 MPs) was the point where it became mathematically impossible for both other candidates to get more votes, but, with Tobias Ellwood now banned from taking part, 119 is the benchmark. Sunak is on 118. It is almost impossible to believe he will not get there tomorrow. But he has been finding it increasingly hard to pick up votes. In the second ballot he was up 13 votes, and in the third he was up 14 votes. Today he is up just three.

Mordaunt is up 10 votes on yesterday. But she was expected to do quite well with the 31 Tom Tugendhat votes released last night, but instead more of them may have gone to Truss, who is up by 15 votes. It is never quite that simple, because it's a secret ballot and the votes that change are not just those released by a candidate who has fallen out, but this does suggest Truss has momentum. And it also suggests that "Stop Mordaunt" may be a more powerful voting incentive than "Stop Truss".

The "Stop Mordaunt" vote might also be a "Stop Sunak" vote, if MPs are assuming that Truss would beat Sunak, but Sunak would beat Mordaunt. No one can be sure that this assessment is true, but Truss is a more experienced campaigner than Mordaunt, with stronger convictions. She seems to have impressed Tory members more than Mordaunt in the past week. (See [2pm.](#))

Truss is now only six votes behind Mordaunt. But Badenoch's supporters are mostly rightwingers, and rightwingers identify with Truss but not Mordaunt. (Both started off as Cameron centrists, but Truss has done a better job of reinventing herself.)

And even if the Badenoch votes break in favour of Truss rather than Mordaunt by just 60%/40% (as they may have done today), that would still be enough to allow Truss to overtake Mordaunt.

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Updated at 17.49 EDT

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[YouGov poll suggests Badenoch would beat all rivals in final ballot - and Sunak would lose badly to all of them](#)
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[Ukrainian foreign minister pays tribute to Truss's 'mettle, inner steel and clarity of purpose'](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Voting opens in fourth round of leadership ballot](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Labour says Forde report on claims of racism, sexism and bullying in party could be published today](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Ellwood defends missing confidence vote, saying he is abroad promoting Johnson's Ukraine policy](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Johnson tells cabinet that heatwave vindicates government's net zero strategy](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Truss says she would raise defence spending to 3% of GDP by 2030](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Tory MP Tobias Ellwood has whip withdrawn after failing to back government in confidence vote](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Badenoch says she would delay 2050 net zero target date in some circumstances](#)
- [5d ago](#)

[Badenoch claims she is only 'change candidate' left in Tory leadership contest](#)

- [5d ago](#)
[MPs to vote again with Sunak close to securing place on final ballot](#)

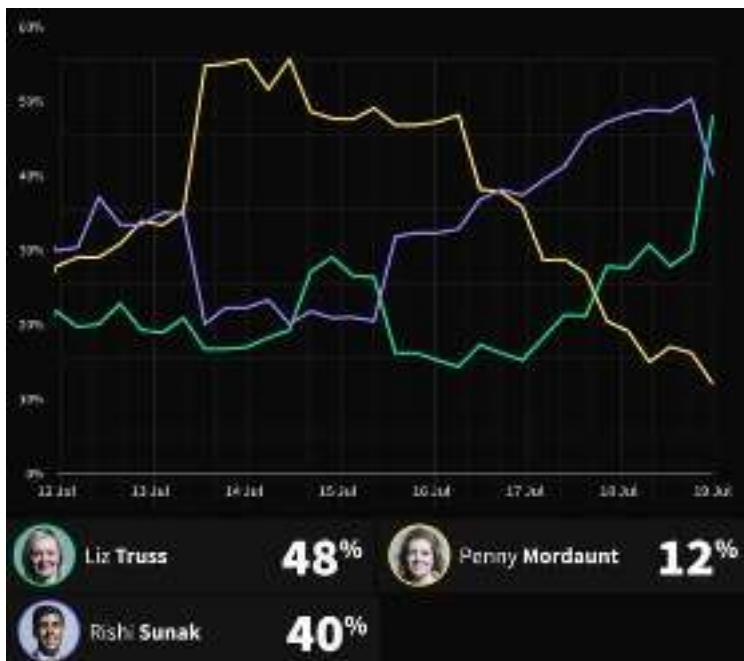
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[5d ago](#)[13.02](#)

Afternoon summary

- Kemi Badenoch has been eliminated from the Conservative leadership race, setting up a battle between Penny Mordaunt and Liz Truss to join Rishi Sunak in the last round. Some bookmakers are now giving odds making Truss the new favourite in the contest. These are the implied odds of winning from **Smarkets**, the betting exchange company.



Implied chances of winning by betting odds in Tory leadership contest
Photograph: Smarkets

- Labour under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn was riven by bitter infighting, with his supporters and opponents using the issue of antisemitism within the party “as a factional weapon”, a long-awaited report has said. In his response to the report, published in full on his Facebook page, Corbyn says the report should trigger a debate about whether or not the Labour party is there to serve its members. He says:

The appalling behaviour that Forde calls out, including the repulsive racism and sexism shown to Diane Abbott and others, should have no place in a progressive party. Toxic factionalism is far from over - nor are persistent problems of racism and sexism - and action must be taken, as Forde makes clear.

Most of all, the party needs to decide what it is for and who decides that. Are we a democratic socialist party, run by members and affiliated unions, that aims for a fundamental transfer of wealth and power from the few to the many? Or are we something else?

- [Millions of public sector workers including teachers, doctors, nurses, and police officers are to receive a below-inflation pay rises this year, raising the prospect of industrial action.](#)
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[5d ago](#) [12.38](#)

Government releases further details of public sector pay awards

The government has now published various written ministerial statements with details of pay awards.

Priti Patel, the home secretary, has published [details of the pay award for police officers](#). She says:

The review body recommends a consolidated increase of £1,900 to all police officer pay points for all ranks from 1 September 2022, equivalent to 5% overall. It is targeted at those on the lowest pay points to provide an uplift of up to 8.8%, and between 0.6% and 1.8% for those on the highest pay points. The government recognises that

increases in the cost of living are having a significant impact on the lower paid. It is within this context and after careful consideration that we have chosen to accept this recommendation in full. As at March 2022 there are 142,526 police officers who will receive this consolidated increase.

Patel has also published [details of the pay awards for police and crime commissioners](#).

Ben Wallace, the defence secretary, has said members of armed forces will get a 3.75% pay rise. The full details are [here](#).

Steve Barclay, the health secretary, has released [full details of the award for NHS staff](#). (See [4.31pm](#).)

James Cleverly, the education secretary, has released [full details of the award for teachers](#). (See [5.16pm](#).)

Dominic Raab, the justice secretary, says he has decided [judges should get a 3% pay rise](#), instead of the 3.5% recommended by the senior salaries review body.

And Raab says [prison officers will get a pay rise of at least 4%](#), with more for lower paid staff.

Heather Wheeler, the Cabinet Office minister, says [senior civil servants should get an across the board increase of 2%](#), instead of the 3% recommended by the senior salaries review body. But pay band minimums will increase too.

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[5d ago](#)[12.16](#)

Experienced teachers in England to get 5% pay rise, government announces

Experienced teachers in England will get a 5% pay rise for the next academic year, the government has announced after recommendations from the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB). PA Media says:

Both the **NASUWT** and **NEU** teaching unions, which have threatened strikes in autumn over pay, have said the proposed increase of 5% for more experienced staff is too low.

The NEU has said it will now consult its members on strike action in the autumn.

NASUWT previously said it would hold a national strike ballot if the government fails to “deliver pay restoration for teachers”.

And Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the NEU teaching union, previously said a 5% rise for more experienced staff would be “unacceptable”.

The government announced the starting salary for teachers outside London will rise by 8.9%, with salaries reaching £28,000 for the 2022/23 academic year.

It said this meant it had made “good progress” towards a manifesto commitment for starting salaries rising to £30,000.

“Those in the early stages of their careers will also benefit from significant increases, ranging from 5% to 8% depending on experience,” the government said.

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the NEU teaching union, said the government had been “forced” by members to drop a previous proposal of 3% for experienced teachers, but added it had not “moved far enough”.

He said a 5% increase would mean “yet another huge cut” to the real value of pay against inflation, and that this would mean members were consulted over strike action in autumn.

“With RPI inflation at 11.7% according to the latest figures, experienced teachers would see a bigger pay cut than the one inflicted by last year’s pay freeze and even the increase to starting pay is below inflation so is a real-terms pay cut,” he said.

The rise is equivalent to an increase of almost £2,100 on the average salary of £42,400 this year.

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[5d ago](#)[12.04](#)

Corbyn's supporters welcome Forde report as showing they were right about some party staff undermining his leadership

Jeremy Corbyn’s supporters in the Labour party have welcomed the findings of the Forde report (see [2.29pm](#) and [4.17pm](#)), saying it vindicates claims they made at the time about how some staffers at party HQ were obstructive or hostile to the leadership. Here are some of their responses.

From **Len McCluskey**, the former Unite general secretary

I am outraged that Labour staff secretly pushed money to "anti-Corbyn MPs and not on campaigns for pro-Corbyn candidates" in the 2017 election, as Forde has confirmed.

Unite was the biggest funder of that campaign. It was likely Unite members' money. There must be action. pic.twitter.com/np0UXdL6ff

— Len McCluskey (@LenMcCluskey) [July 19, 2022](#)

From **John McDonnell**, the former shadow chancellor

Shockingly Forde report findings confirm what was suspected. That party officials secretly diverted election funds in 2017, prevented supporters of Jeremy Corbyn from having a vote in the leadership election & used discriminatory abuse. To move on lessons need to be learnt.

— John McDonnell MP (@johnmcdonnellMP) [July 19, 2022](#)

Forde is calls for a cultural change in how Labour politicians, officials and members treat & respect each other. A good start in changing the culture would be the restoration of the Labour whip to Jeremy Corbyn & allowing appeals under new system for all those disciplined before

— John McDonnell MP (@johnmcdonnellMP) [July 19, 2022](#)

From **Momentum**, the pro-Corbyn [Labour](#) organisation

A statement on the Forde report from Momentum Co-Chair [@HilarySchan](#) pic.twitter.com/WX97zmW63Q

— Momentum ☎ (@PeoplesMomentum) [July 19, 2022](#)

From **Alex Nunns**, the journalist and former Corbyn speechwriter

The Forde report confirms many claims made by the left about the Corbyn years. But its biggest flaw is its desperation to "both sides" each point, as if an elected leadership with a mandate, and unelected staff resisting that mandate, are equally culpable for factional conflict.>

— Alex Nunns (@alexnunns) [July 19, 2022](#)

Here is an extreme example. Forde finds the group chat of senior HQ staff was reprehensible, but then says he "can only speculate" if a similar group chat existed in LOTO. I was in various LOTO group

chats and never saw abusive language. Don't speculate, stick to the evidence. pic.twitter.com/JfKMhUy.gwO

— Alex Nunns (@alexnunns) [July 19, 2022](#)

Andrew Fisher, Corbyn's former head of policy, has criticised the Labour party's response to the report.

This sort of glib response is disappointing from the Labour leadership

If they'd read the Forde's report they'd have seen the "continuing concerns" regarding disciplinary procedures and around "a hierarchy of racism or discrimination"

A time for reflection, not grandstanding <https://t.co/AsesSmcikj>

— Andrew Fisher (@FisherAndrew79) [July 19, 2022](#)

And my colleague **Owen Jones**, who was one of Corbyn's most prominent media supporters, has posted a long Twitter thread on the report. It starts here.

This is utterly damning from the Ford Report.

It dismisses claims from senior Labour officials that their messages "were cherrypicked and selectively edited", and condemns them for both "deplorably factional" and "at times discriminatory attitudes".
pic.twitter.com/suWeFk31wd

— Owen Jones □ (@OwenJones84) [July 19, 2022](#)

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[5d ago](#) 11.35

Police pay is going to go up by an average of 5%, with low earners getting more and high earners getting less, the Daily Mirror's **Pippa Crerar** reports.

NEW: Home Office announces all police officers to get £1,900 payrise from 1 Sept, equivalent to 5% overall.

Lowest paid will get up to 8.8% and highest paid 0.6%. (Still a real terms cut as inflation 9.1% & expected to hit 11%)

— Pippa Crerar (@PippaCrerar) [July 19, 2022](#)

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Updated at 11.42 EDT

[5d ago](#)[11.31](#)

Department of Health announces NHS pay awards, with eligible doctors getting 4.5%

The government is starting to release details of public sector pay awards. The **Department of Health and Social Care** says all NHS staff will get a pay rise of at least £1,400, with the lowest earners receiving up to 9.3%.

Eligible dentists and doctors will receive a 4.5% pay rise, it says. DHSC says:

All NHS staff under the remit of this year's pay review will receive a pay rise. Over 1 million staff under the Agenda for Change contract, including nurses, paramedics and midwives, will benefit from a pay rise of at least £1,400 this year backdated to April 2022. This is on top of the 3% pay rise they received last year, despite a wider public sector pay pause.

This means that the lowest earners such as porters and cleaners will see a 9.3% increase in their basic pay this year, compared to last year. The average basic pay for nurses will increase from around £35,600 as of March 2022 to around £37,000 and the basic pay for newly qualified nurses will increase by 5.5%, from £25,655 last year to £27,055.

Dentists and doctors within the Doctors and Dentists' Remuneration Body (DDRB) remit this year will receive a 4.5% pay rise as the government accepts the recommendations of the independent NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB) and the DDRB in full.

Across the public sector, these are the highest uplifts in nearly 20 years, reflecting the vital contributions public sector workers make to the country and the cost of living pressures facing households.

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Updated at 11.41 EDT

5d ago[11.21](#)

Back to the Tories, and the **Liz Truss** and **Penny Mordaunt** campaigns are both trying to win over Kemi Badenoch's supporters.

A **Truss** campaign spokesperson said:

Kemi Badenoch has run a fantastic campaign and contributed enormously to the battle of ideas throughout this contest.

Now is the time for the party to unite behind a candidate who will govern in a Conservative way and who has shown she can deliver time and again.

Liz has a bold new economic agenda that will immediately tackle the cost of living crisis, boost economic growth and continue leading the global fight for freedom in Ukraine.

And **Mordaunt** said:

This afternoon colleagues once again put their trust in me and I cannot thank them enough. We are so nearly across the finish line. I am raring to go and excited to put my case to members across the country and win.

I want to pay tribute to my friend Kemi Badenoch who electrified the leadership contest with her fresh thinking and bold policies. She and I both know that the old way of government isn't working as it should. Voters want change and we owe it to them to offer a bold new vision for this country. Kemi's passion for this showed and I'm glad she put herself forward to be heard.

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5d ago[11.17](#)

10 takeaways from the Forde report into factionalism in Labour party



Jessica Elgot

The Forde report into factionalism in the Labour party under Jeremy Corbyn, and specifically into a leaked report exposing anti-Corbyn staffers making racist and sexist comments, is available online in full [here](#). Here are 10 takeaways from what it says.

1) Supporters AND opponents of Corbyn using the issue of antisemitism within the party “as a factional weapon”. Both “sides” were thus “weaponising the issue and failing to recognise the seriousness of antisemitism”.

2) Factional warfare undermined the party’s ability to function. Under Corbyn, the party was “spending more time occupied by factional differences than working collaboratively to demonstrate that the party is an effective opposition”.

Both sides blamed one another for this inability to properly function. The report says:

Both genuinely believed that the other side was trying to sabotage their work in this period – sometimes with a degree of justification, and sometimes not.

On the 2017 election, Forde concludes it was “highly unlikely” that the parallel campaign run by anti-Corbyn staffers cost the party the election by, for example, funnelling support elsewhere. He says: “The two sides were trying to win in different ways.”

3) There is not clear evidence that Corbyn’s team or others overtly interfered in investigations about alleged antisemitism. The report finds most of the problems were created by a lack of clarity on procedures, aggravated by factionalism.

4) The report dismissed the complaint by Labour staffers that derogatory messages were “cherrypicked and selectively edited” in the leaked report. It says they were “deplorably factional and insensitive, and at times discriminatory, attitudes”.

5) Corbyn himself declined to be interviewed for the report, though signed a joint submission to the inquiry. Forde described the Labour leader as “notably silent”.

6) Forde also finds there is a “vociferous faction in the party sees any issues regarding antisemitism as exaggerated by the right to embarrass the left”.

7) He also finds that the leaked report itself – authored at Unite’s headquarters – was “a factional document with an agenda to advance, and that the quoted messages were selected pursuant to that agenda”.

8) There is significant work still to be done to combat racism in the party, Forde finds. Authors of the WhatsApp messages “should have considered ... the fact that Diane Abbott is a black woman, and has been vilified on that basis over several decades”.

9) But Forde also finds the messages’ authors “were not given a right of reply before their messages were included in the leaked report; that was

a clear breach of natural justice". He says some were reported in a "selective way".

10) Forde praises the changes under Keir Starmer to the disciplinary process. He says;

We must commend the party for its efforts more recently to achieve a greater degree of independence in its system of regulation, with notable reforms approved at the party conference in 2021.

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Updated at 11.36 EDT

5d ago10.57

This is from **Kemi Badenoch**.

I'm grateful to my colleagues and the party members who have supported me.

This campaign began less than two weeks ago. What we've achieved demonstrates the level of support for our vision of change for our country and for the Conservative Party.

Thank you. pic.twitter.com/2hnk3nyynY

— Kemi Badenoch (@KemiBadenoch) [July 19, 2022](#)

Candidates often enter a leadership contest not really expecting to win, but hoping to raise their profile in the party. Badenoch has achieved that more successfully than most fourth-placed candidates, and, whoever wins, she can expect a promotion in the reshuffle.

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Updated at 11.36 EDT

5d ago [10.41](#)

Tory leadership ballot result - snap verdict

Rishi Sunak is almost certain to be on the final ballot for party members, and he is more likely to be facing Liz Truss than Penny Mordaunt, these results suggest. (See [3.03pm.](#)) But nothing is certain from these numbers – other than the fact that Kemi Badenoch, the former equalities minister, is now out of the contest.

Sunak is now only one vote away from the point where he is guaranteed a slot on the final ballot. Previously 120 (just over a third of the total electorate, 357 MPs) was the point where it became mathematically impossible for both other candidates to get more votes, but, with Tobias Ellwood now banned from taking part, 119 is the benchmark. Sunak is on 118. It is almost impossible to believe he will not get there tomorrow. But he has been finding it increasingly hard to pick up votes. In the second ballot he was up 13 votes, and in the third he was up 14 votes. Today he is up just three.

Mordaunt is up 10 votes on yesterday. But she was expected to do quite well with the 31 Tom Tugendhat votes released last night, but instead more of them may have gone to Truss, who is up by 15 votes. It is never quite that simple, because it's a secret ballot and the votes that change are not just those released by a candidate who has fallen out, but this does suggest Truss has momentum. And it also suggests that "Stop Mordaunt" may be a more powerful voting incentive than "Stop Truss".

The "Stop Mordaunt" vote might also be a "Stop Sunak" vote, if MPs are assuming that Truss would beat Sunak, but Sunak would beat Mordaunt. No one can be sure that this assessment is true, but Truss is a more experienced campaigner than Mordaunt, with stronger convictions. She seems to have impressed Tory members more than Mordaunt in the past week. (See [2pm.](#))

Truss is now only six votes behind Mordaunt. But Badenoch's supporters are mostly rightwingers, and rightwingers identify with Truss but not Mordaunt.

(Both started off as Cameron centrists, but Truss has done a better job of reinventing herself.)

And even if the Badenoch votes break in favour of Truss rather than Mordaunt by just 60%/40% (as they may have done today), that would still be enough to allow Truss to overtake Mordaunt.

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Updated at 17.49 EDT

[5d ago](#)10.03

Badenoch out of Tory leadership contest, as Truss gets closer to Mordaunt, with Sunak still leading

Sir Graham Brady, chair of the 1922 Committee, reads out the result. He starts: “Nearly there.” The last ballot is tomorrow

Rishi Sunak - 118 (up 3)

Penny Mordaunt - 92 (up 10)

Liz Truss - 86 (up 15)

Kemi Badenoch - 59 (up 1)

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[5d ago](#)09.58

The 1922 Committee is about to announce the results of the fourth ballot for the Tory leadership.

Kemi Badenoch knocked out of Tory leadership race – video

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Updated at 10.58 EDT

5d ago 09.55

Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss pulled out of a planned TV debate, leading to it being cancelled, after senior Tories took the view that the ITV debate on Sunday night was a PR disaster for the party.

Quite how right they were is shown by this Labour party video, which is little more than a round-up of edited highlights from the debate.

All your bills going up and up and up.

Taxes rising to the highest level in 70 years.

The worst economic crisis for a generation.

Not our words.

The words of those running to be the next Tory leader.

See what else they think of 12 years of Tory failure:
pic.twitter.com/N7seYcHPV4

— The Labour Party (@UKLabour) [July 19, 2022](#)

Given what is happening in the Conservative party, producing Labour party campaign adverts must be one of the easier jobs in politics at the moment. Michael Gove has just scripted another advert-in-waiting for the party only this lunchtime. (See [2.47pm](#).)

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[5d ago](#)[09.47](#)

Government failing to deliver 'certain essential functions' for voters, says Gove

Michael Gove, the former levelling up secretary, has said the government is failing to deliver “certain essential functions” like swiftly providing driving licences and passports. Speaking at a Policy Exchange event, he said the state should “do fewer things” but be “strong and effective”. He said:

I believe that there are certain essential functions that the state needs to do better, and which we fail to deliver at the moment.

There are some core functions, giving you your passport, giving your driving licence, which is simply at the moment not functioning ...

We are no longer providing people, either with the efficient delivery of services or the effective focus on what the state should do.

I think that's because we have become a government and an administration that is knocked off course by powerful stories that are told by people with a mission - and our own sense of mission has not been strong enough to resist that.

At the same event **Lord Frost**, the former Brexit minister, blamed the civil service for government failings. He said:

We're always told that we have a Rolls-Royce [civil service] and the problem is that ministers don't make their will clear.

Well, ministers made their will clear about coming back into the office several months ago and yet it is still not happening. So I believe there is something very fundamentally wrong in the way the civil service and the state is working.

But **Camilla Cavendish**, who was head of David Cameron's policy unit when he was PM, criticised Frost for blaming civil servants. She said:

There are people on this panel who have been in government for the past few years and under you guys this stuff has fallen apart - so why haven't you done anything about it?



Michael Gove Photograph: Policy Exchange

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[5d ago](#)[09.36](#)

Government criticised for increasing school funding in England by 1.9% per pupil



Sally Weale

The government has announced that schools in England will get a 1.9% increase in per-pupil funding next year, prompting fury from teaching unions who described it as “a big real-terms cut for education spending” and warned of a return “to the bad days of austerity.”

With inflation predicted to soar into double digits by the autumn, Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the **National Education Union**, said the government’s latest funding award would end up “damaging” children’s education, rather than improving it.

There was also criticism of a 2.1% increase in funding for free school meals which will amount to an additional £10 a head. Liberal Democrat education spokesperson **Munira Wilson** said:

With food and energy prices spiralling, schools too are suffering from the cost-of-living crisis.

Increasing free school meals funding by just £10 per head a year will not stop schools from choosing between cutting quality or putting up prices for other struggling families.

Boris Johnson's parting gift to schools is a slap in the face. As our teachers deal with sweltering classrooms and squeezed salaries, this Conservative government has handed mainstream schools a real terms pay cut worth almost £2.5bn.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the **Association of School and College Leaders**, said analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed that school funding per pupil in 2024 will be at about the same level in real terms as in 2010. He said:

The government has short-changed education for many years and, unfortunately, that has left the sector in a very difficult financial situation.

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[5d ago09.29](#)

Antisemitism was used as ‘factional weapon’ in Labour party, Forde report finds

Labour, under the leadership of [Jeremy Corbyn](#), was riven with bitter factional infighting, with both supporters and opponents of Corbyn using the issue of antisemitism within the party “as a factional weapon”, a long-awaited report has said. My colleague **Peter Walker** has the story here.

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[5d ago09.28](#)

This is from **William Wragg**, a vice chair of the Conservative 1922 Committee, with a picture from the room where the Tory ballots are being

counted.

The heat is on  pic.twitter.com/faA4991eOn

— William Wragg MP (@William_Wragg) [July 19, 2022](#)

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Conservative leadership

Truss targets Mordaunt with pledge to raise UK defence spending

Foreign secretary says she would up defence budget to 3% of GDP by 2030 and rethink size of armed forces



Liz Truss arrives for a cabinet meeting at Downing Street in London on Tuesday. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Jessica Elgot](#) Chief political correspondent

Tue 19 Jul 2022 04.34 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 05.14 EDT

Liz Truss will make an urgent attempt to overtake her main rival, Penny Mordaunt, in the [Conservative leadership](#) race with a pledge to raise defence spending and a vow to look again at the size of the UK armed forces.

The foreign secretary is facing an uphill battle to join Rishi Sunak in the final two of the contest, as well as an insurgent campaign by the fourth-

placed [Kemi Badenoch](#), who picked up more supporters than Truss at the last round of voting.

Mordaunt remains in second place but her numbers stalled on Monday night, her vote reduced by one, giving rise to hope in camp Truss that it can overtake her, especially if Badenoch is forced to leave the race on Tuesday night and her supporters back Truss.

On Tuesday morning, Truss said she would raise defence spending to 3% of GDP by 2030 amid the increased threat from Russia and China.

She said she would make the UK “the most capable force in Europe” and that the new cash would mean accelerating the delivery of cutting-edge technologies.

Truss said she would update the 2021 Integrated Review, with a renewed focus on China and Russia, as well as a non-specific commitment to look again at the shape and size of the UK’s armed forces.

Announcing the pledge for new defence spending, Truss said: “We live in an increasingly dangerous world where the threat level is higher than a decade ago, and we need a stronger deterrent to face down those threats and ensure Britain leads on the global stage. Ultimately that requires more resources. My number one priority is keeping this country safe and people can trust me to do that.

“Britain and the free world face a defining moment. We need a prime minister capable of leading internationally, who can also drive the economic growth we need here at home. I am the candidate best placed to do that.”

Rival leadership candidates will on Tuesday court the 30 MPs who backed Tom Tugendhat, [who left the race](#) on Monday evening. Tugendhat himself has not declared who he will support but most of his MPs are likely to fall behind Sunak or Mordaunt.

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Three candidates praised Tugendhat explicitly on Monday night. Mordaunt said he was “a friend and colleague who I’ve admired for years, I know that we are both committed to a clean start for our party and I believe he is one of the strongest assets on the Conservative green benches. It was an honour to stand alongside him in this contest.”

Truss said Tugendhat “ran a campaign that he can be very proud of and he has shown the depth of quality in the Conservative party”. Badenoch also tweeted on Monday that Tugendhat would be an “asset” to any future Conservative government.

Sunak will launch a crime policy blitz on Tuesday, pledging to introduce a new offence for belonging to or facilitating abuse by grooming gangs, as well as a new offence for taking “downblousing” pictures down women’s tops.

He will also propose making it an aggravating factor in sentencing if criminals refuse to appear in court and review sentence guidelines for crimes against women and girls.

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Conservatives

Tory leadership: mid-table clash is chance for Mordaunt's stalled campaign

Tom Tugendhat's elimination leaves No 2 in race the only hopeful who is vaguely liberal and not tinged by Johnson's government

- [UK politics: live updates](#)



Penny Mordaunt received mixed reviews for her performances in the TV debates but she is still in second place behind Rishi Sunak. Photograph: Tejas Sandhu/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[Peter Walker](#) Political correspondent

Mon 18 Jul 2022 15.56 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 00.14 EDT

Unusually for a political contest, the positions at the top and bottom of the vote tally were the least interesting aspect. Instead, the third round of MPs' choices for the candidate to take over from [Boris Johnson](#) was what you

might call a mid-table clash. And here, things have got very interesting indeed.

One immediate point was that Penny Mordaunt's momentum has seemingly stalled. The trade minister, widely talked up as a potential favourite after taking second place in the initial two voting rounds, remained just behind Rishi Sunak, but with one fewer vote, down from 83 to 82.

Team Mordaunt will privately complain their candidate has faced an unprecedented tide of mud-slinging from rivals and unfriendly newspapers, with some becoming borderline obsessive in recent days. Mordaunt sceptics will point to mixed reviews of her performance in the televised debates, where she sometimes seemed fluent but oddly vague.

But, at the same time, the widely expected [elimination of Tom Tugendhat](#) brings an opportunity for Mordaunt. His support largely held up, slipping only from 32 to 31, and loyal Tom-ites would seem more naturally drawn to the only other hopeful who is both vaguely liberal – by current Conservative standards – and not overly tinged with Johnson's government.

Sunak's 115 votes puts the former chancellor in a virtually invulnerable position in the top two, who will be put to a ballot of Tory members. But the identity of the person he will face remains deeply uncertain, with just two more rounds of MPs' votes to go, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Both Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, and [Kemi Badenoch](#), the former levelling up minister, fared just about well enough to give their supporters hope. Truss put a difficult few days behind her, including debate performances viewed as somewhat wooden and a mauling from Sunak on her tax policy, to gain seven votes, putting her 11 behind Mordaunt.

This was, however, an arguably meagre haul given Suella Braverman, who was eliminated in the second round with 27 votes, had called on her backers to support Truss.

Badenoch is now in the Tugendhat position – bottom of the pile going into a new round, and seen as likely to depart next. She is only 13 votes behind Truss, but Tory amateur game theorists will realise that switching your vote from Tugendhat to Badenoch would be quite a leap, both in terms of policy and style.

Complicating this is the fact that Badenoch has momentum, presenting herself in the debates as the voice of unvarnished truth, and gaining nine MPs between rounds two and three.

Barring a slightly unexpected turn of events, however, the MPs' ballot does seem to be shaping up into a Mordaunt v Truss scrap for second, with the stakes even higher given both are generally viewed as more in tune with the sentiments of Tory members than the more cautious, fiscally prudent Sunak.

If Badenoch goes, Truss's views would seem more in tune with her pugnacious, culture war-infused style. However, Badenoch and Mordaunt share a status as insurgents, as outsiders who served under Johnson but not in cabinet, and would thus represent more of a fresh start to present against Sunak.

The next two days are likely to be filled with intrigue, scurrilous briefing, complaints of unfairness and a host of contradictory predictions. But we can be certain of one thing: they will not be dull.

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Tory leadership race: who's still standing, what are they promising and who's backing them?



The Tory leadership race has eliminated another candidate. Composite: Guardian

And then there were two: members to decide between Truss and Sunak as Penny Mordaunt eliminated

[Alexandra Topping](#) , [Ben Quinn](#) and [Helena Horton](#)

Tue 19 Jul 2022 10.49 EDTFirst published on Sun 10 Jul 2022 15.56 EDT

If your head is reeling after the breathless psychodrama of the last few days, you are not alone. Yet, even before the black door of Downing Street had shut behind [Boris Johnson](#), the contest for his successor was well under way.

By Wednesday afternoon, the field had been narrowed down to two candidates:

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Rishi Sunak



Rishi Sunak leaves Millbank Studios in May 2022. Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

Best known for: Being a super-rich former chancellor who wears expensive flip-flops, and once gave us all a half-price Nando's.

The pitch: A serious man for serious times, who won't give MPs a tax cut just because they want one – and trying to remind us we used to love him.

Backers: 137 including Dominic Raab, Jeremy Hunt, Gavin Williamson and [Grant Shapps](#).

Ex-chancellor Rishi Sunak launches Tory leadership campaign – video

Where does he stand on ...

Tax and spending: Sunak has indicated he will focus more on fiscal prudence than immediate tax cuts, with his video taking aim at other candidates who may offer "comforting fairytales" rather than face the hard economic reality.

In a field populated by other candidates promising cuts, that may become a challenge. Arch Johnson loyalist Jacob Rees-Mogg has dismissed Sunak

since the contest began as “a high-tax chancellor”.

Boris Johnson: Sunak was a close ally of Johnson, and stuck with him throughout Partygate, but his resignation was seen as the straw that broke the camel’s back and launched a flurry of resignations. After this perceived treachery, the anyone-but-Rishi camp has gone on a war footing. One senior No 10 official was quoted [in the Financial Times](#) as calling Sunak “a treacherous bastard”, while a Johnson supporter in the cabinet told the paper: “Rishi will get everything he deserves for leading the charge in bringing down the prime minister.”

Culture war: For a former chancellor whose budget last October was criticised for devoting more time to alcohol duty [than to policies on care, housing, climate or violence against women](#), Sunak’s insiders nonetheless found time to stress that he was committed to protecting women’s rights from “gender-neutral language” in a article in the Daily Mail. “Rishi believes in people’s freedom to choose how they live and who they love, but that women’s rights must be protected as well,” the source said.

Climate crisis: Insiders say Sunak was very resistant to spending money on climate measures when he helmed the Treasury. He has, however, previously spoken out in support of net zero and made the case for a greener economy. Green Tories fear he could be swayed by the supporters of the many rightwing candidates as they get knocked out during the contest, and look for a credible candidate to back.



Liz Truss giving a statement to the House of Commons in May 2022.
Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/Reuters

Best known for: Being a hawkish foreign secretary, a [pork markets](#) obsessive with a hatred of [disgraceful cheese imports](#).

The pitch: Told the Telegraph on Sunday: “It isn’t right to be putting up taxes now. I would reverse the national insurance increase that came in during April, make sure we keep corporation tax competitive so we can attract business and investment into Britain, and put the Covid debt on a longer-term footing.”

Backers: 113 including Nadine Dorries and Jacob Rees-Mogg.

Where does she stand on ...

Tax and spending: Truss has been at pains to paint herself as an heir to Thatcher, with her allies stating that her economic pitch, rooted in “low-tax principles”, higher defence spending and trade deals would set her apart from other heavyweight contenders. She memorably hailed younger people as a generation of “Uber-riding, Airbnb-ing, Deliveroo-eating freedom fighters”.

Boris Johnson: Seen as a Johnson loyalist, her allies nonetheless reportedly lobbied the frontbench to back her to replace him at the height of the Partygate scandal.

Culture war: Truss, who holds the equalities brief alongside being foreign secretary, has said people should not have the right to self-identify as a different gender without medical checks, adding that she believed it was “dehumanising to be treated as a woman, rather than a person”.

Climate crisis: Many have privately joked that it shows what a dire situation the contest is in when the main climate hope lies in libertarian Truss, who did not include climate commitments in many trade deals when she ran the trade department. However, she is backed by the energy secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, who is relatively strong on renewable energy, and another backer, Vicky Ford points out that she was very supportive of Cop26.

3

Who's dropped out?

- Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, dropped out on 12 July and pledged support to Rishi Sunak’s bid.
- Sajid Javid, the former health secretary, dropped out on 12 July, though didn’t immediately endorse any other candidate.
- Rehman Chishti, a backbencher, pulled out on 12 July after failing to gain a single public endorsement.
- Jeremy Hunt (18 votes) and Nadhim Zahawi (25) failed to reach the threshold of 30 votes in the first round of voting on 13 July and were knocked out of the contest.
- Suella Braverman (27 votes, down five) was knocked out in the second round of voting on 14 July.

- Tom Tugendhat (31 votes) was eliminated from the race in the third round of voting on 18 July.
 - Kemi Badenoch (59 votes) was eliminated from the race in the fourth round of voting on 19 July.
 - Penny Mordaunt (105 votes) was eliminated from the race in the fifth round of voting on 20 July.
-

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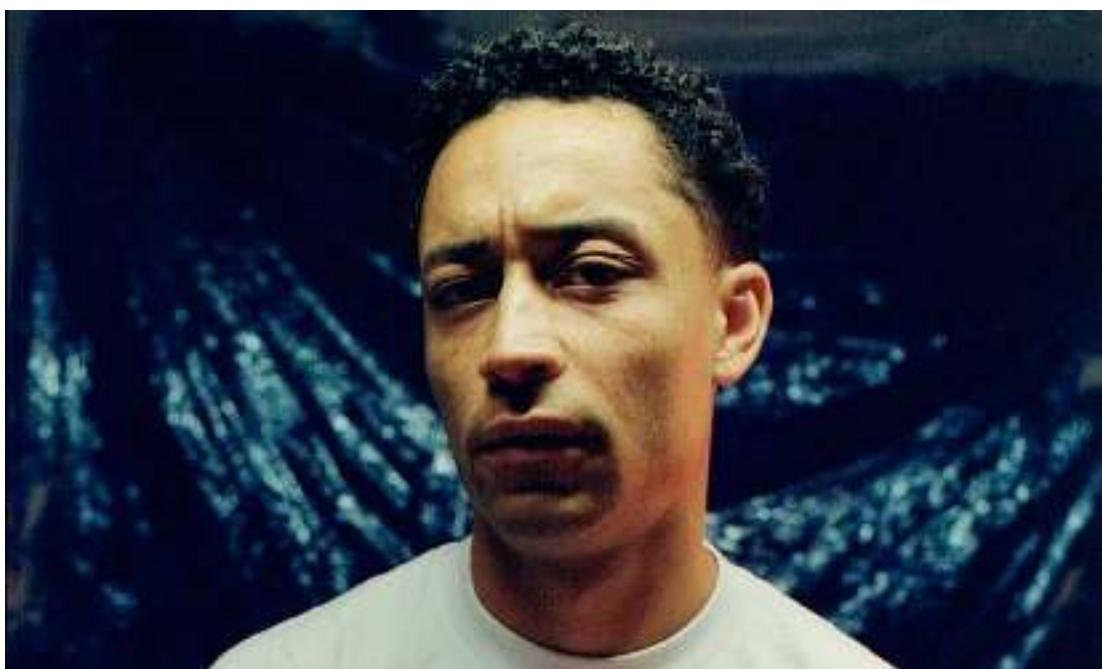
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Interview

Loyle Carner: ‘There’s a whole other side to me that’s darker’

[Alex Mistlin](#)



‘This is the first time I’ve tried hard’: Loyle Carner. Photograph: Sirus Gahan

UK hip-hop's Mr Nice Guy is getting angry – digging into racism, his mixed-race heritage and his relationship with his estranged father



[@amistlin](#)

Tue 19 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT

Ben Coyle-Larner is wrestling with himself. Literally, in the video for his new single, Hate, a song that sees him shelve his languid, confessional flow and nice guy persona in order to deliver lines such as “I tell you what I hate though / The same fellas getting bodied by the plainclothes” with genuine venom. The video sees a camera trained on Coyle-Larner’s snarling face as he drives down a largely empty stretch of motorway, while being jostled and harangued by alternative versions of himself in the back seat. It might be a rather heavy-handed metaphor but it’s true to the tone of the song and his new direction, one he doesn’t yet seem entirely confident in.

“The song was written in such a hateful place,” says the 27-year-old rapper, better known as [Loyle Carner](#). The video, which he co-directed, “had to reflect that feeling of getting in your own way when you’re full of rage. You’ve got all these other people, all these other voices in your head, leading you astray or trying to push you to do the wrong things. It’s that internal battle.”

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Of Hate, Coyle-Larner says he “finally felt allowed to discuss race”. It’s a theme that wasn’t entirely absent from his previous releases but the coherence with which he addresses it here feels entirely new. “I hadn’t really been able to do it before – to be mixed race,” he says. “It’s a weird thing because you’re between these two absolutes ... up until very recently, it wasn’t really accepted to openly discuss feeling oppressed.”

It is jarring to think that the Coyle-Larner across from me in his east London studio is the same person I saw snarling into the camera five minutes previously. For 40 minutes, he is shyly loquacious, keen to articulate his emotions but tempered by an obvious nervousness about being misconstrued: “People feel scared to say how they really feel because in the times we’re living they get crucified. I’m trying to unlearn that bit by bit and be more myself.”

Coyle-Larner has already rescheduled our conversation once, citing jetlag on his return from Guyana, the country of his heritage, where he’s been shooting his new video for Georgetown. He says he was inspired to return to Guyana at the urging of Akala, one of his rap heroes and the author of [Natives](#). “The white side of my life is something I’ve known my whole life, it’s something I’ve been deeply connected to – I’ve been to Scotland, I grew up with my mom. It didn’t really need any more development or understanding. The thing I wasn’t able to understand was where I sit in the world as a Black man.”

He is understandably nervous – it’s his first interview since the pandemic and his last record, the well received if slightly anaemic [Not Waving, But Drowning](#). I know his new album exists – because I’ve listened to it – but its title and release date are TBA; it represents an elephant in the room throughout, with Coyle-Larner visibly uneasy at its every mention. A couple of days before we meet he tweeted: “Hope I ain’t been gone for too long,” and seems genuinely anxious about the possibility that some fans won’t like the new him.

This shift in tone is particularly fraught because the rap he delivered on his first two albums has become a byword for a certain kind of dextrous but unchallenging hip-hop, guaranteed to win approving industry nods and inclusion on Spotify playlists but not polarising enough to be anyone's favourite thing. Indeed, write-ups mention his involvement in a cooking school and his love of Liverpool FC as much as his music. He is UK hip-hop's nice guy but it's a tag he seems keen to shake. "Wherever I go, that's what everyone always says. It's not annoying, but it's not always facts."

He is frustrated by the way many have lasered in on his liberal bona fides, while acknowledging that he's done plenty to perpetuate this two-dimensional image; one of his biggest hits is titled [Ottolenghi](#) after the chef and Guardian food writer. "There's a whole other side to me that's darker," he says. "The last couple of times I've released music, all I've been worried about is what other people would think."



Loyle Carner performs at Parklife festival at Heaton Park, Manchester in June. Photograph: Burak Çingi/Redferns

Coyle-Larner grew up in south London with his mother, a teacher working with children with learning difficulties, and his stepfather, Nik, who died in 2014. As well as having ADHD, he is dyslexic, meaning school (he went to Whitgift, a private school for boys, then the Brit School for Performing Arts)

was often a challenge and he is grateful to have found a career that enables him to provide for his mother and son, who was born towards the end of 2020. “I love that my plate’s full / I love the money in my bank is disgraceful,” he raps on Hate.

While buying his mum a house and a car is “like a hood dream”, it’s fair to say he’s a little guilty about the way he pays the bills. He tells the story of being at a school careers fair and a teacher wandering over to him and a couple of the other Black kids to say: “It’s a shame there’s no football or rap here.” The experience clearly lingers, and he harbours resentment that he wasn’t encouraged to direct his talent with words towards being a playwright or novelist. On his new single, he raps: “They said that it was all that you could be if you were Black / Playing ball or maybe rap.” “It’s telling that it’s what I ended up falling into – beautiful but heartbreaking,” he says. “Take nothing away, rap music is my first love and it’s saved my life countless times but I wonder how much choice I had in being a rapper?”

I ask if he’s beginning to reckon with his choices and identity more now that it’s sunk in that music is what he does for a living: “It sounds stupid but this is the first time I’ve tried hard. Where I grew up, and the people I was around, all the emphasis was on: ‘It’s not cool to try.’ And that comes from insecurity and fear, obviously, because if you try and people don’t like it, it hurts a lot more. I had to risk being considered.”

He also cites Kendrick Lamar as a huge influence in this regard, comparing the current phase of his career to where Kendrick was when he released his third studio album, [To Pimp a Butterfly](#) (Kendrick was also 27 at the time of release). Not that his forthcoming release should be judged by the standard of Lamar’s masterpiece, but the record was clearly in his thoughts when conceiving and writing his new album: “When you’re young, there’s a charm to the fact that you’re a bit naive. You don’t know what you’re striving for. It’s a balance because you don’t want to be too old to feel connected to the culture of youth that you’re trying to speak to. There’s a sweet spot in the middle, like Kendrick with To Pimp a Butterfly, where you’re naive enough to still be free-speaking, but considered enough to refine your shit.”

Coyle-Larner's personal growth over the past three years is perhaps most evident in the development of a relationship with his estranged father. He explains his decision to reconnect with his dad in terms of "trying to be selfless for my son. I want him to understand that he is connected to his Black lineage, because I wasn't and that affected me in my childhood."

Indeed, he concedes the impact that not having a relationship with his father still has; on *Hate* he raps: "I fear him / I fear the colour of my skin / I fear the colour of my kin." Insofar as his new music is a departure, then, it wasn't informed by a need to address the political consequences of Black Lives Matter so much as his parallel experience of exploring the mystery of where he's come from. "You fear what you don't understand," he says. "When I started making this music, I didn't really understand the Black side of my life and that made me frustrated. I was so angry at the world."

Hate is out now on EMI.

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‘A bigger paycheck? I’d rather watch the sunset!’: is this the end of ambition?



Maeve, a generation Z'er, who has a ‘huge, huge, almost indignant desire’ to be happy. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

From high-flyers quitting their jobs to Beyoncé singing about work-life balance, people are recalibrating their lives and relationships to their jobs.

What's changed?



[Elle Hunt](#)

Tue 19 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT

Until 2020, I lived by five-year plans. I had set my [career](#) track when I was still a child, racing through school to get to university, then university to get to work. I was often described as “driven” – approvingly by teachers and bosses, and pejoratively by ex-boyfriends, who perhaps felt they had got the raw end of the deal.

When I was 28 years old, I started seeing a therapist to find out how to work more and better. She and I discussed my career more than we did my childhood, or my mental health, or my love life. I didn’t want a partner, I told her, because they would just be a distraction.

She might have challenged me had I not stopped seeing her because of the pandemic. By then I had been freelance for six months. Through lockdown, I worked all day, most days, and several nights through to dawn. At first there was a perverse solace to this: I was still making progress, even though I was stuck in one place. Then, one September morning after yet another all-nighter, [I came to a sudden, painful stop](#).

My burnout was especially distressing for being self-inflicted; I felt bewildered and betrayed, as if my trusty north star had led me astray. gingerly, I started interrogating my ambition: what was I seeking from work, and where might this feeling be better sourced?

By my 30th birthday, in March 2021, the version of myself who had organised her entire life around her career felt like a stranger. I was still productive, but no longer at the expense of my health, happiness or relationships. It was as if the fire that had been fuelling me for half my life was down to a smoulder – and for the first time, I was content to let it go out.

It turns out I was not alone. This has been called the age of anti-ambition: over the past two and a half years, many people have taken stock – of how they spend their time, where they find meaning, their hopes for the future – and found work wanting.

Hundreds of thousands have quit their jobs, most to take early retirement or live off savings, shrinking the UK labour force [by an estimated](#) 1 million workers. In the US, 2.8% of employed people [resigned](#) in May alone (although that is balanced against “hires” of 4.3%) – only just down from the peak of 3% last year. Those who can’t afford to opt out of work altogether, meanwhile, are less invested in it. [In one survey](#), 37% of respondents said their job had become less important to them through the pandemic, with many citing burnout or a change in values.

In pop culture too, this shift is evident. In just two years we’ve gone from celebrating “hustle culture” to a backlash ensuing after [Kim Kardashian](#) dared to declare that “nobody wants to work these days”. Even Beyoncé – a self-professed workaholic, who [has spoken](#) of going without food, [sleep](#) and bodily relief so she can “slay all day” – is now singing on Break My Soul [about](#) quitting her job and building “a new foundation” around love, fun and rest.

For some of us, this amounts to a new identity. “I don’t have the titles, benefits package or authority I maybe once had,” Rob Weatherhead tells me, “but there is no money in the world you could offer me to go back to chasing them.”



‘For me it’s about looking forward: in 20 years’ time, will I be happy about the decisions I’ve made?’ ... Rob Weatherhead in his work office, a few minutes from his home. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

For nearly half his life Weatherhead, 40, was climbing the ranks in advertising, all the way to director level. That meant long days, regular travel to Manchester and London from his home in Bolton, and extended periods away from his three young children.

At the time, he accepted this as the price of his ambition. “It was always about the next thing, whether it was a promotion or another opportunity,” he says. “It’s difficult to see beyond that when you’re in that world.”

What people want less of now is pointless presenteeism, stress, toxic workplaces and the commute

Julia Hobsbawm

Weatherhead remembers leaving the London office late, in the lead-up to a big pitch, to find about 20 others still at work too. “They probably had commitments, children, partners,” he says in disbelief. “I was just like: what are you doing here at 11 o’clock at night?”

In an attempt to control his time, in 2014 Weatherhead left his job to become a freelance consultant. But he remained at the beck and call of his clients. “I was still chasing ... well, whatever it was I was chasing.” He sounds genuinely at a loss. “Probably progression, in some form.”

It took the pandemic, and losing all his contracts for eight weeks, for him to recalibrate. He now works three minutes’ walk from his house, does the school run each morning and is learning jujitsu alongside his children, aged 10, eight and five. The younger two, he notes with obvious pride, won’t remember a time when he wasn’t there for them.

He has also set up a wine business with a friend. “But it’s just something that we enjoy doing.” His past life now strikes him as bizarre. “For me – without sounding grandiose – it’s about looking forward: in 20 years’ time, will I be happy about the decisions I’ve made? Will I still have good strong bonds with my children?”

Research by the Families and Work Institute in the US suggests that most people stop jostling for promotion at 35 years old, often coinciding with childcare responsibilities. But the recalibration we’re seeing now is more than this inevitable, individual drift – it appears to be a cultural U-turn.

Julia Hobsbawm, a consultant and author of The Nowhere Office, calls it the “great reevaluation”: a large-scale reckoning that will shape the future of work. “It isn’t so much that people have less ambition, but that their ambition is changing – from being about career success first, to work-life balance,” she says.

Dissatisfaction with modern work – rigid hierarchies, bad management, boundaries that flex only one way – had been mounting for decades, says Hobsbawm. The upheaval of 2020 not only revealed our jobs to be more flexible than many of us had been led to believe; we were also reminded of the importance of health, hobbies and relationships – our careers often seeming hollow by comparison. Now, says Hobsbawm, “there’s a widespread sense of ‘carpe diem’”.

“No one can just go back as before, because we are all in some way profoundly changed,” she says. “What people want less of now is pointless

presenteeism, stress, toxic workplaces and the commute ... People want autonomy and flexibility as much as they want promotion and professional careers, or more.”

For those high up on the corporate ladder, however, it can be a dizzying climbdown.

Katie Mantwa George, 38, spent 15 years working in recruitment for companies including Barclays, Credit Suisse, Rothschild and AIG. “It was fun,” she tells me. She enjoyed the travel, the camaraderie – even the pressure. “I was always fishing for the next promotion, really wanting to prove myself.”

George had good boundaries, creative outlets and strong relationships; but when I ask if she ever burnt out, she is unequivocal. “Oh, definitely.” She felt the burden of representation too. “Being one of the only women of colour in leadership at most of the companies I worked, it quite often fell to me to have a say – and it’s draining, to be honest. I want to make a difference, but it’s extra work.”



‘I got to the point where I couldn’t sleep – my heart was in overdrive’ ...
Katie Mantwa George

By 2020 George was working at Amazon, leading a team of nearly 40 people across 12 cities, and had well and truly eclipsed the financial instability that she had weathered growing up. “It made me feel like I’d made it,” she says.

But the corporate world was starting to take a toll. “I got to the point where I couldn’t sleep – my heart was in overdrive,” George says. She went to see her doctor, who told her she was overworked and gave her a heart rate monitor to wear for three days.

This health scare prompted a life overhaul: she enlisted a coach, relocated with her job to Cape Town to be close to family, and later took a three-month unpaid sabbatical. When it came time to return to the office, Katie’s team had evolved and she realised that she had too.

She quit last August, and has since pursued work that feels meaningful: she has written a children’s book about being mixed race, advised on inclusive recruiting strategy, coached corporate types in empathic leadership, and taught meditation – “to slow everyone else down too”.

It has not been easy to turn down opportunities or to adjust to the step-down in status and income. “But I feel so much more me.” She doesn’t start work before 10am or carry on past 5pm, does yoga daily and spends quality time with family. “Ambition used to mean a bigger paycheck, a bigger brand, a more senior position … Now I’d actually rather go and watch the sunset.”

Ben Franklin, the director of the Centre for Progressive Policy, sees this daily. “Across many sectors, people are wanting to work flexibly, and employers are struggling to meet that demand,” he says. To Hobsbawm, the resistance to returning to the office, despite government exhortations, is also revealing. “Managers who try to insist on presenteeism, from Elon Musk to Jacob Rees-Mogg, look anachronistic,” she says. “Workers are voting with their feet.”

The transition to hybrid working could see inequality worsen, however, Hobsbawm warns, with only in-demand talent able to dictate their terms. But there is one powerful force hastening the end of ambition and the beginning of a new era of work: gen Z.

“Speaking of ambition,” says Maeve cheerily, when I call her at noon, “I’ve just woken up.” The 19-year-old is back home in Saffron Walden, Essex, from Bristol University, where she is studying languages.

Unlike older millennials such as myself – who [may have](#) had a rosy view of work before being disappointed – “zoomers” have only ever known stagnant wages, insecure contracts, sudden redundancies and crushing student debt.

Factor in the pandemic, the Ukraine war and the climate crisis, “and you almost believe ambition could be to your detriment, because there are so many things working against you”, says Maeve. “The world seems incredibly fickle – there’s this sense of: ‘I’ll just get there when I get there.’”

Maeve is passionate and principled: she doesn’t eat meat, buy new clothes or use social media, and says she “can’t get enough” of learning about the world. Had she been born 10 years earlier, Maeve might have grown up a five-year planner like me. “I really value my degree; I’ve always worked hard,” she says. “But to plan some huge structure of what you’re going to do ... you just feel that it’s likely to crumble underneath you.”

It’s sad, Maeve agrees, but no surprise. Maeve has had jobs since she was 13, but worries that she will never earn enough. “A hardback book is 20 quid, a pint is a fiver – so many pleasures in life are so expensive.”

Many gen Z-ers are well versed in anti-capitalist theory and [broadcast their](#) apathy, ambivalence or anger on social media. “I don’t want to hustle,” [said](#) a twentysomething TikTokker last year. “I simply want to live my life slowly, lay down in a bed of moss with my lover, and enjoy the rest of my existence.”

Many of gen Z feel the same. In Deloitte’s recent [survey](#) of more than 23,000 workers aged 18 to 38, work-life balance was found to be their top priority when choosing an employer, and 75% preferred remote or hybrid patterns.

It reflects what I’ve found myself repeating in conversation over the past year: that the goals that used to spur me on now matter less than leading “a

nice life”. That has meant revising my ambition, from becoming a bestselling author by 32 (“at the latest!”) to recapturing my love for writing.

Maeve also gained clarity. During lockdown she was studying for her A-levels. “I don’t think I’ve ever worked so hard in my life. I didn’t see anyone. I felt terrible,” she says. But she also altered clothes for friends, spent hours playing violin and read one novel a week.

“The only way that I could keep my ambitions was to scale them down,” Maeve says. Now, she has just the one: “this huge, huge, almost indignant desire” – to be happy.

“There’s lots of things that people my age are going to have to struggle through and settle for, but that’s something that I feel like I can do for myself,” Maeve says. “People think happiness is a privilege, or a byproduct of success – but it can also be a goal.”

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UK unemployment and employment statistics

UK living standards squeeze will intensify as real pay plunges

Analysis: Rising inflation likely to lead to more strikes and falling spending unless government acts



Pay growth excluding bonuses picked up slightly in May, but nowhere near fast enough to keep up with price increases. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

[Larry Elliott](#) Economics editor

Tue 19 Jul 2022 04.06 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 16.26 EDT

Forget talk of a return to the inflationary spirals of the 1970s. The real story of Britain's labour market is of an intensifying squeeze on living standards as the gap between pay and the cost of living widens.

Real regular pay – wages adjusted for prices once bonus payments have been stripped out – were 2.8% lower in the three months to May than in the

same period of 2021. Not only was that the sixth monthly decline in a row, it was the [biggest drop](#) since modern records began in 2001.

What's more, there is worse to come as inflation heads higher over the coming months. Pay growth excluding bonuses picked up slightly from 4.2% to 4.3% according to the latest [Office for National Statistics data](#) but nowhere near fast enough to keep up with price increases. If the Bank of England is right and inflation peaks above 11% after energy bills rise again in the autumn, the pressure on household budgets will be enormous.

[Real weekly earnings chart](#)

Including bonuses, the picture is a bit brighter. Here the fall in real pay is smaller – at 0.9% – but the benefits of bonuses have been skewed towards better-paid workers in the finance and business services sectors and construction. These groups enjoyed annual total pay growth of 8.2% and 8.1% respectively, enough to keep pace with price rises.

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But not all workers can rely on bonuses to top up their pay packets. Real earnings are falling particularly rapidly in the public sector, where total pay was just 1.5% higher in the three months to May than it was a year earlier.

The ONS labour market figures show a decline in inactivity as people return to the workforce in search of jobs. This is not entirely surprising: job vacancies are at record levels and households need paid employment when they are struggling to pay the bills.

Two big conclusions can be drawn from the latest data. The first is that there will be trouble ahead unless the government responds to the falling living standards of teachers, nurses, civil servants and other groups of public sector workers. This will mean either people leaving the public sector or strikes, and probably both.

The second is that the economy is rapidly reaching crunch point. If average regular pay is rising by just over 4% and annual inflation is running well

above 10%, something has to give. That something will be consumer spending, with the lowest-paid and most vulnerable workers suffering most.

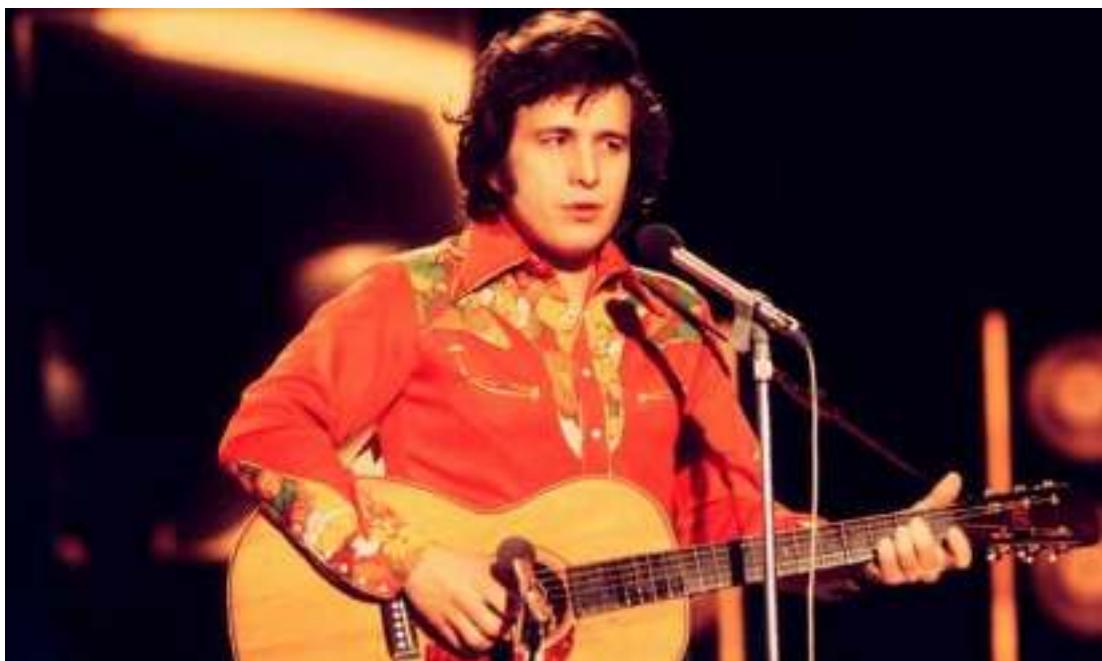
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Music

‘I said, Don, it’s time for you to reveal’: 50 years later, the truth behind American Pie

In an expansive new documentary, Don McLean talks about the much-discussed meaning of his enduring hit song



‘This film was a concerted effort to raise the curtain’ ... Don McLean in 1974. Photograph: Michael Putland/Getty Images

[Jim Farber](#)

Tue 19 Jul 2022 02.08 EDT Last modified on Fri 22 Jul 2022 11.55 EDT

A long, long time ago – five decades to be exact – America was roiled by wrenching generational showdowns, massive street protests, and a blazing array of social justice movements. Now, half a century later, similar events and dynamics dominate the public conversation. So, perhaps, it’s poetic that precisely five decades have elapsed since a song that captured all that

cultural turmoil, American Pie, became a smash hit. “It’s a song that spoke to its time,” said Spencer Proffer, who has produced a comprehensive new documentary about the song, titled *The Day the Music Died*. “But it’s just as applicable now.”

In fact, American Pie has only gained in fans and expanded in meaning as it has hit successive generations and generated fresh covers. Over the years, it has been interpreted by artists from Madonna (who created a commercially triumphant, if aesthetically limp, take in 2000) to Garth Brooks to Jon Bon Jovi to John Mayer. Throughout the years, journalists have subjected the song to a Talmudic level of scrutiny, while its songwriter, Don McLean, has doled out dribs and drabs of insight into his intent. By contrast, the new documentary offers the first line-by-line deconstruction of the song’s lyrics, as well as the most detailed analysis to date of its musical evolution. “I told Don, ‘It’s time for you to reveal what 50 years of journalists have wanted to know,’” Proffer said. “This film was a concerted effort to raise the curtain.”

In addition, it offers an emotional account of the tragic event that McLean used as his jumping off point for the larger story he wanted to tell.

The event, which McLean dubbed “the day the music died”, shattered the pop world of its day and had a formative effect on the songwriter. On a frigid night in 1959, a small plane carrying Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and JP Richardson (The Big Bopper) crashed in a corn field in Clear Lake, Iowa, minutes after take-off, killing everyone on board. The documentary begins with that event, traveling back to the Surf Ballroom, where the stars played their final show. The film-makers scored a coup by bringing on camera a man who saw that fateful concert, as well as the man who owns the aviation company that rented the doomed plane. More, it features a moving interview with Valens’ sister Connie, who we see thanking McLean for immortalizing her brother in song.

The first part of the film covers McLean’s early life, including his time as a paper boy in the suburb of New York City where he grew up. In an extensive interview for the film, McLean talks about delivering the paper that carried news of the crash, something he alludes to towards the start of the song’s

lyrics. At the time, Buddy Holly was his musical idol. If his death instigated the song's words, a more personal loss altered the course of McLean's life. When he was 15, his father died suddenly of a heart attack. "That had a profound effect on him," Proffer said. "He has carried the death of his father in his soul."

In his grief, McLean threw himself into music, developing a talent promising enough to earn him gigs in the folk clubs of Greenwich Village as a teenager. He found a role model in the Weavers, particularly in Pete Seeger, whom he befriended. The primacy of storytelling in the group's songs, as well as their socio-cultural grounding, served as a template for certain aspects of American Pie. From Seeger, he also learned the value of the singalong. One clear draw of American Pie is its chorus, which anyone can mimic. The simplicity of its melody echoes children's music. "It's like a camp fire song," Proffer said. "Everyone is invited to sing."

Some of the song's lyrics even quote nursery rhymes, including "Jack be nimble/Jack be quick." The cover of the American Pie album underscored the connection by featuring McLean's thumb in the forefront to reference another nursery rhyme about Little Jack Horner, who "put in his thumb/and pulled out a plum".

At the same time, the song's message couldn't be more adult. "For me, American Pie is the eulogy for a dream that didn't take place," says the song's producer, Ed Freeman, in the film. "We were witness to the death of the American dream."

"The country was in some advanced state of psychic shock," McLean says on camera. "All this bedlam and riots and burning cities."



Photograph: The Cover Version/Alamy

The extremity of it all made McLean want to shoot for the moon, creatively. “I wanted to write a song about America, but I didn’t want to write a song about America like anybody ever wrote before,” he says.

That was no small goal considering the number of songwriters at the time who were fashioning their own odes to the disillusion of the American dream. They ranged from Paul Simon with *American Tune* (which imagines the Statue of Liberty sailing out to sea) to Dion’s version of *Abraham, Martin and John* (which poignantly addressed the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy).

McLean’s desire to stand out from the other singer-songwriters who dominated music at the time had a careerist incentive as well. His debut album, *Tapestry*, released in 1970 hadn’t made waves and his small record company, MediaArts, had little faith in him. Even so, the big statement song he devised to turn that around arrived in a form that defied the most basic edict of a hit – that it last no longer than three minutes. *American Pie* snaked on for eight and a half minutes, and was stuffed with a fever dream’s worth of cryptic imagery.

In fact, McLean wrote even more verses than the final song held. “He just kept writing,” Proffer said. “If it was over eight minutes, it could have been 16.”

In that sense, it shares something with Leonard Cohen’s Hallelujah. In both songs, verses were written by the author and discarded (though many more were ditched in Cohen’s case). Both songs have also gained in stature and impact over the years. ([Coincidentally, Cohen’s song](#) is also the subject of new documentary titled Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, A Journey, A Song). Yet, at the core, they differ fundamentally. “Hallelujah is a spiritual study,” Proffer said. “American Pie is a sociological study.”

Often, it’s a coy one. The lyrics brim with coded references to kings, queens, and jesters, along with a host of cultural figures that, together, turn it into a virtual pop quiz: “Name that reference!” The result has made the song especially involving, teasing the listener to solve its puzzle. “Every time you listen, you think of something else,” Proffer said.

In the film, McLean dismisses some of the most common speculations about his reference points. Elvis wasn’t the king in question. The “girl who sang the blues” wasn’t Janis Joplin, and Bob Dylan wasn’t the jester. In 2017, Dylan commented on his alleged reference to Rolling Stone: “A jester?” he said. “Sure, the jester writes songs like Masters of War, A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall, It’s Alright, Ma.” I have to think he’s talking about somebody else.”

As fanciful as some of McLean’s lyrics may have been, its core reference to the “day the music died” turned the song into a history lesson for those born too late to remember that event as crushingly as McLean did. Even when the song first appeared, over a decade had passed since the crash, the equivalent to a thousand years in the fast-paced life of pop.

One of the most interesting sections of the documentary offers a granular dissection of the evolution of the song’s arrangement. It didn’t find its true groove until they brought in session keyboardist Paul Griffin, who has played on seminal recordings by everyone from Dylan to Steely Dan. His piano parts brought a gospel fervor to the song, as well as an extra pop

bounce. Hooks like that helped a song of daunting density and length become beloved by millions.

To deal with its length, McLean's record company had a clever idea. The first half of the song appeared on the A-side of the single, while the second was consigned to side B. The result turned the A-side into a cliffhanger the listener had to see through to the end. The subsequent demand forced AM radio stations to play both sides. At the same time, FM radio – whose mandate was to go deeper and play longer – was reaching its commercial apex at the time. Issued at the end of 1971, American Pie hit No 1 by January of 72, where it stayed for a full month. For 49 years, it held the record for the longest song to hit No 1 – until Taylor Swift's 10-minute cut, All Too Well, broke it.



McLean in 2019. Photograph: Charles Sykes/AP

Interestingly both songs have a certain anger. But, with the passage of time, McLean's piece has morphed considerably in the public consciousness. Today, it is sometimes performed, and interpreted, as if it were some kind of rousing sequel to The Star-Spangled Banner. In the film, one fan describes it as a song that makes “you pause and be grateful for everything that you have”.

Garth Brooks says in the film that it's a song "about that drive of independence, that drive of discovery ... of believing anything is possible".

Both views couldn't be more baffling, given the wall-to-wall sadness and disgust of the actual words. In fact, American Pie ends with "the father, son and the holy ghost," so appalled by the state of the country that even they – the ostensible saviors of mankind – cut and run for the coast. "People aren't thinking about what (the song) really means," Proffer said. "They're thinking about how it makes them feel."

If such reactions wildly decontextualize the song, the film can serve to re-contextualize it. More, it aims to extend its legacy by featuring new versions of the song sung by someone of the current generation (the 24-year-old British singer Jade Bird) as well as artists from another culture (singer Jencarlos and producer Maffio, who created a version in Spanish). "It's exciting to know that something that happened 50 years ago can resonate to later generations," Proffer said. "Through listening to the song, people get a glimpse into what life was like then and what it came to be today."

- The Day the Music Died: The Story of Don McLean's American Pie is now available on Paramount+
- This article was amended on 19 July. It was originally said that American Pie held the record as the longest song to reach number one for 39 years but it is 49 years. This has now been changed
- This article was amended on 22 July. It was originally noted that Paul Griffith was the session keyboardist but it is Paul Griffin. This has now been changed

2022.07.19 - Opinion

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The Tories are upping their attack on our democracy, under cover of the leadership contest

[Gina Miller](#)



Deep within the Northern Ireland protocol bill, ministers are making a sinister grab for yet more unchecked powers



‘Even though he is on his way out, Boris Johnson’s plans to erode our democracy are continuing below the radar.’ Photograph: James Manning/PA

Tue 19 Jul 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 20 Jul 2022 04.36 EDT

Boris Johnson’s term in office has been notable for repeated abuses of power and attempts to quash opposition – from proroguing parliament to clamping down on the right to demonstrate. But even though he is on his way out and the Conservative party is gripped by its leadership contest, his plans to erode our democracy are continuing below the radar.

The starker example is the Northern Ireland protocol bill, proposed by the leadership hopeful Liz Truss, that is still making its way through parliament and currently in the committee stage. Much of the attention, and the condemnation, has rightly been on how it could [break international law](#) by invoking article 16 of the protocol. But, far less widely reported, there are sinister clauses in this bill that again amount to blatant power-grabbing domestically.

The bill would have the effect of giving parliament the ability to constrain the courts, and hand increasing powers to ministers. This bill accelerates the increasing dominance of the government over all other branches of the state – notably the courts and parliament.

Clause 22 in particular will convert every regulation-making power in the bill into a “Henry VIII” power, meaning that ministers can make any provision that could be made by an act of parliament, without parliament.

The fundamental doctrine of the separation of powers – which requires that the principal institutions of state, the executive, legislature and judiciary should be clearly divided in order to safeguard citizens’ liberties and guard against tyranny – is being systematically destroyed by this government. As the political thinker Montesquieu said in 1748: “When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty ... there is no liberty if the power of judging is not separated from the legislative and executive ... there would be an end to everything, if the same man or the same body ... were to exercise those three powers.”

Contrary to the charge that government lawyers are incompetent, what is quite remarkable is how the drafting of the protocol bill pushes what many constitutional lawyers and experts have long known but have never seen a government dare to do.

It’s another nail in the coffin of the naive “[good chap](#)” model of our government that few expected to be tested as it has over the past few years. It is, however, a thin, skeleton bill, containing few details, and as [Lord Judge](#) famously said: “As for skeleton bills, I find it absolutely extraordinary that we ever pass them. We say to ourselves, ‘Let us give the minister powers before the minister has the slightest idea how he or she is going to exercise them.’” The bill also includes clauses that mean parliament can legislate freely to constrain the courts, and there is very little the courts can do about it – meaning that a successful legal challenge to the protocol bill, or the act that follows, is very unlikely in the UK courts.

But the bill goes further. It gives ministers eye-wateringly broad powers. For example, they will be able to come up with new regulations on the movement of goods between Great Britain and [Northern Ireland](#), and the Treasury will be granted powers to regulate customs issues. Sneaky new Henry VIII powers will be introduced, which will enable ministers to alter primary legislation without requiring parliament to vote in favour.

Clause 19 of the bill will empower a minister to take measures he or she considers appropriate in order to implement any post-protocol agreement reached with the EU – ending parliamentary scrutiny of international treaties.

So continues the route to what Lord Hailsham once called an elective dictatorship. An ideological plan by government ministers to manipulate a supine parliament into giving them ever more powers. Creating phoney wars in the media to distract attention while they fast-track laws that diminish our democracy. [Brexit](#) was supposed to be about protecting our parliamentary sovereignty: but this government of Brexiteers are eroding our sovereignty, our constitution and our ability to hold the government to account.

But I have another worry; could this bill mean the government can bring back a no-deal Brexit by the back door? If negotiations over the Northern Ireland protocol break down, could ministers fundamentally alter the infrastructure of the EU withdrawal agreement, without parliament? The political and economic uncertainty faced by Northern Ireland and post-Brexit Britain are only exacerbated by this bill. The man who created this scenario may be on his way out, but we cannot afford to drop our guard: otherwise his poisonous legacy may endure for years.

- Gina Miller is a transparency campaigner and leader of the True and Fair party
 - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
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[Opinion](#)[Menopause](#)

It might well be a cliche, but I am feeling the urge to steal

[Zoe Williams](#)



The old trope about middle-aged women shoplifting has (almost) turned into a reality for me. And there is something I really want



‘Academics undertook inquiries about what could possibly be causing menopause shoplifting.’ Photograph: AndreyPopov/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Tue 19 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 03.49 EDT

I distinctly remember, when I was young, that there was this cliche about middle-aged women: they loved [shoplifting](#). Not regular shoplifting, where you need a thing and can't afford it, but [menopause](#) shoplifting, where you don't need the thing at all and you take it anyway. It was a staple of radio comedy and layperson psychobabble, and academics undertook genuine inquiries about what could possibly be causing it. Was it general depression or something more specific? A philosophical response to the loss of fertility and how unjust that was, perhaps? I always found that explanation rather unconvincing, but what did I know? This stuff was years off.

Then in 2001, [Winona Ryder](#) ruined it for everyone by pulling off a heist so spectacular (aged only 30!) that she single-handedly broke the cliche, and it passed out of usage. Before I got a chance to see whether shoplifting was fun or not, the social imperative had disappeared and the urge never took me, although my friend did once steal a wedding card, and if you want to know how authentically menopausal that was, she didn't even know anyone who was getting married.

The shop opposite me, unfortunately, has something I want. I don't want to pay for it. I just want to have it. They're growing courgette flowers in their outdoor planters. It has a fairytale jeopardy – doesn't the wrath of a wizard always start with someone stealing a lettuce? – and also, I want those flowers. I want to fill them with cheese and deep fry them, and I do not want to be the kind of person who enters the shop and politely asks to buy things that are growing. I pass the shop four or six times a day, and I would be lying if I said I don't sometimes go out with a pair of scissors. Conditions have so far not been right – always someone lurking about, or a dog or one of the kids with me – and this definitely isn't behaviour I want to model. I can settle something, though: I don't feel depressed or remotely philosophical. I feel alive.*

*Note: I'm only admitting it in order not to follow it through. But you knew that.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

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Opinion**Conservative leadership**

Tory candidates' tax cuts: a boost for the wealthy, and a drag for the rest of us

[Carys Roberts](#)

Inconveniently, there's little evidence that the only thing standing between the UK and a thriving economic future is slashing taxes on corporate profits

- Carys Roberts is executive director of the Institute for Public Policy Research



'Cutting taxes has consequences – and would require a scaling back of the state.' Left to right, candidates Liz Truss, Kemi Badenoch, Rishi Sunak and Tom Tugendhat on Sunday's televised debate. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/ITV/EPA

Tue 19 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 12.50 EDT

An outsider listening to the debate between Tory leadership contenders might think that the only problem the country is facing is overly burdensome taxes. Never mind the soaring temperatures, a symptom of the climate emergency, or average ambulance waits [in England of 51 minutes](#) compared with an 18-minute target. On these topics, those vying to be our next prime minister have had much less to say.

Pledged policies have included cancelling the planned rise in corporation tax or reducing the rate even further; raising income tax thresholds; and more rapid cuts to the basic rate of income tax. With the exception of [Rishi Sunak](#), who has said he would wait before cutting taxes further, the mood music is cutting taxes from day one. We are told this is the best way to get the UK's economy growing strongly again, therefore putting the country's finances on a sustainable footing. Tax cuts are also put forward as a way to put money in people's pockets to help with the cost of living crisis.

But there are several gaping holes in this approach that mean it's unlikely to survive contact with the UK's economic reality. Taking the cost of living crisis first, the tax cuts on the table are an incredibly inefficient way of getting money to those who need it. The government has already scheduled a penny cut to the basic rate of income tax, which all candidates support at a minimum. But [IPPR analysis shows](#) that this costs the exchequer £5bn, more than half of which will go to the richest fifth of households. It would be much more effective to boost the support offered to those on low incomes through the benefits system.

What about the Conservative belief that taxes hold back economic growth? Inconveniently, there's little evidence that the only thing standing between the UK and a thriving economic future is slashing taxes on corporate profits. In fact, we've tried it for the past decade: the headline rate of corporation tax has been cut successively from 28% in 2010-11 to 19% in 2017-18, but this has not delivered the business investment or economic success promised. The UK remains at the bottom of the pack when it comes to business investment, because businesses invest when they see future opportunities for growth – for example from decent and growing incomes, infrastructure and transport, and a skills policy – not from changes to marginal tax rates.

Perhaps most importantly, permanently cutting taxes has consequences – and would require a scaling back of the state. The problem is, there is nothing left to hack back, following the decade of austerity that people, communities and services across Britain have endured. And, we face huge challenges coming rapidly down the track. We urgently need to decarbonise our homes, our transport and our industries to reach net zero, and to do so fairly. Health services are stretched to breaking point, with [many people opting out of the NHS](#) in England as they struggle to access care, and the number needing health services at any one time is only set to grow. Deep economic inequalities between regions and places of the UK – which levelling up was intended to speak to – show no signs of abating and [are in some cases deepening](#).

All of these challenges require more than money to address; but a well-resourced state is essential to tackling each of them. A party determined to engage in a race to the bottom on tax will fail to provide the answers.

This is why several of the candidates have said they would fund tax cuts through borrowing, rather than identifying where they would cut back. Sunak has scathingly referred to this as “[something-for-nothing economics](#)”, which would cause inflation. He is half right. The government does have *some* space for additional spending or tax cuts – but with inflation as high as it is, it will need to use that space wisely, rather than on tax cuts that benefit those at the top without boosting growth. Much better to use it to give direct support to the most vulnerable, increase support with energy costs, and invest in renewable energy and insulation to lower bills today and help hit our net zero targets. To reduce the risk of inflation, tax wealth and income at the top.

In the end, assessing the leadership candidates on their economic plan is like assessing a cat in a dog show. The debates of the past fortnight, and no doubt the coming summer, are designed to score political points, and ultimately to win over just 358 Conservative MPs and 180,000 Conservative party members. But, while tax cuts might delight backbench MPs, Conservative members [tend to lean to the centre economically](#) compared with the parliamentary party. Most importantly, the British public are far more [concerned about the big issues](#) that need to be addressed [than a reduced tax](#)

bill. And, unfunded tax cuts with no plan for a stronger economy risks looking fundamentally unserious, and opening up space on economic competence for Labour. To win the next election, the next Conservative leader may find themselves – as many party leaders have done – wanting to move away from policy pledges made in the heat of a leadership contest.

- Carys Roberts is executive director of the Institute for Public Policy Research
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OpinionTravel

I take off my flight crew uniform now when I finish work – I don't feel safe in it

[Meryl Love](#)

Airline staff shortages and travel chaos have cranked up encounters with furious customers



‘Passengers are particularly tense in this travel chaos, and in my uniform, I am the embodiment of their flying woes.’ Gatwick airport, May 2022.
Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

Tue 19 Jul 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 08.03 EDT

Warm, wet vomit is trickling down my leg. It looks like the contents of an airline kids’ meal. Bits of pasta, chicken nuggets, and what appears to be the dribbly remnants of a chocolate bar. I’ve already taken my seat for landing, so there’s nowhere for me to go when the child next to me starts to empty

the contents of his stomach as the plane makes its final descent. When the wheels touch down, vomit is running down the aisle like that chocolate river in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

The flight had already been delayed before takeoff, leaving us stewing in the blistering heat of the runway for over an hour, so the smell of half-digested bolognese really adds insult to injury. “Are you going to do anything about that?” a passenger asks me in disgust.

Once you’ve been vomited on enough, it really does kill the self-esteem. I don’t have children, but I think if one of my kids projected body fluids on to a total stranger, I might at least offer them some hand sanitiser. But the parents make no such gesture.

This is just the latest merry example of what it is to be cabin crew in 2022. I am seemingly responsible for every bad experience passengers have had so far with this airline. You put on the uniform and accept the role. It’s a lot like acting; during this particular incident, I have to act like I don’t want to jump out the window. “Yes, of course,” I say. I bend my leg, so the chunks of vomit slide off on to the floor. “I’ll send for the cleaners right now.”

Passengers are particularly tense in this summer of travel chaos, and in my cabin crew uniform, I am the physical embodiment of all their [flying woes](#). The frustration of lost bags, delays, and cancelled flights is heightened by the holidays lost to Covid. They’d probably vomit on me themselves if they got a chance. People forget that people in uniforms are real people.

Staff shortages in the airline industry are only increasing the likelihood of difficult encounters. On the same flight, a man charges toward me. I know that look. If it were a cartoon, he’d have steam coming out of his ears. He tries to compose himself before he speaks. Like Al Pacino’s simmering rage in The Godfather, controlled anger is even more terrifying sometimes than explosiveness. When people are out of control, that’s almost easier to handle.

He recounts a litany of offences committed by the airline: lost bags and prams, delayed flights, a night at the airport, all while jabbing a finger at me like I was the mastermind who'd planned and orchestrated the whole thing. It always amuses me when people talk to me as if I were the chief executive: "Your company is a disgrace, how dare you treat people like this." I wish, buddy. I wish. I'm just a very minor player on a very minor salary, but it's part of my job to take it, so I do.

I listen and try to look sympathetic. As sympathetic as is humanly possible, because when a man is as irate as this guy, if you show one ounce of sass, you're done for. I say sorry. I'm very very sorry. I've been saying it so much lately.

As soon as I'm out of the security turnstiles, I take my uniform off. I used to leave it on for the way home but now, if you're anywhere in the vicinity of the airport, you're an unofficial public relations rep for the whole airline industry.

I sit on the tube and hope no one recognises me from the flight. I can finally relax and switch off until tomorrow. That's *one* good thing about this job, you rarely take your work home with you, I think. Then I look down and see a piece of chicken nugget stuck to the side of my shoe. Oh, the glamour.

Meryl Love is the pseudonym of a crew member working for an international airline

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Space

First dormant black hole found outside the Milky Way

VFTS243 has a mass nine times that of the Sun's and is in a binary system with a companion star



An artist's impression showing what the binary star system VFTS243 – containing a black hole and a large luminous star orbiting each other – might look like if observed from close range. Photograph: European Southern Observatory/Reuters

[Cash Boyle](#)

Mon 18 Jul 2022 13.42 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 03.33 EDT

A dormant black hole nine times the mass of the Sun has been found outside the Milky Way for the first time, in what researchers have called a “very exciting discovery”.

Though it is not the first contender, a researcher from the University of Sheffield says this black hole is “the first to be unambiguously detected outside our galaxy”.

The researchers had been looking for black hole binary systems for more than two years before finding what has become known as VFTS243.

Paul Crowther, professor of astrophysics at the university, described it as a “very exciting discovery” that arrives after “a number of dormant black hole candidates have been proposed”.

Stellar-mass black holes are formed when massive stars reach the end of their lives and collapse under their own gravity. In a system of two stars revolving around each other, this process leaves behind a black hole in orbit with a luminous companion star.

The newly discovered dormant black hole is at least nine times the mass of the Earth’s Sun, and orbits a hot blue star weighing 25 times as much as the Sun.

It has been observed in a neighbouring galaxy by a team of international scientists; their study – published in *Nature Astronomy* – suggests that the star that gave rise to VFTS243 vanished without any sign of an associated supernova explosion.

As part of the international research team, Crowther has been working with Tomer Shenar from the Institute of Physics and Astronomy, who started the study at KU Leuven in Belgium and is now a Marie-Curie fellow at Amsterdam University in the Netherlands.

Confirming the likelihood of what he termed a “direct-collapse scenario”, ie, a collapse without an explosion, Shenar believes this has “enormous implications for the origin of black hole mergers in the cosmos”.

A black hole is considered dormant if it does not emit high levels of X-ray radiation, which is how such black holes are typically detected. Dormant black holes are hard to spot as they do not interact much with their

surroundings.

VFTS 243 was found using six years of observations of the Tarantula Nebula by the fibre large array multi element spectrograph instrument on the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope.

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EDF Energy

France to pay nearly €10bn to fully nationalise EDF

Government seeks to shore up domestic energy supplies amid European crisis



Shares in EDF jumped 15% on news of the government plan. Photograph: Johanna Geron/Reuters

[Alex Lawson](#) Energy correspondent

Tue 19 Jul 2022 05.42 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 06.00 EDT

The French government is poised to pay nearly €10bn (£8.5bn) to fully nationalise EDF as ministers attempt to tackle the European energy crisis.

The French finance ministry said on Tuesday it had offered €9.7bn or €12 a share to buy the 16% of debt-laden EDF it does not already own.

The government of the French prime minister, Elisabeth Borne, government is trying to shore up domestic energy supplies amid concerns over the finances of the energy company, which is also building the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station in Somerset.

Ministers want to take action to keep energy bills from soaring even higher amid a gas supply crunch in Europe, caused largely by soured relations with big supplier Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

The €12-a-share offer is a premium of 53% to the closing value of €7.84 for EDF shares on 5 July, the day before Borne announced the nationalisation. It is also more than the [€8bn price tag that emerged last week](#).

Shares in EDF, which had been suspended since 13 July while investors awaited the details of the government plan, jumped 15% to €11.80, valuing the whole company at €45.4bn.

“The price is on the high range level taking into account peers and market conditions,” said Gregory Lafitte, an analyst at Tradition. Lafitte added that most estimates for the offer price had ranged from €10.50 to €12.50.

The near-€10bn investment represents a sizeable chunk of French government spending. The country’s state budget last year surpassed €400bn, including €60bn on defence spending and €61bn on state pensions.

Holders of the company’s convertible debt will be offered €15.64 for each bond, and the final offer for EDF stock will be submitted to Autorité des Marchés Financiers by early September.

The nationalisation offers some certainty over EDF’s finances at a crucial juncture for the company. The longstanding chairman and chief executive officer, Jean-Bernard Lévy, 67, is expected to step down as soon as September.

EDF’s nuclear production accounted for 69% of France’s electricity supplies in 2021. However, this supply level is expected to fall to the lowest level in more than three decades this year because of a combination of maintenance, refuelling and repairs at 12 reactors.

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Separately, France agreed a long-term energy deal with the United Arab Emirates on Monday for fuel and gas supplies as it moves to reduce its dependency on Russian gas, which accounted for about 17% of its gas supplies before the war.

In the UK, a delayed planning decision on the future of the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power plant, backed by EDF, is due to be announced by the government on Wednesday.

Hinkley Point C is not expected to be in operation until 2027 because of construction delays.

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[Sri Lanka](#)

Sri Lanka opposition leader quits presidential run in bid to stymie Wickremesinghe

Sajith Premadasa instead pledges support for splinter faction of ruling party that could upset PM's bid to become president



Sri Lankan opposition leader Sajith Premadasa has said he will no longer run for the presidency. Photograph: Tharaka Basnayaka/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) in Colombo

Tue 19 Jul 2022 02.04 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 09.43 EDT

Sri Lanka's main opposition leader, Sajith Premadasa, has withdrawn from the presidential race and thrown his support behind a rival candidate, presenting a significant challenge to prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's bid for the executive role.

In an announcement made on Tuesday morning, Premadasa said that “for the greater good of my country that I love and the people I cherish, I hereby withdraw my candidacy for the position of president”.

Premadasa instead pledged his support for Dullas Alahapperuma, the candidate from a breakaway group of the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party (SLPP).

The decision to withdraw from the presidential race is believed to be driven in part by the tough political future that any president who takes on the role now faces. The new government, which is proposed to be a cross-party unity government, is likely to only last six to eight months until the country can afford to go to parliamentary elections. Presidential elections are not due till November 2024.

Premadasa’s support brings with it all the votes from his opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party. It significantly improves Alahapperuma’s chances of beating Wickremesinghe, the prime minister and acting president who will run as the SLPP’s official candidate in the secret ballot, which takes place in parliament on Wednesday.

It will now be a three-way vote between Alahapperuma, Wickremesinghe and leftist leader Anura Dissanayake, who were all formally nominated by legislators in a brief parliamentary session on Tuesday morning.

Both Wickremesinghe and Alahapperuma are considered controversial presidential candidates by the public, due to their close association to former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was forced to flee the country and step down last week after mass protests.

It is likely to be a tight race. Wickremesinghe has the backing of the majority of the ruling SLPP, who have the most seats in parliament. However, according to those close to Alahapperuma who spoke to the Guardian, the support of the SJB – and other opposition parties likely to follow – means they now believe they are assured of enough votes to beat Wickremesinghe.

Those close to Alahapperuma said that a deal had been struck whereby Premadasa would be prime minister, and SJB MP Harsha da Silva, who is an economist, would be finance minister in a unity government, under Alahapperuma as president. Three days ago Alahapperuma promised to form “an actual consensual government for the first time in our history” if he won the ballot.

Alahapperuma, a former journalist, served as the minister of mass media in Rajapaksa’s cabinet for over two years, and was part of the SLPP government that is held responsible for driving the country into its worst economic crisis since independence.

Public protests against Wickremesinghe have been particularly vociferous. A six-time prime minister, he took over as a caretaker prime minister in May and was swiftly accused of propping up and protecting the Rajapaksa family, and, after the president resigned, taking on presidential duties without any legitimacy. His private residence was burned down and his prime ministerial home and offices were taken over by protesters last week demanding he step down.

Wickremesinghe caused further outrage by using his powers as acting president to declare a state of emergency on Sunday night “in the interests of public security”.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka’s economic situation continues to worsen, with a lack of fuel and cooking gas and more food shortages likely in the future. The new president would also have to oversee a government composed of usually opposing political parties, and will be ruling at a time of political turmoil for the country, with a mass protest movement – known as the aragalaya – mobilised on the streets and calling for political accountability.

On Tuesday, across the commercial capital of Colombo, mass protests demanding Wickremesinge’s resignation were planned by students and protest groups.

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[Alaska](#)

‘It goes up like tinder’: unprecedented blazes envelop Alaska



A fixed-wing aircraft drops water on the Clear fire near Anderson, Alaska, on 6 July. Photograph: Eric Kiehn/AP

Across the state, 264 individual fires are burning and it is on track to break its 2004 record of 6.5m acres destroyed

Brendan Jones in Sitka, Alaska

Tue 19 Jul 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 19 Jul 2022 11.09 EDT

Alaska has seen more than 500 forest fires since the beginning of April, which have forced the evacuation of mining camps, villages and remote cabins.

By 15 June, [more than 1m acres](#) (405,000 hectares) in the state had already gone up in flames, about the amount of acres that would normally burn in an entire fire season. By mid-July, more than 3m acres of land had been torched, putting the state at risk of breaking its [2004 record](#) of 6.5m acres (2.6m hectares) burned.

Today [264 individual fires](#) are burning across the state. The East Fork complex, which ignited in western Alaska on 31 May, and the Lime complex fire above Bristol Bay, have already destroyed more than 1m acres. Satellite photos show rust-red scars trailing wisps of smoke in the west and southwest parts of the state, where fires continue to smolder. May and June set records in Alaska for dryness.

[Map of active wildfires burning across Alaska.](#)

“It’s unprecedented,” said Rick Thoman, a climate specialist at the International Arctic Research Center in Fairbanks, of this year’s fires.

Experts like Thoman attribute the burn to two factors: an unusual amount of lightning strikes causing ignitions, and a landscape primed to burn.

“Drought, early melt of snowfall, winds and lightning strikes have all combined to make for a tough start to the season,” Thoman said.

The high number of lightning strikes is a result of increased vapor in the relatively warmer air across the state, which in turn has increased the number of thunderstorms, Thoman explained.

Over a four-day span in July, for example, almost 40,000 lightning hits were recorded across the state, while Alaska averages about 60,000 strikes over the course of a year.

The strikes connected with a landscape ready to burn. Willows and alders in the state's forests have grown thicker and taller, while black spruce, another tree common in the forests, grow larger and work up the hills. Meanwhile, warmer temperatures have increased vegetation on the tundra. "At the end of the day, you just have more material to burn," Thoman said.



The East Fork fire near Saint Mary's, Alaska, on 9 June. The blaze is within two miles of two Alaska Indigenous villages, prompting evacuations. Photograph: BLM Alaska Fire Service/AP

The climate crisis is playing a part in the changing conditions, Thoman said. "It's not only Alaska. Across the board in the Arctic and the sub-Arctic, you're seeing this increase in fires. Taking into consideration the lightning, the drought, the early snowmelt – there's just no doubt the warming planet is playing a huge role in this."

Sam Harrel, information officer at the Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection, said he couldn't recall such a drastic year of firefighting in the state. "These lightning storms are relentless. You've got the early melting snowpack, and dead grass on the tundra. One strike and the dead grass goes up like tinder."

Long fingers of fire

The increase in flammable vegetation is creating fires that are “way more intense”, said Kale Casey, the lead information officer for Alaska Incident Management Green Team, which helps coordinate responses to fires across the state. Fires this year are causing a burn Casey said he hasn’t seen in his 17 years of working in fire suppression.

“Rather than running through the trees and just scorching the earth, these guys are burning deep, getting everything,” he said.

Casey and his firefighters have also noticed what he described as “long fingers of fire” burning deep into the tundra.

Instead of working quickly across the “duff layer”, the dense mats of grass and shrubbery decomposing along the top of the soil, today’s fires often burn through the duff to the mineral soil beneath, explained Zav Grabinski, a science communicator at the Alaska Fire Science Consortium, a wildfire research center.

“If the fire burns through the duff and reaches mineral soil that’s the sign of a very hot and deep fire,” Grabinski said. “This year’s duff is bone dry, creating these burns. In a usual year without drought, you can dig down and find moisture pretty quickly.”



Alaska wildfires have become more intense, burning deep into the tundra and creating more resilient coals that can result in holdover fires. Photograph: Patrick T Fallon/AFP/Getty Images

Deeper fires can also mean more resilient coals. Embers nest in the duff, insulated over the long winter from snow, feeding on flammable peat. Come spring, winds cause the embers to flare back up, creating holdover fires – or what firefighters call “zombie fires”.

“With fires burning hotter, and burning deeper into the forest floor, we’ve seen that multiple times,” Casey said. “The fire augurs in there, then wakes up again. That’s always discouraging.”

Casey said that zombie fires might be responsible for some of the early fires the state saw in April.

Smoke and destruction

One of the longest-burning fires haunting the state is the Upper Talarik fire, part of what is now known as the Lime fire complex, not far from the proposed site for the controversial Pebble mine, one of the world’s largest open-pit gold and copper mines.

On 30 June, the Upper Talarik fire destroyed a supply camp for Pebble Partnership, the conglomerate vying to build the mines. A charred mess of twisted augurs and skeletons of Quonset huts was all the fire left in its wake.

Due to Alaska’s large size and small population density, fires have only prompted a handful of community evacuations. Homeowners in Anderson, a town located about 80 miles (129 km) south-west of Fairbanks, were told to “take your family and pets and leave now”. At least one home has burned in the area, though officials cannot confirm an exact number.



Fires have caused only a handful of evacuations due to Alaska's small population density, but the smoke pollution has caused health problems.
Photograph: Lance King/Getty Images

Among the other impacts has been smoke pollution. Harrel pointed at the East Fork fire, threatening the community of Saint Mary's on the Yukon River, and Pitkas Point, just across from it. At one point, the smoke was so bad residents couldn't see the banks on the other side of the river, Harrel said. People did yard work with respirators. Although the drought allowed residents to run ATVs up lower riverbeds instead of along bumpy trails along the bank, and the smoke kept away mosquitoes (Alaskans refer to the insects as the "state bird"), the fires limited solar panel production and threatened respiratory health.

The smoke causes headaches, burning eyes and bronchitis. This spring, a hospital in Nome, in western Alaska, [recorded](#) 600 parts per million of particulate matter. Doctors say that anything over 150 parts per million of particulate matter can damage the lungs and trigger asthma.

Seth Kantner, who grew up in a sod cabin on the Kobuk River near Kotzebue along Alaska's western coast, and built his daughter a cabin 40 miles (64 km) up the Noatak, said he worries constantly about both structures burning in the encroaching Derby Creek fire, especially when he's

working on the ocean, as a commercial fisher. “There’s been very little rain since the snow melted in May. We’ve had sun, but not much precipitation. It’s nerve-racking, worrying about the fires.”

The new normal

While decades of poor forest management have contributed to a number of historical fires in California and the Pacific north-west, Alaska’s situation is different, Casey said. Over the years, most fires in the state had been left to burn because they are often so remote: “In Alaska we basically fight fires by aviation or boat. [The fires] are just so tough to get to,” he noted.

Today, a conglomeration of state and federal firefighters deployed by helicopter, parachute, boat and trucks, work with crews from other US states with the idea that the Alaska crews will reciprocate once the Alaska season wanes and fires intensify farther south. Airplanes nicknamed “Fire Bosses”, drop 800 gallons of water collected from lakes and rivers over the fires, allowing firefighters to create perimeters in an effort to stop the spread.

Still, Casey said, his crews are bracing for the months ahead.

“Here we are, the middle of July. Right now it could go a lot of different ways. 2009. 2004. We have all these memories of these years. In our careers, we hear the word ‘records’ more and more and more. We hope for rain. But as we all know in the trade, hope is not a strategy for fighting fire.”



Firefighting crews in Alaska are bracing for the months ahead and hoping for rain. ‘But hope is not a strategy for fighting fire,’ said Kale Casey. Photograph: Mike McMillan/AP

Rick Halford, a former senate president of the Alaska legislature and air taxi operator who has witnessed fire seasons from his planes, said he has never seen a weather season so intense. “In Alaska, you had lightning and thunder so rarely that your kids were shocked by it,” Halford said. “It’s not that way any more.”

Halford hopes for the heavy rains of late summer, but he has learned after more than half a century living in Alaska that depending on the weather is a risky prospect. As for the larger reason behind the increase in fires, he said that science confirms what he is able to see from the windows of his cockpit. “The fire seasons are getting worse, and that’s a fact,” he added.

“This may end up being our worst year. This is reflective of changes around the planet. Even if these fires aren’t generated by human action, they are still part of what we are changing on this Earth. Things are just getting warmer.”

Francis Mitchell, a former emergency firefighter and public information officer, said that people in his hometown, in McGrath, in south-west Alaska, have been fighting fire since the 1940s. He recalled that in the 1960s, a

number of village civilian crews were “trained” to fight remotely. “The plane would show up, and you just got on and fought fire. That was your training.”

The spread of this year’s fires shocked him, he said. “It’s just not what we’re accustomed to seeing.”

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US politics

Pro-Israel hardliners spend millions to transform Democratic primaries

Critics say Aipac and its allies are seeking to influence Democratic politics with money from Republican billionaires



Representative Donna Edwards of Maryland. Hardline groups have spent millions to oppose her primary bid. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

[Chris McGreal in New York](#)

Tue 19 Jul 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 20 Jul 2022 08.57 EDT

Pro-Israel lobby groups have poured millions of dollars into a Democratic primary for a Maryland congressional seat on Tuesday, in the latest attempt to block an establishment candidate who expressed support for the Palestinians.

A surge in political spending by organisations funded by hardline supporters of Israel, led by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac), has

reshaped Democratic primaries over recent months even though debate about the country rarely figures as a major issue in the elections.

Critics accuse Aipac and its allies of distorting Democratic politics in part because much of the money used to influence primary races comes from billionaire Republicans.

Aipac has spent \$6m on Tuesday's contest in Maryland, more than any other organisation, to oppose Donna Edwards, who served eight years as the first Black woman elected to Congress from Maryland before losing a bid for the Senate in 2016.

Edwards is endorsed by the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, among other leading [Democrats](#).

But she angered some pro-Israel groups during her stint as a representative by failing to back resolutions in support of Israel over its 2011 war in Gaza and other positions. She also backed the Obama administration's nuclear deal with Iran when it was strongly opposed by the Israeli government and therefore Aipac.

Aipac launched a super political action committee, or super Pac, the United Democracy Project (UDP), in December as a legal mechanism to spend unlimited amounts to directly influence elections and counter growing criticism within the Democratic party of Israel's continued domination of the Palestinians.

The lobby group kickstarted the UDP with \$8.5m and donations from wealthy donors with close ties to Israel. They include two Republican billionaire businessmen and Trump campaign funders, Paul Singer and Bernie Marcus, as well as the billionaire Israeli American Democratic donor Haim Saban.

UDP-funded [television ads](#) criticising Edwards make no mention of Israel and instead attack her as an ineffective politician who got nothing done during her stint in Congress. Over the past two months, Edwards has lost a

significant lead in opinion polls over her rival, Glenn Ivey, who is [now marginally ahead](#).

A more liberal pro-Israel group, J Street, which calls for the US government to take a harder line with the Israeli government to end to the occupation, has backed Edwards through its Super Pac with about \$700,000 in ads.

A J Street spokesperson, Logan Bayroff, accused Aipac of being [a Republican front organisation](#) in part because of its endorsement of members of Congress who voted to overturn Joe Biden's election victory following the 6 January storming of the Capitol.

"It's alarming that a group that has endorsed some of the most rightwing extremist Republicans, with a super Pac funded in part by Republican billionaire megadonors, could go into a Democratic primary and spend and spend with the single-minded purpose of crushing a fairly popular mainstream candidate who they've labelled anti-Israel with no evidence, no real justification at all, for such a claim," Bayroff said.

"This is all about trying to drive the party back into more rightward direction on Israel and foreign policy. It's really alarming and it's fundamentally anti-democratic when a group can influence this process in such a way because most voters wouldn't know where this money is coming from. I think that's dangerous."

Bayroff said Aipac and UDP were attempting to intimidate candidates into "feeling that they cannot offer good faith criticism of Israeli policy, that they cannot vocally support Palestinian rights".

"They recognise that the political space on these issues in the Democratic party has opened up and they want to try to arrest and reverse that trend, and push us back to a place in which there's really very little public debate or discussion about the correct American role in the region," he said.

The most visible sign of that shift has come from members of "the Squad" of congressional progressives – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib – who are unusually vocal in their support of the Palestinian

cause. [Opinion polls](#) also show that younger Democrats, including American Jews, are more openly critical of Israel.

A UDP spokesman, Patrick Dorton, dismissed J Street's accusations including the charge of being a Republican front group by pointing to Saban's financial support.

"We're exercising our democratic first amendment rights in participating in these elections. If you want to look at politicians who've intimidated people and chilled discussion on the US Israel relationship, look at the Squad," he said.

"In part UDP was formed because there were an increasing number of candidates with radical anti-Israel views running for Congress. Our view is that is dangerous for American democracy and could negatively impact the bipartisanship support for the US-Israel relationship."

UDP and other pro-Israel groups, such as the Democratic Majority for Israel and Pro-Israel America, have spent heavily to oppose candidates regarded as anti-Israel in Democratic primaries from Texas to Ohio and California.

The UDP helped defeat six of seven contenders it opposed. Other pro-Israel PACs, led by the Democratic Majority for Israel, also funded opposition to the co-chair of Bernie Sanders' most recent presidential campaign, Nina Turner, in a solid Democratic seat in Ohio. Turner, who has argued that substantial US aid to Israel should not be used to perpetuate the occupation of Palestinian land, at one point held a lead of 30 percentage points – but lost.

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